

The beauty of Masters



Although Wendy Farrow is a diminutive lady she is a race-walking powerhouse with great skill and efficiency of movement. She credits mentors over the years for helping develop her technique; in the first instance, Colin van Blommestein, then the South African 50km road walking champion.

Born in Cape Town, South Africa, Wendy lived there until her late twenties. When international work and travel beckoned, she moved to England for three years and, on return to South Africa in 1999, lived in Johannesburg before the move to Perth with her husband Danny in 2013. Wendy has a Bachelor of Commerce degree and works as a corporate accountant.

Having never had exposure to athletics at school, other

than the annual sports day, Wendy played tennis and hockey. She continued with hockey for a time after leaving school also adding rowing to her sporting repertoire. In her twenties, she began road running to increase her fitness. She competed in her first 10km run full of trepidation but finished "...near the back with some stragglers, and was so pleased with my achievement." Wendy set her sights on training towards an eventual half-marathon but injury intervened. Severe Ilio-tibial band syndrome brought her road running to an abrupt end. In 2001, in search of improved fitness, Wendy joined a Johannesburg branch of Run Walk for Life (RWFL), a walk/run exercise program three times per week. She was surprised to learn that walkers competed in the road running races held around Joburg, completing distances up to 30km. She was keen to join them and by the end of the first year had race-walked her first half marathon. In 2003 Wendy took on a 30km event and has since completed three 32km races. Walking has provided a base fitness for the hiking and backpacking that she also enjoys. Wendy has only suffered minor niggles since taking up race-walking. She recalls having to pull out of a 15km road race and hopping into the support vehicle thinking she would be transported back straight away. "Had I known they would remain on the course following the entire race at 20kmph I would have ambled slowly back!"

To build Wendy's technique and speed, RWFL manager Nichola Humphreys helped her put Colin van Blommestein's tips into practice. *"I was fascinated. It appeared difficult and I thought, 'I'll never be able to do this. Nichola was excellent in the way she encouraged and motivated me. She provided training programs and promoted the importance of recovery in one's training regime."*

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In focus

With Carmel Meyer

... it's for everyone

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Wendy's race-walking resume is now long and varied although she prefers distance events from 10-20km. In 2010 she competed on the track for the first time in a 5000m race. It wasn't until Wendy and Danny emigrated to Australia that she next competed on the track. In 2012 she was excited and nervous about the 10km race in her first road walking championship event; the South African Road Walking Championships in Cape Town. Wendy also recalls races with unpleasantly memorable weather conditions - *"It rained heavily from start to finish in the 2014 Masters state 10km road walk. Athletes, judges and officials were drenched from cap to shoes!"*

The Perth2016 WMA Championships was a special moment for Wendy. *"I recall Bob Schickert saying to me one Sunday, Will you be competing for Australia in the Champs? Up until then, I had not considered it as an event for me. It was only for the top athletes, surely? I was wrong. That's the beauty of Masters, it's for everyone."* Wendy competed in the 5000m track walk plus 10km (achieving a PB) and 20km road walks. Another memorable PB was achieved in the 2016 Open State Championships 20km walk.

The WA Race Walking club provided training for Perth2016. Wendy also credits fellow MAWA walker Cheryl-Lee Dean; both ladies trained on Saturdays between Scarborough Beach and Hillarys Boat Harbour, through winter and summer, on a course that Wendy describes as very scenic but undulating. *"It was great training together and it helped me improve my times."* Nowadays Wendy aims to average 25-30kms a week. Some of her training is done as part of her daily commute home. *"It is a great way to de-stress after sitting in an office all day; also cheaper than travelling home by bus!"*

Wendy has been a volunteer track official and is grateful to Bob Schickert for making her welcome and mentoring the novice official. With her great sense of humour, Wendy recalls officiating for a national event that was being live-streamed nationally. *"We were told to be on guard all the time due to the live-streaming. Whilst walking out across the track to take up position I duly tripped over the metal edging on the inside of the track, in full view of the spectators!"*

"Fitness and heightened well-being motivate my walking" says Wendy. "Walking invigorates and energises me and it is a great way to get to know a new city." After all the years she has walked, mainly for the joy of it, competing at WMA Perth 2016 as a race walker was 'the cherry on top. *"I was fortunate to be in Perth at the right time. It made all the effort over the years so worthwhile."*

