

FOCUS ON HAROLD BODDY

With Geelong walks identity Harold Boddy finally announcing his retirement from many of his racewalking related activities this year, what better time is there than now to talk about Harold and his great contribution to Victorian athletics over many years.

Like many people, Harold came into athletics when his children Tyne, Lana and Reece started in Little Athletics in Geelong. Not one to sit back and let others do the work, Harold was quickly in action as an official and club coach at the Corio Little Athletics Club in suburban Geelong, soon taking on the role as club President.

Geelong Walkers Club, based at Landy Field, had been formed in 1979 but the Corio Winter Walkers Club, based at the Goldsworthy/Corio athletics track, was even older, and it was to Corio Walkers Club that Harold took his children once they showed an interest in our sport of racewalking.

He also became actively involved in Geelong Walkers Club at this time, taking on the position of President in the 1997.1998 season, a role he fulfilled for over 10 years before handing over the mantle only a couple of years ago. A perusal of their annual reports from any of the years in this timeframe shows the huge amount of work he did year by year, coordinating weekly races, tallying points, creating new awards (many of which came from his own pocket) and generally promoting and advancing the sport and the club in the Geelong region.

Realising that they would do better if they also raced in stronger walk fields, he brought Tyne (U12) and Lana (U9) to Melbourne in late 1998 to race with the Victorian Race Walking Club and the family then joined our walking club.

He also started racewalking himself at this stage, having his first walks with VRWC in the 1999 winter season and also joining Corio Athletics Club and competing with them in the AV Interclub competition each summer. Alas, as the years progressed, his races became fewer as his many commitments (see below) took more and more of his time. My records show that his last serious race was an AV Interclub walk in December 2011.



July 2008 – Harold and Lana Boddy race with VRWC at Middle Park

Once his term as president at Corio Little Athletics finished in the early 2000's, he branched out into both the coaching and judging fields. He started as a Little Athletics D grade judge, worked his way to C, B and eventually A grade levels and qualified as an Athletics Victoria judge as well. His contributions have been many, chairperson of the Little Athletics Victoria Walks Committee, representative on the LA Competition Board and LA Region Walks Coordinator, and for many years he regularly travelled to different Little Athletics centres to conduct walking clinics amongst the children and to recruit judges from amongst the parents.



July 2010 – a typically cold Ballarat day for the Victorian Country champs – walk judges Judy Mason, Peter Vysma, Shane Bertrand, Harold, Terry Knape and Gordon Loughnan

Leveraging off his success in coaching his own children as racewalkers, Harold has been coaching for more than 10 years now at grass roots Little Athletics level. He has a love for teaching beginners how to racewalk, enjoys seeing his young athletes grow and develop not only in their skills but in their confidence as well. Conducting training sessions twice a week, his walks squad always has 10-20 youngsters in it. For a small LA centre, this is huge! While many of his walkers regularly made State level, he was just as conscious of those further back in the field and would always be seen walking beside them, providing tips and encouragement.

This 2014/15 season, the plan for the 'Corio' walkers (aka H's Army) was for his daughter Tyne to take the reins after he retired from athletics. But you can't keep a good man down and, when Tyne requested he come out of retirement to help, he was able to enjoy the LA State Championships from the stands rather than running the program from the infield for the first time in years.

Harold is one of those generous people who manage to balance the pressures of a full time professional work career with the added challenges of bringing up a family, yet who find extra time to give so generously to our sport, never earning a cent from their efforts but leaving a legacy that will last long after they pass the baton and put the feet up for a well earned rest.

Well done Harold and thanks for your many years of work for our sport of racewalking.

Tim Erickson
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