

CLUB SPOTLIGHT ON: COUNTRY

MINGARA ATHLETICS CLUB by Geoff Crumpton, Club Captain

Mingara athletics began as a small training group for young aspiring Triathletes at Central Coast Grammar School in mid-1996 and about 6 months later moved to the Killarney Vale 300m Grass oval where the group was coached by Margaret Beard-slee OAM. In April 1997, Tuggerah Lakes Mingara Little Athletics Club agreed to nominate the club to Athletics NSW thereby setting up a pathway from Little A's to Seniors. The club now boasts its home at the Regional Synthetic Track at Mingara and has a little over 200 members, including ANSW accredited Officials and Australian Track and Field Certified Coaches. Those 200+ members include athletes from U12 to Over 80 and every age in between.

Now, the boring facts are out of the way, just what, and who, actually constitutes the Mingara athletics club? People, obviously; a shared love of athletics, naturally; a desire to compete and better themselves, of course; the willingness to try new and exciting activities, that goes without saying; but, more important than all that, is the human need for camaraderie and companionship and a sense of belonging.

Athletics, specifically at Mingara, thrives upon, being welcoming to folk of all ages, genders, professions, stages of life and health, income and social standing. We have teachers, public servants, medical and health professionals, truckies, tradies, retirees, business owners, stay-at-home mums and dads, folk from every walk of life. We have members from as far afield as Mudgee in the Central West of NSW, Newcastle, Campbelltown (now Myrtleford in Victoria), the ACT and many suburbs of Sydney. And, what brings them together? The camaraderie and companionship of being amongst fellow 'crazies' whose main, and sometimes only, goal is to be that 0.01sec faster, or jump 1cm higher, or throw 1cm further than they did last week, last month, last year, or last competition! We don't care about medals, they're a bonus, we care about constantly striving to better ourselves, to see exactly how far we can push our own limits. Setting new Personal Bests is what we are striving to achieve and, best of all, the only competition we have to defeat, is, ourselves!!

This healthy attitude becomes very obvious at a carnival, be it local, State or national and we at Mingara Athletics pride ourselves on the fact that we promote attendance at as many carnivals, and meetings, as possible. We clap, cheer, encourage, congratulate, commiserate and sympathise with each and every one of our members who are competing. We provide them with as much information as possible to keep them up-to-date on the Athletics offerings all over the State and country. Posts are provided on an almost daily basis with results, congratulatory messages, new records set, and notes for upcoming

competitions. New members are given official welcomes via Social Media and we actively encourage ALL members to participate in as many activities as they are able. Our prevailing attitude is, "if we provide the information, everyone is aware, and can make their own decisions to attend or not, but, at least they will know what's happening."

The backbone of the club, its spine if you wish, is its Masters cohort. To say Mingara Masters is close to the best performing Masters club in the State is not hyperbole, it's something upon which we pride ourselves. We don't actually have that many Masters athletes but, those we do have, are incredibly committed, skilful and willing to sacrifice their own Individual successes for that of the overall Team success. Nothing displays this more than at State Relays. Mingara Masters entered 32 Women's and 19 Men's teams from a Masters m'ship of barely 60 active members!! We do have more, however, many are Winter Cross Country athletes, Park or Ultra Trail runners, and a few who join for just the major events as they gain so much fun and enjoyment out of being in the team environment.

At this year's State Relays, our Masters Men and Women enjoyed amazing success with every Woman taking home at least 1 piece of bling, with many winning many, many more pieces of Gold, Silver and Bronze. Our Men achieved almost as much success and it all boils down to one fact, we have people who WANT to compete for Mingara! They're made to feel they are

contributing to the overall success of the club, and they want to be part of a team. A team that fosters teamwork, that thrives on 'going the extra mile', that encourages 'having a go', that rewards the simple fact of turning up, that wants folk to, 'step outside their comfort zone' and enter events they normally wouldn't even dream of doing, all to assist the club become the best it can be, and, over and above all else, HAVE FUN!!!

Mingara Athletics is the reigning Hooper Cup holders, the trophy for supremacy in NSW Country Athletics. We've won this prestigious trophy for the past 5yrs and will be doing our utmost to defend, and retain it again in Dubbo in mid-Jan next year. We had the largest attendance of teams at both relay competitions this year, the Street relays we host, and the State Relays held at Campbelltown. Our Winter athletes placed highly in all ages over the XCOUNTRY season, and we placed 3rd out of 66 clubs in the Winter Trophy, only behind perennial Cross Country powerhouses Bankstown and Syd Striders. We are currently placed 11th in the overall Treloar Shield standings and are far and away the leading NSW Country club in that prestigious competition. Our Masters are in a no-holds barred battle with Cherrybrook for 2nd place behind UTS Norths, a club that dwarfs both of us for size. We are well represented in the top level of School athletics and Open competitions and our Masters are regulars in State, National and International competitions.

At State relays Mingara athletics achieved 13 Firsts, 23 Seconds, 18 Thirds and 10 Fourths. We set 41 new Club Records and 4 new NSW State records. At the Street Relays in July, we entered 22 teams for 4 Firsts, 7 Seconds and 3 Thirds. We also currently hold at least 6 ANSW State records from U18s to Masters, and some 39 NSW Country records.

I personally believe, however, our biggest attribute is that everyone at Mingara treats everybody else as exactly the same. There's no, 'big heads' at our club, no-one who considers themselves, or their child, better than anyone else. We're all in this together, we're one, big, slightly, as they all are, dysfunctional family that, like all families, pulls together when it's required.

So if you are interested in joining the Best Masters Club in the State, bar none, we, as Kal Newcomb insists I told her when we first met last year at the Canberra Half, 'take anyone', hahaha!!!

Photos supplied by Geoff Crumpton

