

2010 WMA WORLD MASTERS INDOOR ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS
March 1-6, at Kamloops, B.C., Canada

DAY 6 — Saturday, March 6

The 2010 WMA World Masters Indoor Athletics Championships came to a close Saturday after a sixth straight day of amazing and inspirational competition at the Tournament Capital Centre.

Over and over, Kamloops spectators have commented about what positive role models the 1,400 athletes who gathered here have been — not just to the youth who have come out to watch, but to the adults in the crowd as well. Every athlete who took part has been inspirational just by having the courage to get out there, and by having the commitment to live active, healthy lifestyles.

Even more inspirational are those who not only get out and do it, but do it well.

There have been several multi-medal winning athletes this week. Several have stood atop the podium on more than one occasion.

Olga Kotelko of West Vancouver, B.C., finished her week with 10 gold medals and eight world records in the women's 90 age group. On Saturday, Kotelko chose not to compete in the 400m Dash. Instead, she concentrated on the 4x200m relay — which she and teammates Louise Sorensen, Hildegaard Buschhaus and Leona Smith won in a newly established world-record time of 4:15.33.

Horst Albrecht of Germany also had a golden week, winning seven times in the M85 age group. The final victory came Saturday when he won the Triple Jump with a leap of 6.46m.

Phil Raschker led the American team with seven gold, two silver and one bronze in the W60 age group. She capped her week Saturday with a championship run in the 400m, crossing the line in 75.60. Then, she joined Joan McMullan, Mary Trotto and Brenda Matthews in winning bronze in the 4x200m relay in a time of 2:19.67.

Marie Kay of Australia finished with five gold medals in the W50, the last one coming Saturday when she won the 400m in a time of 62.96. Fellow countryman Peter Crombie took home three medals in the M65, two gold and one silver — the latter coming when he was second in the 400m with a time of 62.36.

Ugo Sansonetti of Italy set his second world record of the meet when he captured gold in the M90 400m Dash. Sansonetti crossed the line in 1:46.78, bettering the time of 1:48.33 set by Herbert Liedtke of Sweden. Sansonetti also set a world record in winning the 200m earlier this week.

Nolan Shaheed of the United States just missed setting a world record in the M60 1,500m. Shaheed easily won the race with a time of 4:36.92. That was just four-tenths off the 4:36.52 owned by Raymond Zembri of France.

For Great Britain's William Gentleman, the true victory was actually making it to the start line. Gentleman won gold medals this week in M70 Hammer and Weight Throw. The latter came Saturday, when he threw 16.68m. This was Gentleman's first competition after suffering a stroke.

Be sure to check the full event results and the final medal count, both available on the homepage of the kamloops2010masters.com website.

DAY 5 — Friday, March 5

The women threw their weight around Friday — and they were rewarded with world records at the 2010 WMA World Masters Indoor Athletics Championships.

Ulrike Engelhardt of Germany set a new standard in the women's 50 age group of the Weight Throw. Engelhardt threw 15.59 metres, which was better than the mark of 15.42m held by Vanessa Hilliard of the United States.

Engelhardt was one of four women who broke world records in the Weight Throw on Friday.

Galina Kovalenskaya of Russia threw 10.25m to win the W75 age group. Kaija Jortikka of Finland was the previous record holder at 9.54m.

Rachel Hanssens of Belgium captured her fifth gold medal of the meet and her second world record when she won the W80 Weight Throw with a toss of 8.01m — nearly a metre better than Canadian Olga Kotelko's previous mark of 7.06m. Hanssens also set a record in winning the Shot Put (7.15m) on Wednesday, and also won gold in the Javelin, Discus and Hammer Throw.

Kotelko might have lost a record Friday, but she gained two more — one in winning the W90 Weight Throw with a toss of 6.32m (American Betty Jarvis had the old mark of 5.45m), and another by winning the Triple Jump with a leap of 4.14m. There hadn't been a W90 record in the Triple before, so Kotelko's mark is new on the books.

That brings Kotelko's total thus far this week to nine gold medals and seven world records, with one more day of competition remaining.

Some of the biggest cheers of the day were reserved for John Altendorf of the United States when he twice broke his own world record in the M60 Pole Vault. Altendorf entered the day with the record of 4.00m. He bettered that at 4.02m, and then bettered it once more with a final leap of 4.05m.

