

PROFILE

Collin COOPER

A top athlete, a gourmet cook and competent builder and carpenter, Collin's quiet and reserved nature belies his skills, stamina and culinary arts.



"If I get a problem, I run, as this helps me to relax and gets me back on an even keel." Jogging, of course is gaining popularity as an aid to better health, but I wonder how many do it to relax.

Collin Cooper, one of the members of the Maintenance team based at Hindmarsh has been a keen athlete all of his life, and with his wife they jog 60 kilometres a week and love it.

Born in Adelaide, Collin spent his early youth at Geranium in the Murray Mallee and although his parents were both chefs, they were against the idea of him following in their footsteps, and so encouraged him to take up a trade. He served his apprenticeship in the building trade — general building, carpentry and cabinet making, but once completed, he became an apprenticed baker at 22 and then, "forced his way into the family business!"

For the next 15 years Collin baked for the family business, which for a number of years was 'Coopers Home Made Cakes' on the corner of Frome and Rundle Streets in the City. The family also had an eye for taking over run down businesses and then building them up.

Because of severe injuries following a gas oven explosion, Collin left the baking business and then managed the Cross Road Bowl for 12 years — he was then the oldest Ten Pin Bowling Manager in Australia — quite an achievement for that time, as the intense workload usually saw Managers move on after five years or so, but then Collin returned to baking.

Because baking was a 7 day a week job, and gave him little time for anything else, he returned to his other skills and established his own business of doing house improvements.

In 1977 he joined the St. John Building and Maintenance Department and his work can be seen in St. John House, Metropolitan Centres and in the Transit Ambulances where he made many of the equipment storage cupboards.

As mentioned, one of his loves is baking, but in recent years this has been expanded and he specialises in two areas — cake decorating and from all accounts his Christmas cakes are of a unique design and he still cooks for special clients. He has competed in country Shows with good results.

Another example of his culinary arts is in the area of European and Oriental dinner preparations. Cooking is very much a hobby and Collin has an enormous collection of recipe books from throughout the world and he also corresponds with people all over the globe.

Another of his achievements is athletics and as Collin says, "Sport to me is everything."

Starting at an early age, Collin has been in Athletics since he was 13, when he joined the Adelaide Harriers, and by the time he was 23 he had achieved his ultimate goal — the top distance runner in South Australia. He then turned

professional and then set himself another goal of becoming the top professional runner in Australia. This he achieved in Victoria in the Mile and Half Mile. At that stage he ran the Mile in 3.59.9 from scratch in a handicap and the Half Mile in 1 minute 50 seconds — both were run on grass which is not as easy as modern cinder tracks and one wonders what times he would have run had he been on the modern day tracks.

Collin was the only professional runner coached by the legendary coach the late Percy Ceruty and according to Collin, his guidance helped him tremendously.

Collin's wife Ann (formerly Ann Shanley) is also an enthusiastic athlete and she was the first S.A. woman to represent Australia at the Empire Games in Auckland in 1954. Ann was also the S.A. Champion sprinter from 13 to 28 years of age, (she only lost once in that 15 year period and that was to Norma Thrower who became an Olympic Champion Hurdler) and was in the class of Marjorie Jackson and Shirley Strickland. At 29, Ann regained the 100 and 200 yard sprint titles before retiring.

During her career, Collin was her coach and from all accounts, he was so gruelling in his methods that the Running Association suggested he ease off a bit.

The other member of the family — son Brian was a State champion swimmer.

Well, what does Collin do today? He has his gourmet cooking, cake decorating and baking (he finds yeast cookery interesting) and jogs 60 kilometres a week with his wife because it's fun and relaxing. With a grin, Collin says, "I do the cooking and Ann does the gardening." as both are not keen on the reverse roles.

One point Collin made during our interview was that he does not believe in running in the morning as he considers the body is not fully awake and alert to take the strain.

Collin and his wife take kids on 3 km runs and he has made the offer to coach any youngsters of our staff who would like to become more involved in Athletics — it's only a matter of contacting him. Obviously he enjoys doing this as he says "Coaching kids is a fantastic field."

We found interviewing Collin a delight — he's enthusiastic, dedicated and as far as sport is concerned he believes in sport being an activity for fun and relaxation, not something that should become a mind and body bursting exercise.

The interests and activities of some of our personnel are quite amazing and Collin Cooper's is one of them. I wonder how many of our staff run 60 kilometres a week for fun?

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