

# MacLean riding high as titles bring out best



South Australian competitor Tony Patane gives it everything during the hammer throw at the Masters Athletics Championships at Marrara's Arafura Stadium yesterday

Pictures: JUSTIN KENNEDY

## JOSH SPASARO

MICHAEL MacLean is already a Top End legend in rugby league and basketball – he could soon be well-known for his athletics prowess.

The life member of the Brothers and TV Jets rugby league and basketball clubs took out gold in the men's 40+ high jump at the Masters Athletics Championships at Marrara yesterday.

His winning jump was 1m 72cm.

"It was good. It was my first time being involved in the Masters," the Brothers league coach said.

"Not really (do I have a background in high jump) – I'm a basketballer. I did some at school and liked it.

"(Tournament Local Organising Committee chair) Steve McGugan in his recruiting drive got a few different athletes from different sports.

"He came down to the rugby league and said 'do you want to have a go?'"

"I've got a calf injury, so I thought I'd do the high jump where I won't have to run too much.

"As I'm walking out the gate I'm thinking 'what next?' I was looking at the 3km steeplechase," MacLean said.

Darwin product Helen Searle was celebrating a silver medal in the 75 years 2kg women's hammer throw.

Searle, 78, was a bronze medallist in high jump at the 1958 Commonwealth Games in Cardiff, and won two silvers in Perth four years later.

She is also a past Olympian. "The Olympics were in the years where there was no drug testing – 1960 and 1964, so we just got walked over," she said.

"But I still improved and that was the aim."

Searle's late mother Ruth Frith, OAM, was the world's oldest athlete at 102.

"I used to be a runner because Mum was a sprinter and Dad was a long-jumper,



Adriana Van Bockel in action

so I didn't have a choice," Searle said.

"Now my knees are going and the body's starting to cut down and you're pushing yourself to keep training.

"I still like coaching and I like giving back and helping the kids."

Wollongong's Mary Thomas has gone to every World Masters Championships.

She was celebrating gold medals in the women's 70 hammer throw, discus, javelin and shot put yesterday.

She won five golds each at this year's World Masters Indoor Championships in South Korea, and last year's World Masters Games in Perth.

"I've done this since I was 14, and been going 59 years," Thomas said.

"I was the Australian Open javelin champion in 1969. I threw 52m then.

"I've got artificial joints now, but this is my life."

Territorian and four-time World Masters champion from this year's tournament in Auckland, Allan Long, won the 2000m men's 60 years steeplechase comfortably in a time of 7hr 19min 32sec.

He came close to the national record in blustery conditions.

Fellow NT athlete Colin Heywood took out the 1500m and 5000m walk events at the 60+ years level.

He will contest the 10km road walk starting on the Casuarina coast tomorrow morning at about 7.30am, with the 8km cross country to also start at that time.