Altendorf's gold helped the mighty U.S. machine to a team-leading 240 medals — 105 gold, 78 silver and 57 bronze.

Canada is close behind at 210 medals, including 70 gold, 76 silver and 64 bronze. Germany (38 gold, 25 silver, 31 bronze, 94 total), Australia (18 gold, 13 silver, 16 bronze, 47 total) and Great Britain (16 gold, 24 silver, 13 bronze, 53 total) round out the top five.

The Aussies were glad to see teammate Heather Carr win her second gold medal of the meet when she captured the W60 division of the 10K Race Walk on Friday. Carr crossed the finish line with a time of 56 minutes 17.1 seconds. Earlier this week she won the W60 3,000m Race Walk in a world-record time of 15:54.75.

After Friday's race, Carr went directly to the Kamloops Airport to begin the return trip home to Melbourne — a sad journey, as she is going home for the funeral of her mother, who died on Feb. 25, the eve of Carr's trip to Kamloops.

Also of note in the 10K Race Walk was Janice McCaffrey of Canada, a three-time Olympian (1992, 1996, 2000) and Commonwealth Games medallist. She won gold in the W50 age group with a time of 55:24.2.

Five days of competition at these championships are now in the books. The meet will wrap up Saturday with a full slate of events, including the Half-Marathon and 4x200m relays, and will be followed by closing ceremonies featuring the Kamloops Rube Band at about 4:30 p.m.

DAY 4 — Thursday, March 4

Germany is celebrating some multi-medal performances at these 2010 WMA World Masters Indoor Athletics Championships.

Horst Albrecht is leading the team with five gold medals in the men's 85 age group. On Thursday, he won the Long Jump with a leap of 2.77 metres. That, on top of earlier victorious performances in the 60m Dash, the 200m, the Indoor Pentathlon and the 3,000m Race Walk. Albrecht will try to add to his golden haul when he competes in the 60m Hurdles on Friday and the Triple Jump on Saturday.

Incidentally, Harry Thompson of Powell River, B.C., twice finished behind Albrecht to claim silver in the 60m and 200m races, but won gold in the 800m. Thompson will try to duplicate that winning performance in the 400m and 1,500m, both Saturday.

Meanwhile, Christiane Wippersteg has won four medals for the German team. Wippersteg won silver medals in the W80 Shot Put, Javelin and Discus — she was runner-up to Rachel Hanssens of Belgium in all three. On Thursday, Wippersteg finally struck gold when she won the High Jump with a leap of 0.85m.

The Australians also have something to cheer about — in particular, the four gold medals thus far won by Marie Kay in the W50 age group. Kay has been victorious in the 200m, Long Jump and Indoor Pentathlon — the latter with a world record-setting total of 4,906 points. On Thursday, she nearly had another record in the High Jump, but couldn't reach 1.56m and had to settle for a winning leap of 1.50m. Kay will try for a fifth gold medal when the 400m preliminaries open Friday.

As events were winding down Thursday, the United States led the medal standings with 193, including 82 gold. Canada had 175 medals (59 gold), followed by Germany's 79 (33 gold) and Australia's 39 (15 gold).

To no one's surprise, Olga Kotelko of West Vancouver, B.C., established two more world records Thursday. The 91-year-old continues to blaze new territory; she's often the only one in her age group, so her biggest motivation is setting new records.

Kotelko leaped 0.75 metres and added another gold medal to her collection in the W90 high jump. There hadn't been a WMA indoor record in that discipline before; in fact, Kotelko owns the W85 mark of 0.89m. Kotelko also won the W90 Hammer Throw with a toss of 13.92m. That bettered the 13.13m of Ruth Frith of Australia.

Kotelko now has won seven gold medals and set five world records thus far this week.

While medals are lovely souvenirs, having fun is the main goal of most competitors at these championships. Take, for instance, the Crockett brothers of British Columbia.

Ken Crockett of Kamloops is competing in 10 events in the M55 age group. The 57-year-old is joined here this week by his two brothers — Dan, 63, who hails from Kelowna, and Steve, 55, who lives in the family's hometown of Keremeos.

Dan is competing in four events in the M60 age group. He made the finals in the 60m and 800m races, and is

still to compete in the 400m and 4x200m relays. Steve entered two events in the M55 age group — the 60m and the Long Jump.

