

In Focus – Irwin Barrett-Lennard

Irwin was born in Guildford but the family moved to farm in the Wongan Hills area, in the northern wheatbelt. Realising at school that activities involving a moving ball were not his forte he took up running and rowing for fitness, enjoyment and improving mental concentration. He won his High School mile, the Maiden 8 rowing Championship, the UWA Inter College mile and ran a 4:43 mile at Leederville Oval. He gained an MSc in Agriculture at UWA and was President of the UWA Sports Council.

Not just a Farmer!

Irwin and Berwine married in 1953 and for fifty years they farmed at Wongan Hills. But they were no ordinary farmers. Irwin, assisted and supported throughout by Berwine, was a Wongan Hills councillor for twenty two years, Chair of the WA Centre for Remote and Rural Medicine and Patron of the Wongan Hills Arts Society. He was also a UWA Senator for twenty eight years, which sometimes entailed a twice weekly commute to Perth. With four children, he had little time to devote to running but while in Perth he sometimes managed to fit in a morning run on the beach. One such run coincided with a Marathon Club event and he took up Ivan Brown's invitation to join the club. He then "graduated to the vets" and moved back to Perth in 2006.

Triple World Champion



Irwin admits he isn't graced with fast twitch fibres so has always excelled at events of 5km and over. He ran a marathon at 76 (4:08:20) which gave him his sixth M75 State Record in six weeks, making twelve in all. Now he's working on his M80 State and National record collection. There are too many records to detail here; suffice it to say he easily beat John Gilmour's 5000m record.

He has competed in the Australian nationals five times, at the Adelaide Games, the Oceania Championships in Christchurch and most recently at the World Masters Athletics Championships in Finland. He says "Each has been a source of new friendships, great memories and items for the shoebox. But absolutely nothing beats running for Australia and winning Gold in the World Championships." That he did three times – in the cross country, 5000m and 10000m!

Always a stalwart helper at our State Championships, Irwin will be volunteering to do his bit here at the 2010 Nationals – when he also hopes to compete in his gold medal events. His running motivation is "fitness and friendship and the joy of just doing it." He would like to think he will run another marathon, soon, and as an M80 his aspirations include not falling too far behind and encouraging others to do what we do.

Irwin has nine grandchildren and says "Let your kids and grandkids know that their potential is precious. What they do with it could help somebody or everybody. And movers and shakers need to keep fit."