

LOCAL SPORTS

At Bend track meet, a world record and a cast of characters

By Robert Husseman
The Bulletin

Track and field enthusiasts at Summit High School on Saturday afternoon saw something that does not happen in Central Oregon every day: a world record.

John Altendorf, of Corvallis, broke his own 65-69 age-group world record in the pole vault at the High Desert Classic Open/Masters Track & Field Meet Saturday.

Altendorf, 65, a volunteer pole vault coach at Corvallis High School, cleared 12 feet, 9 inches on his second attempt to break his own record. He previously cleared 12 feet, 7¼ inches at the World Masters Athletic Championships, held last month in Sacramento, Calif. The WMA Champion-

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ships are comparable to the IAAF World Championships, but for top age-group athletes.

"I really felt strong coming off the top (of the pole)," Altendorf said. "I think I had two good jumps today — that was the premier one. That was my best jump of the day."

Altendorf continued competing but missed three attempts at 13-1½. He was happy with the end result but felt that another clearance was attainable.

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From left, Jack Casey, 64 from Corvallis, Tim Scott, 47 from Bend, and Naim Hasan, 54 from Portland, sprint the 100 meters during the High Desert Classic Open/Masters Track & Field Meet at Summit High School in Bend on Saturday.

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"As a masters vaulter, you've got about six full-energy jumps," Altendorf said. "I was out of energy."

Summit High School had never before had a world record — regardless of age group — set at its track. About 250 athletes, officials, spectators and other personnel were on hand to see the attempt.

The High Desert Classic meet, which has been held three times since 2006, has struggled to find its footing as a regular destination event, primarily because of its late position on the track and field calendar. What the meet lacked in numbers, however, it made up for in characters.

Competitors' ages ranged from 16 (Summit High junior-to-be Annie Sidor; pole vault) to 81 (Eugene resident Tom Allison; shot put, discus, javelin). Sidor, the Class 5A pole vault runner-up in 2011, competed in an open heat with men almost 50 years her senior.

"I've never vaulted with anyone

who wasn't a high school athlete before," Sidor said. "That was really fun. They gave me a lot of tips."

Another record holder competed in the High Desert Classic shot put and javelin events. Monica Kendall, a 55-year-old elementary school physical education teacher from Milwaukie, is the reigning American record holder (ages 55-59) in the shot put. She also holds the 50-54 age-group American records in the shot put and javelin throw. "I was hoping to set some records here," she said, "but the shot put ring (is not legal, per USATF standards)."

Stephen Peirce, 67, of Sherwood, competed in 15 events, the most for a single athlete at the meet by a large margin. His goal: "Go for the gold. Run as fast I can, jump as high as I can to get the gold medal," he said.

Bend resident Trent Webb, 56, better known as the "Mountain Joggler" ran the 100, 200 and 400 meters while juggling his signature three balls, to the amazement of spectators. After races, Webb provided juggling lessons to interested parties.

Kermit Walker, 76, an assistant track coach at Southwestern Oregon Community College in Coos Bay, ran the 100 and competed in the long and triple jumps. Walker also talked technique and improvements with his fellow competitors during his jumping heats.

After he lapped his only competitor to win the 5,000-meter racewalk, Eugene resident Dennis Robeson turned to her and shouted, "One more (lap)!" The other competitor, Robeson's wife, Maureen, crossed the finish line almost three minutes after her husband.

"This is a beautiful location (and) track," said Maureen Robeson, the oldest female competitor at the meet at 62. "If this event goes on for a while, builds momentum..."

Robeson's thought trailed off, but the event did gain momentum behind one world record and the enjoyment of those who witnessed it.

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