In fact, sibling bragging rights were on the line when Ken and Steve went head-to-head Thursday afternoon in the Long Jump. Ken came out on top, finishing fourth with a leap of 4.66m. Steve was right behind in fifth after jumping 4.49m. Jouko Nikula of Finland had the winning jump of 5.68m.

“He said he was going to beat me, but I said no way,” Ken said of little brother Steve, with a laugh.

Ken, by the way, finished eighth in the Discus on Thursday with a throw of 26.64m, and qualified sixth in the 400m after crossing the line in 61.70. That final goes Saturday.

DAY 3 — Wednesday, March 3

It was a record-setting day at the 2010 WMA World Masters Indoor Athletics Championships as six new world records were established Wednesday at the Tournament Capital Centre.

Heather Carr of Australia won the women’s 60 age group of the 3,000-metre Race Walk with a time of 15 minutes 54.75 seconds. That bettered the old standard of 15:59.53, held by Waltraud Seiler of Germany.

Ugo Sansonetti of Italy set a new record in the M90 200m Dash when he finished in 41.13 seconds, bettering the mark of 41.64, held by Herbert Liedtke of Sweden.

Rachel Hanssens of Belgium threw a record 7.15m en route to gold in the W80 Shot Put. That was further than the old mark of 6.80m, thrown by Christiane Wippersteg of Germany.

Zdenka Kirsch of Germany won the W80 3,000m in a record time 19:07.34. That shattered the mark of 19:34.94 held by Judith Kazdan of Canada.

And Canadian Olga Kotelko continued her winning ways Wednesday with two more gold medals in the W90 age group, both in record-setting fashion. Kotelko won the Shot Put with a 4.90m result — the old mark of 4.73m was held by Gabre Gabric of Italy. Kotelko also established a new record in winning the 200m Dash in a time of 60.72 seconds — the first time an indoor record has been set in that age group.

Kotelko, from West Vancouver, now has won five gold medals and has set three world records at these championships. She won 11 golds and set eight world records in August in Lahti, Finland, at the 2009 WMA World Masters Outdoor Athletics Championships.

Halfway through these championships, the United States holds a slim lead in the medal count. The U.S. has won 69 gold, 46 silver and 37 bronze for a total of 152. Canada is next with 144 — 48 gold, 57 silver and 39 bronze.

Germany is third with 63 medals (26 gold, 14 silver and 23 bronze). That’s followed by Great Britain, whose 10 gold, 15 silver and 12 bronze gives them 37.

Sonia Armitage was one of those helping Great Britain’s cause Wednesday. She won the 800 metres in the W45 age group, crossing the line in 2:26.26 seconds. Armitage edged Renee Belanger of North Vancouver, who finished in 2:27.62.

It was a golden homecoming of sorts for Armitage. She was born in Merritt, about 45 minutes south of

Kamloops, and she lived her first four years in Kamloops before her family moved to Scotland. She will try to claim another medal for Great Britain on Saturday, when she competes in the 1,500m.

DAY 2 — Tuesday, March 2

Olga Kotelko of Canada celebrated her 91st birthday in style on Tuesday — by winning two gold medals at the 2010 WMA World Masters Indoor Athletics Championships.

Kotelko, who hails from West Vancouver, B.C., threw 12.99 metres in the women's 90 age group of the Discus competition. She is the oldest female competitor at these championships, and had no one to contest her. Her distance fell short of the WMA record for the age group of 13.92m — Kotelko's own mark, set at the WMA Outdoor Championships in Lahti, Finland, in August.

Kotelko did, however, set a new WMA standard in the 60m Dash when she crossed the line in 15.14 seconds, shattering the old mark of 31.20 held by Grace Foster of the United States. Kotelko will be competing in 11 events in Kamloops; she opened the championships with a gold medal in Javelin on Monday. She won 11 golds and set eight world records in Lahti.

As competition wound down Tuesday, and with just the M80 Pentathlon's High Jump event still ongoing late in the evening, the United States and Canada were tied with 71 medals apiece. The Americans led the gold-medal count with 30, and added 25 silver and 16 bronze. The Canadians, meanwhile, had 24 gold, 25 silver and 22 bronze.

Christopher Bates of the United States set a world record Tuesday in the M45 Indoor Pentathlon. Bates scored 4,110 points to win gold, bettering the old WMA standard of 4,062 held by Jean-Luc Duez of France.

