

SPOTLIGHT ON ANDREW JAMIESON

The following article on Andrew Jamieson was written by Ron Reed and appeared in the Melbourne Herald Sun on December 15th. See <http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,22925703-2862,00.html>

Golden oldie Andrew Jamieson keeps ahead of pack



Andrew Jamieson, taking it all in his stride (Photo – Ian Currie, HeraldSun)

A MODEST semi-retired grandfather of five has been unmasked as Australian track and field's secret world-beater - and he will go on show in Melbourne tomorrow.

Race walker Andrew Jamieson, 61, a surgeon and olive farmer, is just back from Monaco, where he was acclaimed as the world's best masters athlete in any age group or discipline at the IAAF's glittering awards dinner last week.

This impressive accolade followed five gold medals -- three individual and two in team races -- at the masters world championships in Riccione, Italy, in September. He also broke 11 world records during the year.

The championships attracted almost 10,000 athletes, including 530 walkers, with 60 or 70 in each race he contested.

So there was no lack of a competitive edge -- but Jamieson's efforts failed to get noticed back home.

However, if the photographers had been in Monaco they would have been able to catch him rubbing shoulders with America's world champion sprinter, Tyson Gay, and Ethiopian 5000m champion Meseret Defar, the open class athletes of the year.

"Nothing like that had ever happened to me before -- it absolutely blew me over," Jamieson said yesterday. "For someone who loves athletics, it was just like being in heaven."

Jamieson's next big ambition is to complete a full set of world records, which he plans to achieve at the open 50km Australian championships and Olympic selection trials at Albert Park on Sunday morning. He already holds the records for all the other distances -- 3, 5, 10, 20 and 30km -- in the 60-plus category, and is after the 50km mark of 4 hours 23.29 held by Gerhard Weidner, an elite athlete in the old East German regime. "It's the toughest one to get, but I think I can do it if the conditions are reasonable," he said.

The 50km walk has become a point of pride in Australian athletics, with Geelong's Nathan Deakes winning gold at the world championships in Osaka in September. Deakes was recently voted Australia's male athlete of the year and is a contender for the Herald Sun's SportsStar 2007 awards. Deakes has already been selected for the Olympics and will not compete on Sunday, but Jamieson will be surrounded by elite competitors. He is not seeking to beat them to Beijing, however.

Jamieson has been involved in race walking since his teenage years, although he took up marathon running at one stage -- his best time was a tick under three hours -- until he injured a foot. He couldn't run any more, but could walk -- fast.

Veterans' athletics expert Richard Trembath said this week that Jamieson was "the hardest trainer I've ever seen, in anything", while the man himself says he puts in between 50km and 90km a week. His wife, Lyn, is also a well-performed athlete, winning a national masters 1500m title a few years ago before her knees gave out. Jamieson, though, shows no sign of stopping.

"I just love the sport and I'm still good at it. I can still compete with the young guys and I can still break world records," he said.

Being feted at dinner on the French Riviera alongside Tyson Gay isn't bad for the ego, either.

For the record, Andrew finished 8th in 4:31:29, a fantastic time for a 61 year old walker but outside the World Masters record that he is chasing. Next time Andrew!