

## **HISTORY OF KZN MASTERS**

Memories by Alf Burgess

In 1976, I took my son Robert, aged 11 yrs. to the Pinetown field at Lahee Park, to train for school sports, our intention was to improve his sprinting.

During the session, we noticed an older man training a young girl named Jenny Ford, Robert mentioned that the man training her was from America, and that she had broken school records in training.

We approached him and it turned out to be Len Paveley the originator of Paveley Harriers down the South Coast.

He was wearing a beautiful American track suit, which was a gift from his recent trip to the World Masters Championships in the States.

We were asked to join him whilst he did some run throughs of 60 meters or so.

To our surprise he easily outran us, and he was over 60 years old. We could not believe the fitness and muscular body this man had.

He had run 12.8 secs for the 100m at the games. I suggested that we should try to start a club for athletes over 40 in Natal,

I had read about how the Japanese had many older athletes competing.

Len mentioned that Percy Reid a Springbok Baseball player, had tried to start in Pietermaritzburg, but there were none interested.

However, my old friend Danie Burger had successfully started in the Transvaal.

The following day I contacted Percy, he had also been to the States and had done very well in the 1500m at the age of 55 yrs. (4min 46secs).

He had been keeping records and results of all the South Africans and he passed them on to me.

Len and I got together again, and we spoke to Trevor Smith who was also training at Lahee park, and he mentioned that Aubrey Rose had been mentioning that he was interested and would assist where he could.

The following Tuesday the four of us met under the stands of the Kings Park track, we had our first committee meeting that night, with Len as Chairman.

After the meeting I volunteered to get hold of Danie Burger, who had also been to the States, and he lived in Johannesburg.

I knew Danie from Wits, as we were in the same track team in 1957.

We stayed in contact, and slowly built up the interest, one of the ideas was to encourage the roadrunners to try track, so we had a few 5000m races

on the track and organized a 10km road race. We approached every club for support and had 35 competitors at our first track meet of 5000m only.

Our first road race of 10kms on a Sunday afternoon, attracted 125 entries even though there had been a 21 km race that morning.

As a result of that race, we signed on people such as Anne Weeden, Perry Leary, Paddy Williams, Willie Mavuma and John Broom.

It was not long before, previous track runners joined us, Kalie van Zyl, Henry Brand, Susan Cronje and Dan Mathee.

Piet Badenhorst, and Ethel Pevely were amongst the names I can remember.

Len Pavley remained our chairman for a few years, and organized the Natal Championships in 1979, where we had over 180 competitors, of which 60 plus were from the Free State.

Unfortunately, Len contracted a muscle virus and eventually after a very brave period he died, and Ethel his wife gave

Masters a very generous donation of over R15 000 which she and Len wanted us to have to promote Masters, this was 1982.

We had lots of fun and in 1980, they arranged a South African Championships in Germiston, and with the help from the Allied Building Society, we were fortunate to have Perry Leary and Myself chosen from Natal to be part of a 17-man team to Los Angeles, USA for the Pan American Masters Games.

Our chairman was then Laurie Hass, a Natal Road runner master's was doing very well. Henry Brandt took over as Chairman and the track support improved tremendously.

Then in 1994 our Chairman, John Baum joined us, and he really put all his energy into getting the road division going, unfortunately we were now stepping on the toes for the road running division, this was not encouraged, and our road section started to dwindle.

Sadie van Dyk then took over the road section and I looked after the Cross country, and we started to build up the numbers once more.

Joe Rodgers took over just before the World Championships in 1997, and really got the walking section going.

The World Championships 1997. were a shame as we had the best opportunity to really put master's on the map, but as we were not even asked to assist with the organization the momentum was lost. Persons who had no idea of master's were jumping on the band wagon, it was very frustrating.

The press did not help either as what should have been appreciated as older athletes performing to the best of their ability and achieving outstanding results, was turned into a meeting of old people who were having a sporting past time. Even the minister of sport referred to us as not being a sport but a past time to keep fit and healthy. They do not realize what good the positive attitude and fitness does for older people who stay enthusiastic and healthy.

The only good result after the world champs was that we had some new members, we had over 4000 at the time of the champs, and only 120 afterwards.

The new members were people such as Jenny Allebone, Neil Peritt, Des Rowntree, Keith Jolly, Joanne Jacovides, Vernon Loker, and Anna du Plessis.

Patsy Clemmans and Willie Ward were very active in the period before the World champs as well.

Members that made their mark were, Patsy became a Springbok walker, Lucas Nel broke a world 800 m record, and Kalie van Zyl had a list of worlds performances to his name, and Jenny Allebone, a world class athlete.

Rod and Betty Slater were the real stalwarts of our committee.

I took over as chairman but due to work pressure had to give up running and assistance from 2000.

Derek Brown took over and really improved the image and teams were selected for the first time, the momentum improved again.

During 2001, we unfortunately lost Henry Brand, after a long illness.

Fred Moodley took over and the club with the help of enthusiastic people it starting to pick up again.

With the enthusiasm of Liz Alexander and the newsletter we were once again starting to succeed.

Then in 2003-2006 we had Len Diedericks who became our new chairman, he introduced a tremendous feeling of cooperation and teamwork,

As a result, we got our first sponsorship from Aquella water of Krantzkop. With their generous assistance we were able to have the S. A. Champs in Durban

This was the first time since 1994, that the champs were in Durban, and they were very successful.

We unfortunately had to say goodbye to Mavis Hutchinson after many years of competing and coaching, she went to the Free State to work as a coach.

Vic Vaz has now taken a number of our athletes under his wing and great results are coming through, with Liz Alexander, Anna Du Plessis, Joanne Daley and some new men sprinters, Gavin Maxwell, Mike Shroeder and Andy Daley middle distance.

We have also had Arthur Zimmerman join us and he is in the category of Kalie and Lucas. Kalie van Zyl one of the world's great masters, had passed away during 2005.

Magdalena Tomlinson moved down the coast and still breaks records whenever she competes.

The new chairman in 2006/07 is Bill Pellew, who has shown a great enthusiasm for improving our situation. Jodi Pastorini has really been working very hard for years and has kept all our correspondence and filing in a very professional way. She has also been walking very well.

Jenny Allebone passed away during 2007, she was very brave and competed in a 10km race only 2 weeks before she died.

2007 was one of our best years yet, we had Anna Du Plessis, Joanne Daley, Gavin Maxwell, Mike Shroeder, Andy Daley and Liz Alexander and Jan Roodt compete in Italy at the world Championships, they all did very well. We also got a bronze medal in a relay race.

Anna Du Plessis is going to the World Indoor champs later this year. 2008, we wish her all the best.