

## Bev Peterson – Merit Award 2021

To fully appreciate and understand this person's contribution to the sport, we first need to take a little journey through her life:

Her mother was a New Zealand representative in Track and Field, a Commonwealth Games representative but also a Commonwealth medal winner. After her mother and father retired, they worked hard to foster athletics especially amongst the children through Naseby, Waimate, where she was born and into Christchurch. It was here in Christchurch, in being on the first committee for Children's athletics that her parents introduced her, along with her elder sister to athletics. This means that she has been active in athletics in Canterbury for nigh on 60 years, longer than children's athletics has been around.

In those days, athletics for both children and adults was held on grass at Rugby Park. She progressed through the grades and as she entered her pre-teens, the family would spend all day down at the park with her competing in both the Children's and Adult's races and jumps. Long are the memories of tinned fruit suspended in jelly, consumed between meetings. Over her years she has seen Canterbury Athletics move from Rugby Park to the Ilam sports fields, to QE2 to Rawhiti Domain @ New Brighton and now here at Nga Puna Wai.

As she grew into a teenager, she had the honour of becoming one of the many athletes coached by Valdy Briedis. This was an honour, not because she could be one of Valdy's athletes or because he would take on anyone, but because Valdy was a rarity in New Zealand sport at the time, as he was a University Educated sports graduate. His education was from Latvia and such a qualification was unheard of in New Zealand at the time. As a refugee of the second world war Valdy brought Latvian and Russian training practices to New Zealand, produced probably the most New Zealand Athletic title holders of any coach there has been in New Zealand and his athletes have included world record holders. Valdy's training techniques were what still live on in her coaching methods today, the fundamentals are timeless. After Valdy, she was then an athlete of another Valdy trained and educated coach, Kevin Hickman.

She first represented New Zealand at senior level at the age of 16, in 1973 going to Canada to compete in the Pan Pacific Games, she last competed for New Zealand some 17 years later representing New Zealand at the Auckland Commonwealth Games in 1990 surely one of the highlights of her athletics' career, and records she set years ago are yet to be broken. She competed at International level in sprinting for 17 Years. She was unbeaten in the 100m in Canterbury in the years during the 1970s and 80s.

She competed first at the Technical club and one of her fellow athletes remembers being so impressed with how fast she was! There was no mucking around once the gun went off, she would fly out of the blocks and storm down the track at lightning speed. She was fiercely competitive.

She is still the current Canterbury U20 U19 and U18 record holder in the 100m 11.5, 200m 24.2.

In the twilight years of her career, her mother crops up again. Her mother decided to get into veteran's athletics and her daughter was now also a part of this scene, competing and thriving. Veterans Athletics is a little more relaxed environment, competitors are a little sparse, so competition is often performed with younger, similarly matched athletes. Through this environment both mother and daughter were able to give support and advice to the up and comers and this laid the foundation for her absorption into coaching.

Armed with the knowledge from well informed and educated coaches she found herself perfectly placed to pass on this help to others and she did.

She, like Valdy Briedis and Kevin Hickman, never seemed to refuse to help an athlete and she has always worked with the premise not to just take the creme of the crop but to work with anyone, to help them become the best athlete they want to be. For her, it's all about individual achievements not glory.

Just as an aside Athletic coaching in Canterbury hasn't been her only achievement. Her knowledge and advice have been sought by Parafed Canterbury, Rugby New Zealand, Canterbury Bankstown and Wests Tigers amongst a few of the Australian Rugby League teams.

She is still passionate about athletics, and now coaches a group 10 to 12 promising young runners. Over the Summer months she is down at the track most nights coaching and there again Saturday afternoons at interclub and often again coaching on a Sunday. She is the first one there on a Saturday afternoon and the last one to leave as she likes to study all the results before she goes home. She records all her athletes' results and knows everyone's PBs!


Now all this information is useless without some endorsement, checking with a few athletes she has coached I received comments such as:

She is extremely supportive not only to her squad but to other athletes at the track. She is very encouraging and happy to offer both technical and life advice. She loves to see people improve and gets very excited when anyone runs a PB! She travels around NZ to coach her athletes at National events and has had a lot of success with her athletes at NZSS Champs and at the National Track and Field Champs with several of her athletes winning gold at these events.

Thank you for everything you have done and most importantly, for caring more about your athlete's wellbeing than results.

You have made such a positive impact on all of our lives and that is something we will cherish forever.

Congratulations on your achievement, you without a doubt deserve this special award.

She has been my coach for 4 and a half years now. Throughout those years of knowing her she has spent hours and hours in the cold, wind, rain and heat cheering me on, telling me to run up tall, drive, or work my arms! Not only has she been there for me as an athletics coach, but she's been there for me as my track mum, always welcoming us to trainings with a warm hug.  I won't lie, there have been trainings that I've left and thought she hated me because the session was so difficult and maybe I've cursed her in my head a few times.

She has helped develop my love for the sport, gently encouraging and pushing us to always aim high. She's been able to master the balance between seriousness of training and still having fun. I've learned countless athletics tips as well as life lessons from her and I'll be eternally grateful to her.

From fastest female sprinter in New Zealand, to greatest coach in New Zealand. Some may say, you judge a coach purely on their athlete's results, however her efforts go well beyond this. She not only helps us achieve our goals and beat our PBs, she also teaches us the importance of selfcare, squad friendship and how to always keep our heads held high.

She is a strong female role model in the sport industry and is one of the most caring coaches, who knows her athletes limits and never pushes them to the point of injury. Her witty humour is always appreciated at training, where there is never a dull moment.

Her athletes want to thank her for believing in each and every one of them, her dedication, motivation and encouragement have made an enormous impact on all our lives and athletic careers.

She is not just a coach, she is a friend to all. She puts in the effort to know us personally, and she understands the impact of how our lives outside of sport can affect us on the track. She has enthusiastically taken each one of us under her wing, and with her coaching, has turned us into great athletes and we are so proud of her and for where she has taken us.

30<sup>th</sup> October 2021