

Lightning Jim achieves



Jim Langford (silver) and Don Mathewson (gold) battle in the cross country at the Perth World Masters Championships. BELOW: John Gilmour and Jim discuss the race.

In his memoir, John Gilmour described Jim Langford as the most outstanding and also the toughest distance athlete he ever coached. Here is Jim's story.

The first time I ran in a long-distance race was at Kent Street High School. To my surprise, no one could beat me. To get to high school I needed to ride my bike 16 kilometers each way. I guess this contributed to my fitness at that time. On leaving school I joined the Canning Districts Athletic club and I came under the influence of John Gilmour. This resulted in a lifetime friendship. A group of us would run from John's house in Como through the nearby pine plantation. On Saturday, John and I would travel to athletics together. John never told me what to do in training, but somehow he passed on his ideas. In 1963 and 1965 I competed in the



In focus

With Carmel Meyer

Australian Cross Country Championship. I won the title in 1965 when they were held in Perth. (*Jim beat Australian Olympian Ron Clarke to win the title*) At this time, I mostly ran in bare feet even on the road but after getting some very sore feet road running, I changed to wearing shoes.

Between 1966 and 1971 I attended the University of WA achieving an honours degree in Chemistry. During this time my training for running was limited, but I did run every day. From 1972 onwards I started to train much harder, running twice most days. In 1975 I was selected in the Australian cross-country team to compete in the

World Championship in Morocco. I also competed in these championships in 1977 (Dusseldorf) and 1979 (Limerick). During this period, I also ran some marathon races. In 1978 I won the Australian Marathon title at Caboolture in Queensland in 2:19.29. My marathon PB of 2:18.08 was set at the 1979 Australian Championships at Herne Hill WA. Rob de Castella won in 2:13.23.

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remarkable career

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It was his second marathon and he came in very strongly towards the end of the race. There were four invited Japanese runners in the race. They took second to fifth places. I came in seventh having ran with one of the Japanese in the lead for about 30km. Then I had a bad spell and lost ground but managed to push on. *(Jim is on the list of All-Time Top 10 WA Marathoners)*

In 1976 my wife (Rosemary) and I lived in London. Most weekends I would race for my club Ranelagh Harriers. If there was no club run, I would choose another race to run in. Two of these races I consider to be my best. I ran a very competitive 10km track race to win in 29:10.6, my PB. I also ran in the City 10-mile road race, finishing second to Hugh Jones in a time of 49:07 – maybe I should not have run 8km in the morning. *(Jones is an Olympian and the first Welshman to win the London Marathon)*

I joined Veterans Athletics after I turned 35 competing mostly in local events and only participating in National Championships when they were held in Perth. This was a time when I had a young family and I was working full time and doing lots of on-call work at night.

On retirement in 2008, it became easier to travel to National and International championships. Since then I have competed in nearly all National championships and six World championships. My favourite event is Cross Country. At World championships, I have finished second twice (Lyon and Perth) in the cross-country race.

I am a great fan of Parkrun, have hardly missed a Saturday and like many others can't wait for them to re-start. Margaret and I still go to the Parkrun venue each Saturday to run the course. *(Jim is a member of Pioneer Parkrun. On January 1, 2015 he set the age-graded course record of 86.94%.)*

Another major interest has been in Rogaining. I started competing in rogaining quite late in life but have done about 80 events since. I have also enjoyed setting events and have now set more rogaines in WA than anyone else. I like getting out into the bush and creating the maps. My parents had a farm in Canning Vale in the days when most of the area was native bush. As children, my siblings and I spent a lot of time out in the bush. I have always been interested in maps. With this background, interests and running ability it is not surprising I loved (and did quite well) at rogaining.

I have always become involved in the organisation of the clubs I join. I served on the Canning Districts committee and as president. I became very involved in the Marathon club, serving on the committee for many years and twice as president. *(Life Member Jim has bib number 7.)* I was also the race director for the Perth Marathon and other public fun runs for several years. I have been a race director for one or more Master's Sunday runs for many years. I have been looking after the MAWA helpers list for a few years and have developed a database system to do this. My other involvement now is as Treasurer of Australian Masters Athletics. Other than that, I like to go to Sunday runs and the track on Thursday nights. About two years ago I tore the meniscus in my left knee which limits to some extent what I can do now. I would not try to run in a steeple race for instance.



Jim Langford heads to a silver medal in the World Masters Championships in Lyon, France.