

# JOHN TRELOAR (1928-2012)

*One of Australia's finest sprinters and revered as our greatest ever male sprinter and a major contributor to our nation's golden era of sprinting (which also included Marjorie Jackson, Shirley Strickland and Betty Cuthbert).*

## Athletics Career Highlights

- London 1948 Olympic Games: 110 yards – 4<sup>th</sup> semi-final, 220 yards - 4<sup>th</sup> semi-final
- Helsinki 1952 Olympic Games: 100M – 6<sup>th</sup>, 200M – 12<sup>th</sup>  
(See [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=MCSxLJK4\\_-l](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=MCSxLJK4_-l))
- Auckland 1950 Empire Games (*now* Commonwealth Games):  
Three (3) Gold Medals - 100 yards (9.7 secs GR); 220 yards (21.5 secs) and 4 x110 yards relay (42.2 secs).
- Australian Track and Field Championships: Six (6) National Titles  
1946/47: 100 yards 1<sup>st</sup> (9.8 secs); 220 yards 2<sup>nd</sup> (21.5 secs)  
1947/48: 100 yards 1<sup>st</sup> (9.8 secs); 220 yards 1st (20.9 secs)  
1949/50: 100 yards 1<sup>st</sup> (10.0 secs); 220 yards 1st (21.6 secs)  
1950/51: 100 yards 2nd (9.8 secs)  
1951/52: 100 yards 2nd (9.7 secs); 220 yards 1st (21.5 secs)

## Awards and Other Honours

- Chairman of Athletics NSW (1990-91)
- Life Member Athletics NSW (1998)
- Australian Sports Medal (2000)
- Member of the Order of Australia (AM) (2001)

## John's Life

Between 1947 and 1952, John Treloar was one of the fastest men in the world.

At the Helsinki 1952 Olympic Games, John became only the second Australian male (after Stan Rowley in Paris 1900), to make the final of the blue-riband athletics event, and the first Australian male at the metric distance of 100M. Although officially declared as finishing sixth, John's time of 10.5 sec was the same time as that given to the 5<sup>th</sup> placegetter and a mere 0.1 behind the first four finishers all of whom officially ran 10.4 seconds. With all six runners finishing within 0.1 second of each other, the final is still regarded as having the closest finish in the history of the Olympic Games 'blue-riband' sprint. The photo-finish system in use at the time was rudimentary and John later remarked: "It was just a matter of going hell for bent". John also competed in the 200M, winning his heat and quarter final. In the semi-final he suffered an injury and was unable to finish.

John Francis Treloar was born in Roseville, New South Wales on 19 January 1928, the son of William Treloar (an engineer) and his wife, Dorothy (nee Oakley). John showed early athletics ability. At 11 years of age, John won the Roseville Public School's Championship and a year later, joined Northern Suburbs Athletic Club. At North Sydney Boys High, he played rugby, was a fast bowler for the First XI and excelled at athletics. In 1943-44, John was when unbeaten in interclub competition in the under 16 years 100 yards, 220 yards and triple jump.

John studied electrical and mechanical engineering at The University of Sydney and both ran for and Captained the Sydney University Athletics Club.

In 1948, at 20 years of age, John was selected to represent Australia at the London 1948 Olympic Games. To assist with his preparation, his parents paid for a professional coach and sent John to the United States for specialist sprint training.

Referred to as the Austerity Games, athletes (at the first Olympic Games to be held after the end of World War II), were housed in basic accommodation and there was no tailoring of food to athletes' needs. John recalled: "We were told there was a giant crate of juicy Aussie steaks on its way but they 'went missing' at Tilbury Docs. "I seem to remember it was kippered herrings for breakfast, lunch and dinner."

John finished a credible fourth in the semi-finals of both the 110 and 220 yards sprints.

After returning to Australia, John worked for the family's engineering business W.J. Treloar and Sons making equipment for the petroleum and related industries.

In 1950, John again represented Australia on the international stage, this time at the Auckland Empire Games (now known as the Commonwealth Games). John competed in three events and won a total of three gold medals - 100 yards in 9.7s, the 220 yards in 21.5s and was part of the Australian team that won the 4x110 yards relay in 42.2s.

In 1951, John married Patricia Law - a physiotherapist.

John continued with his athletics and in 1952 not only did he win his sixth Australian Track and Field title, but he was also selected for his second Olympic Games.

The Soviet Union made its Olympic debut at the Helsinki 1952 Olympic Games and John said: "We had plenty of opportunities of getting to know athletes from all over the world, including the Iron Curtain, and to us it [the Cold War] was a non-event. But obviously, with the politicians, it was more important than that."

John's success in finishing 6th in the 100 metres final and 12th in the 200 metres, together with the achievements of his fellow Australian track stars - Marjorie Jackson and Shirley Strickland, heralded Australia's emergence as a great sporting nation and helped to shape Australia's reputation as a force in international sport.

After Helsinki John continued working in the family business and in 1962 the company went public.

John's passion for and involvement in athletics continued after he retired from competition in 1953. In 1959, John moved to the Shire and helped establish the Sutherland District Athletic Club. John served as Chairman of Athletics NSW (1990-91), and in recognition of his outstanding service to athletics, Athletics NSW awarded John a Life Membership in 1998.

In 1987 John formed a new company which assisted the liquid petroleum gas industry develop strong markets in Australia and overseas.

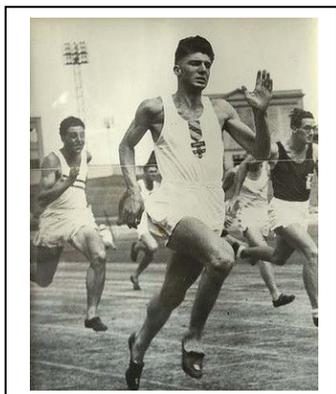
In 1997 after 46 years of marriage, Patricia, John's wife and mother of their children - John, Philip, Geoffrey and Patricia, sadly died of cancer. John later married Jan Bryant.

In 2000, John was a Sydney 2000 Olympic Torchbearer and was awarded the Australian Sports Medal. The following year, John's "service to athletics as a competitor and administrator and to the Olympic movement" was formally recognised when he was honoured with a Member of the Order of Australia (AM)

John died suddenly on 23 July 2012.

In addition to being a wonderful sprinter and legend of Australian athletics, John was a loving family man, a remarkable team mate who inspired those around him and also, a supporter and mentor of many young athletes. In the lead-up to the London 2012 Olympic Games, John sought out a number of athletes on the Australian Team, to wish them well and to remind them that if they did their best then they would have been successful.

John is survived by his wife Jan, his children John, Philip, Geoffrey and Patricia, two stepsons, 18 grandchildren and his brother, Hugh.



*Competing in 1947*



*Captain  
Sydney University Athletics Club - 1950*



*At home in May 2012*