A small correction from Monday: American Aaron Thigpen tied the WMA record for the M45 60m Dash when he ran 7.02 seconds in the semifinal. Thigpen now shares that record with fellow American Stan Whitley. Incorrect information in the results system had the record as 7.08. As a result, it was reported that Thigpen had twice broken the record — once in the preliminaries, when he ran 7.05, and then again in the semifinals when he ran 7.02.

On Tuesday, Thigpen won the 60m final with a time of 7.10.

While records are certainly celebrated, they aren't the be-all, end-all in Masters Athletics.

Take, for instance, the father-and-daughter tandem of Bill Falconer and Tatiana Little of the host city Kamloops.

Little is a longtime coach at the Kamloops Track and Field Club — she and husband Norm helped guide a team of Masters athletes prior to these championships. Little competed Tuesday in the W35 Discus, finishing fifth with a throw of 27.01m.

She was more proud, though, that her dad won a pair of medals Tuesday, bringing his meet total to three thus far. Falconer won a silver medal with a throw of 13.31m in the M85 Hammer Throw. Paul Nobbe of Germany won the gold with a heave of 26.46m. Falconer then took bronze in the M85 60m Dash, crossing the line in 15.25. The winner was Horst Albrecht of Germany, who ran 11.16. Falconer also claimed gold Monday in the M85 Discus.

And then there's Ralph Bergland of Moose Jaw, Sask., the only blind athlete at these championships.

Accompanied by his guide, 16-year-old Cody Welscher of Moose Jaw, Bergland, 84, finished fifth in his heat in the M80 60m dash with a time of 17.11 seconds. On Monday, Bergland won a bronze medal in the M80 Discus, and he is still to compete in Shot Put and Javelin.

Bergland was born with the genetic eye disease retinitis pigmentosa, and by the time he was 35 he was completely blind. It didn't stop him, though. Bergland took up track and field, and went on to win bronze medals in the 100 Metres and Shot Put in the M75 division at the 2005 World Masters Games in Edmonton. He also is a five-time Canadian power-lifting champion.

He decided not to allow his lack of vision to impair him in 1949, after breaking a leg and spending more than two months in hospital.

"You know, when there's other people lying around with broken bones and broken hips and broken this and that, I began to think, hey, life is not so bad after all," Bergland says. "So I said, 'Forget my disability. I'm gonna lick ya!' And I went out and did my thing.

"I just love this."

DAY 1 — Monday, March 1

Four new world records were set on the opening day of the 2010 WMA World Masters Indoor Athletics Championships.

Aaron Thigpen of the United States twice broke the WMA standard for the 60-metre dash in the men's 45 age group. Thigpen ran 7.05 seconds in the preliminary heats, bettering the old mark of 7.08. Then, later in the semifinals, Thigpen lowered his own record by finishing in 7.02. The finals are set for Tuesday.

Fellow American Christel Donley broke the W75 record in the 60m hurdles, one of the disciplines of the Indoor Pentathlon. Donley finished in 14.22 seconds, which was better than the old mark of 14.68. She was the only one in her age group, and therefore earned the gold medal with 3,481 points.

And, Marie Kay of Australia set a new world standard in the Indoor Pentathlon's W50 age group. Kay won the gold medal with 4,906 points, well ahead of the old mark of 4,616. She was tops in every discipline — she held nearly a three-metre edge in the shot put alone.

The first medal of the 2010 World Masters was won by Canadian Erin Bevans. The Port Moody, B.C., product threw a personal-best distance of 61.77m to win the M35 Javelin. Sharaz Shaikh of Mississauga, Ont., was second with a heave of 49.79m, while Kier Wilson of Sherwood Park, Alta., took the bronze with 44.47m.

Meanwhile, Phil Raschker, the 2007 World Masters Athlete of the Year, kicked off her week in style, winning the W60 Indoor Pentathlon with a total of 4,532 points. Raschker finished first in every discipline but one en route to victory, topping the 60m hurdles, high jump, long jump and 800 metres, and finishing third in the shot put. Raschker is entered in nine events at this week's championships. She won 10 gold medals at the 2007 World Outdoor Championships.

Kamloops, the host city, also claimed a few medals Monday. Bill Falconer, 89, won a gold medal for his 12.10m toss in the M85 Discus. Melinda Williamson was a bronze medallist in the W50 event of the 8K Cross-Country race with a time of 35 minutes 18.50 seconds.