

## **BRUCE MILNE – Athletics Canterbury Merit Award 2019**

This recipient started as a swimmer being coached by the famous Duncan Laing, winning titles in the pool and in the surf. But it was at New Plymouth Boys High School where he had a chance meeting with Arthur Lydiard. This was soon after the Rome Olympics when Lydiard was touring NZ. Arthur Lydiard took the NPBHS Cross Country team around their Cross Country course. He had forgotten his shoes and Lydiard barked, where are your shoes boy.

A move to Otahau College in Auckland where his running started in earnest. At the time trained by Allan Middleton and a lot of interval training and after a few titles and a 4:48 mile, he realised that something was missing in his training – Endurance. That is when Lydiard became involved. That changed his life and he started to become a reasonably good runner.

He ran with a guy called Snell a couple of times and came 3<sup>rd</sup> behind Snell at an event in Nelson and later ran a 1000m in 2:22.8. So began his relationship with Arthur Lydiard. He was selected for the Auckland Cross Country team, but a week later a motor bike accident took out his knee cap. Another Motorbike accident curtailed his progress.

He medalled at the National 800m final in 1975, a race won by Bruce Hunter. People were heard to say afterwards that it must have been a weak field as there was an athlete without a kneecap that nearly beat them. As a 40-year-old he ran under 2 minutes for 800m again a race won by Bruce Hunter. He ran 48.9 440yds and 1:54 880yds as a schoolboy.

He followed Lydiard's advice and went on to become a very successful coach and a Physiotherapist to many of us.

He has gone on to coach athletes to some 200 National titles. Those here tonight are Mary O'Connor, Sarah Harnett, also on my right Andrew Stark. More recently titles for Tracy Croft, Maggie Chorley, Angela Whyte, Matt Dryden, Leesa Edge and Malcolm Cornelius all here for their coach.

Other names, read like a who's who of running in Canterbury – Anne-Marie Tweedie (apology), Joan Merrifield, Bruce Baxter, Jason Cameron, Grant McEwan, Rob Mulcahy, Mike Molloy, Geoff Prendergast, Chris Duff, Tim Pankhurst, Brenda Fortune, Yvonne Evans, Roger Alcorn, Marty Lukes, Bill Stevens, Sid Pavett and he even coached his own wife Linda to a Canterbury 10k Championship title and the 1<sup>st</sup> Women's NZ Marathon in NZ.

Here is a person who knows more about aerobic and anaerobic capacity than anyone else. A disciple of Arthur Lydiard his motto was Health 1<sup>st</sup>, Fitness 2<sup>nd</sup> and Performance 3<sup>rd</sup>.

He competed at Track and Field for Otago, Auckland and Canterbury

Was a Canterbury Track and Field selector for 15 years

A National Coach for many years.

He was the Physio at the 1974 Commonwealth Games and 1975 NZ Games Coach at both the 1990 and 1994 Commonwealth Games and in 1984 was personal Coach to Mary O'Connor at the Los Angeles Olympics.

In 1993 and 1995 he was the coach/ Physio to the NZ team competing at the Chiba Ekiden Relay. I think that Kevin O'Sullivan may have been the Manager for that 1995 team.

University's Masters Cross Country Champion in 1993 and a Life Member of the University of Canterbury Athletic Club in 1993.

I would now like to share some thoughts of his athletes. I believe these sum the person up more than any of the words that have gone before.

You have passed on skills that I appreciate with all my heart and you have always inspired me to hold onto my passion for as long as possible and appreciating the pure beauty of running and lifelong friendships.

Two undeniable characteristics of a great coach are inner strength and courage, these describe him perfectly. I am one of the most frustrating athletes in his life, but he stands by me and with his incredible knowledge and dedicated coach and friend he gives honour, dignity and class to the word coach.

He is more than a coach; he is like a 2<sup>nd</sup> father to me. He always makes me learn more from every race and make me hungrier for the next.

He said to me "You can win the NZ Cross Country Champs". I had finished 24<sup>th</sup> in the previous 3 consecutive years. This was a statement that others would have dismissed. As it turned out I did win a NZ Cross Country title. He had the capacity to think big and deliver. Inspiration backed up with proven Arthur Lydiard training methods were his hallmark.

He is a coach who cares for the athlete as a person, with always wellbeing over their athletic ability. Thank you for the people you have introduced me to, you have taught me a lot that goes well and truly beyond running.

He has helped a very special group of athletes over many years, strive to perform to their full potential and even beyond what they believed possible. He eventually followed Arthur Lydiard's advice and moved into coaching and luckily for many of us, he also trained as a physio.

As a coach, he has shown great patience and support, going above and beyond many times. Empathy and concern for his athlete's welfare and health is always a priority. We have been lucky that he has decided to dedicate his time and effort, to helping us achieve, and it's great that he is receiving this recognition.

One of his much-loved quotes was 'who won the first chariot race?' I do remember him then saying 'who won the first chariot race? .... me saying "I don't know" He saying "exactly, it doesn't matter". He is an intelligent and insightful man, a bundle of knowledge and a master of empirical evidence. We are so lucky to have such a generous forward thinking and caring man to guide and mentor us. I am and will forever be grateful for his involvement in my life.

His qualities made him the best coach. His time, the Lydiard principles, the training programs individually designed. He imparted his knowledge, so you knew the reason for each type of session, always motivating. Enthusiasm that would radiate to others. Would discuss tactics. And then his physio occupation where he repaired the body frequently! He knew the physiology that backed up the training. I owe much of my success to Bruce. Not sure how he always had time for us.

So it is great pleasure that I ask to come up to the stage to receive the Athletics Canterbury Merit Award for Exceptional Service to the Sport is Bruce Milne