

Award Citations

OACT Life Member - JOHN HARDING

The Harding family became involved in orienteering from March 1996, initially through children Heather and Matthew competing in regular events and the ACT Schools Championships. Records show that their father, John, in addition to junior athletics coaching duties and organising numerous cross-country events in the ACT, began competing in Wednesday lunchtime orienteering as well as some Sunday events that year, and he entered the 1996 Red Opal Relays in a team with fellow life members, John and Ann Scown. Between 1996 and 2000, John and his wife Carol competed fairly regularly in the Summer Twilight series and other community orienteering events. In January 1999 John began writing his 'Odds and Sods' column and other articles for the ACT Orienteering Association newsletter, something he continued to do until just before the newsletter ceased in printed form in 2012. During that period he also served as a junior squad coach in 2002, and in 2009 he was appointed as Executive Officer for Orienteering Australia, a position he held at Sports House in Hackett until 2018.

In August 2014, the OACT Council decided that suburban Street Orienteering should be organised as a regular series on a voluntary basis. John stepped into the 'StreetO' organiser role from November 2014 and to this day continues to welcome a constantly increasing field of newcomers and their children to that format of the sport. These days John and his ever-present camera can be spotted (often by unsuspecting runners) at most orienteering – and Park Run and other cross-country – events in and around Canberra, with his resulting prolific photographic publications to social and other media creating an enduring pictorial record of popular participation in the sport of orienteering.

OACT Life Member - VALERIE BARKER

Valerie Barker's family was introduced to orienteering in 1995 by Alan Sargent, who was her son James's scout master. Her daughter, Sophie, also took part occasionally that year when Valerie too began competing regularly. Records show that in 1997 and 1998 she competed fairly regularly in the Junior Program events and by 1999 was competing more regularly in Sunday events, ranking 71st in the 1999 Orienteer of the Year competition. The orienteering community is especially grateful to Valerie for also bringing her professional skills as a teacher and organiser to our sport, as she was the manager of the ACT Junior (Blue Lightning) Squad from 2003 to 2011. In 2007 she was ACT Schools Team Manager for the Australian Schools Orienteering Championships (ASOC) held in conjunction with the Junior World Championships (JWOC) at Dubbo, and in the same year was Schools Liaison Officer and Australian Schools Manager for the AUS-NZL Schools Test Match held in conjunction with the Oceania Championships held in the Capital region in October – a role she reprised in 2013 when the National Championships were again staged in our region.

In 2007 she received the Mike Cassells Award for her contribution to junior development and event organisation, and she went on to serve as JWOC manager for four years and as ASOC Coordinator for Orienteering Australia until stepping down from the role in 2021. Over the years Valerie has turned her hand to a variety of roles in the life of Orienteering ACT – from Master of Ceremonies for the launch of the Centenary of Canberra Championships at Canberra Girls Grammar School in 2013, to organising the unique capital O project in the Parliamentary Triangle, to making training videos for beginner orienteers, to serving (since 2015) on the OACT Board.

OA Hall of Fame inductee – JO ALLISON

Jo Allison was one of Australia's top orienteers for over a decade, representing Australia at eight World Championships, two Junior World Championships and one World Games, and won a World Masters Championship. She was the first woman to represent Australia at eight World Championships.

World Championships

Her eight World Championships were: 1997 (Norway), 2001 (Finland), 2003 (Switzerland), 2004 (Sweden), 2005 (Japan), 2006 (Denmark), 2007 (Ukraine), 2008 (Czech Rep).

Her best results were:

- Long: 23. place 2004, Västerås, Sweden
- Middle: 17. place 2008, Olomouc, Czech Republic
- Sprint: 28. place 2005, Aichi, Japan
- Relay: 4. place 2006, Aarhus, Denmark (the best ever result by an Australian team).

The other team members were Grace Crane and Hanny Allston.

Jo Allison was a noted and highly reliable relay runner, often taking on the challenge of being the first leg runner. She was in the women's relay team at seven of the eight World Championships she attended, with the teams finishing eighth or better at her last four Championships.

World Games

Jo Allison was one of the four members of the team to represent Australia at the 2001 World Games in Japan, the first time Orienteering had been included in the Games. She finished 13th in the individual race and the mixed-gender relay team of four was a close fifth, 15 seconds behind third.

Junior World Championship

Jo Allison represented Australia at two Junior World Championships: 1995 (Denmark), 1996 (Romania). Her best results were:

- Long: 15. place 1996, Govora, Romania
- Middle: 15. place 1996, Govora, Romania
- Relay: 11. place 1996, Govora, Romania

During her mid-teen years, she had to overcome stress fractures in her lower legs, which is common young female runners of that age.

Retirement from International Competition

Jo Allison retired from international competition at the end of 2008 season to concentrate on having children. Her boys were born as indicated:

- Roy Shepherd 10/08/2009
- Lewie Shepherd 14/07/2012

Return to National Competitions

Jo Allison returned to national orienteering in late 2013 and made a cameo appearance at the 2017 Oceania Championships in New Zealand winning the W21E class Long Distance final at age 40 on 16 April 2017. She also anchored the Australian women's relay team to victory in the W21E class.

World Masters Championships

She used those races to prepare for the World Masters Championships, winning the Long Distance A final in the W40 class on 29 April 2017.

National League Competitions

Jo Allison was one of the two top female orienteers in Australia for over twenty years. She won her first National League individual series at age 19 years in 1995 and her fifth and last, at age 41 years, in 2017. Only another potential Hall of Fame athlete, Nastasha Key, has won more series, six, than Allison and no woman, other than Key, has equalled Allison's standing at such a high level for such a prolonged period in Australia.