

# Speed Queen Wendy



## In focus

With Carmel Meyer

MAWA competitors are delighted to claim Wendy Seegers as one of our superstars. On Tuesday evenings, it is always a thrill to watch her in a battle to the line, or at Strive where she races against competitors many years her junior. As determined as she is on the track, off the track Wendy is a quiet and unassuming lady who doesn't seek the spotlight but enjoys the camaraderie of her fellow runners. She's also very handy with the starter's gun!

South African-born Wendy grew up near Johannesburg. A university Science (chemistry and math) graduate, her career path was research but Wendy chose to teach instead, 'A great job with time to

*train and do athletics seriously.'* After five years of marriage, Wendy left athletics when she and husband Gys decided to start a family. They immigrated to Australia when their first child was eleven months old. Wendy and Gys now have three children plus Wendy's two step children who also decided to join the family here.

Athletics has always been a family affair for Wendy who joined Little Athletics U5s when she was just three years old! Both her parents were coaches and her four siblings also did athletics. Wendy was successful at the Nationals throughout her school days. She also won at a few University championships but missed two World Students Games due to injury. A diplomatic Wendy says that

despite her early successes she decided to quit athletics as she had faced '*many disappointments*' with the South African Federation.

One of her greatest achievements, qualifying for the Sydney Olympics with an A standard, turned into one of her greatest disappointments when she was not selected for the national team due to the racial issues complicating South African sport at that time.

Wendy had considered her athletics career over but when they came to Perth Gys encouraged her to check out Masters Athletics. Reluctantly Wendy went along to a Tuesday WAAS evening where she found Graeme Dahl on hand to explain proceedings.

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# has God on her side



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Wendy says '*I felt welcomed into the group of friendly and kind people'* and is especially grateful to John Dennehy and others for making her feel so comfortable. '*I enjoyed the Masters so much; it made me enjoy Athletics again.*' With a break to have her third child, Wendy has now been back competing for three years. '*Running is the one time I have my mind for myself and I can enjoy that as "me time". Having no family in Australia and being with the kids all the time... running sure clears my mind!*'

Wendy has endured sporting setbacks with the support of her husband and family and a deep commitment to her faith. She says she has come to realize there is '*Life after Athletics*'. *I now have a life with an awesome husband and three beautiful kids, who love and support me regardless of my performance, and that makes running enjoyable again.*'

Wendy loves winter pre-season training; '*It is a lot harder but with fewer speed sessions I can train hard and hardly have any injuries. As soon as the sprint season starts, so many niggles seem to creep in.*' Wendy's powerful physique suggests gym work and she confirms she used to do Powerlifting as a sport. She loved doing squats and bench press but doesn't have much free time for the gym now. I asked Wendy about injuries: '*Most of my injuries were hamstring related. Sprinting and Powerlifting has also resulted in two knee and two foot operations. I'm thankful to still be running!*'

Wendy's favourite events are the 60m, 100m and 200m. She says she is '*slowly slowly*' starting to like the 400m. As a fellow 400m competitor at the 2015 State Champs who was entering the home

straight as Wendy crossed the finish line, I'm sure the 400m likes Wendy! The 400m hurdles also appeals but her knee surgeries have unfortunately put that event out of contention.

Wendy was lucky to have her Mum on hand to coach her from childhood to Year 12. She was then coached at university and had three more coaches before leaving South Africa. South African Sports Psychologist Maryna Van Niekerk also provided assistance. Wendy entered the coaching realm in South Africa, working with a group of young elite athletes. In Perth Wendy manages her own training and Gys joins in some sessions as well.

No stranger to national and international competition, Wendy competed at the World Championships in Seville, Spain and the World Indoor Championships in Maebashi, Japan. She still holds the South African National records for the indoor 60m and 200m. Her personal best in 100m is 11.18s and 200m is 22.74s. A great memory for Wendy was competing against Marion Jones in South Africa but she was saddened by her drugs charge years later.

As a Masters Athlete Wendy has made a habit of breaking records and her goal is to try and better the 60m, 100m, 200m, and 400m Australian Masters records as she enters the W40 age group in February. Wendy has been making good use of her remaining days of W35! In November 2015, she broke her existing Australian records for 60m-7.61s\* and 200m-24.42s\*. In December 2015, she broke the 400m record set by Kath Holland in 1978 in 55.72s\* and in January 2016, Wendy broke her own 100m record in a time of 12.01s\*. (\*AR pending)

Wendy says it will be a dream come true to compete for Australia for the first time at the 2016 WMA Championships. She hopes to do her country proud and go for medals in the 100m and 200m. Wendy's motto for this year: '*With God nothing is impossible- Go for Gold, World Masters, Perth 2016!*'