

Toni Phillips sails over the hurdle on her way to a gold medal at the Australian Championships in Melbourne.

Photo: GRAEME DAHL

Toni Phillips – MAWA's

Queen of the hurdles



Toni Phillips was born in South Africa in 1972 and spent her childhood there and in Australia. She started running when she was five, doing cross country runs with her Dad, but at school she preferred sprinting which she found a bit easier. As a teenager she joined Northern Districts AAC and over the next dozen years or so gained several state titles in sprints and hurdles. She is an accountant but currently works for only half of each year whilst spending the rest of her time studying for a degree, majoring in Sports Science.

From early childhood until very recently, Toni also found time to play hockey. In 2002, just after she had turned thirty, she played in the Defence Force masters' team at the World Masters Games in Melbourne. Whilst there she noticed that there was an athletics competition going on and tried to make a late entry. She was unsuccessful but was inspired to return home to Perth and seek out and join the masters athletics club, which then still went under the name WAVAC. In some of the following World and Australian Masters Games she doubled up on the two

sports but says "*not sure how now*".

During her ten years of membership she has concentrated on sprinting and hurdling but she still perseveres with longer distances. She features regularly in the Club Tops in distances from 100m to 1 mile and in the 80m hurdles and still holds the state record for the W30 4x400m relay, set in 2003. She has also been a member of postal relay teams which have won AMA titles. She even runs the odd 3000m race at the mid week T&F sessions.

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Toni loves to run



Toni Phillips is a picture of concentration at the State Championships.

Photo: GRAEME DAHL

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Toni is an inveterate traveller and has seized every opportunity to compete outside Perth. This includes Australian Masters Games in Fremantle, Albany, Geraldton, Adelaide and Alice Springs and most of the Australian Masters Championships over the last ten years. At the nationals in Perth in 2003 she excelled herself with a total of three gold medals and one silver. But her crowning glory must be her 100m hurdles gold at the World Masters Championships in Finland in 2009 where she was cheered all the way by a deafening roar from a large MAWA contingent.

Her plans for the coming season are ambitious, covering the New Zealand Masters Games, AMA nationals in Canberra and some relays in Melbourne. And to cap it all she'll possibly go to the World Masters Championships in Porto Alegre, Brazil in October 2013. Having now reached the ripe old age of forty her hurdle distance drops from 100m to 80m and she is keen to try for the W40 title.

Toni is a bit of an organiser and during her time with Northern Districts she served on the committee, for a while as club treasurer. She has been involved as a coach with Little Athletics and has done some officiating at open competitions. Closer to home, and together

with Tom Lenane, she has been running several training groups for almost ten years. These are open to anyone but are composed mainly of masters – so it is not surprising that some of the training sessions are followed by fun and food.

Toni describes as “incredible” the people she rubs shoulders with, both at home and overseas, and says they are her motivation. She loves athletics (probably as much as she loves chocolate) and says she would like to continue running forever. But she would also like to keep winning – to “keep those Eastern States girls and Eastern Europeans on their toes”.