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## [Albuquerque Journal](#)

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### Jazz trumpeter Shaheed runs double time at U.S. Masters meet

By [Patrick Newell/For the Journal](#)

Saturday, March 5th, 2016 at 6:43pm



Nolan Shaheed is an accomplished musician and competitor at the masters level in U.S. track and field. (Patrick Newell/For the Journal)

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Nolan Shaheed was told seven months ago that his competitive running career was over. The Pasadena, Calif., resident suffered through worsening pain for over a year until it became almost unbearable prompting him to see a doctor in August.

“It was a really bad prognosis,” Shaheed said Saturday at the USA Masters Track and Field event at the Convention Center.

"They told me I had spinal stenosis, which is a narrowing of the spinal canal," Shaheed said. "The doctor told me, basically, I wouldn't run again."

Shaheed, who had set several world records in masters track and field, was discouraged but not quite ready to give up.

Running was off the table for the moment, but Shaheed continued to work out so that his muscles would not atrophy. He also continued his day job as a professional jazz musician.

For most of Shaheed's life, music and running have complemented each other. A trumpet player in high school, Shaheed also joined the track and field team.

"I was kind of fast," Shaheed said.

The next year of high school, Shaheed continued with his music, but gave up track and field. Over a short period of time, his trumpet playing took a noticeable turn for the worse.

"My trumpet playing was kind of lousy, so I went to my teacher and asked him what he thought was contributing to that," Shaheed said. "He told that the previous year, when I was running track, my playing got better. He said that if I started running track again, my playing would get better. That's exactly what happened."

The better Shaheed ran, the better he played the trumpet.

"When I started running really fast, my playing was really, really good," Shaheed said. "I wasn't as serious as some of the other runners, but I was beating them. That's when I realized I had a gift for running."

It was the trumpet, though, that afforded Shaheed some tremendous opportunities. His big break came in the early 1970s playing for legendary jazz orchestra leader Duke Ellington.

Not long after Ellington died in 1974, Rasheed began a 10-year stint playing first chair trumpet/cornet for jazz legend Count Basie. Following Basie's death in 1984, Rasheed hit the triple crown playing for Lionel Hampton.

During his long career, Shaheed has played with Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, Natalie Cole, Diana Ross, and Phil Collins, among others.

"I've been very fortunate," Shaheed said. "I've played with a lot of guys and some great names on the L.A. scene."

Shaheed, who turned 66 last July, continued to play the trumpet as a session musician, but with running now off the table, Shaheed had half a day to fill.

"I was working out after my diagnosis, and it was excruciatingly painful," Shaheed said. "My brother had an exercise chair that massages the spine, so I tried that out."

"I felt a little better after that first time, so I went online and found a great sale for a chair, and I bought one."

Shaheed aggressively self-treated, using the massage chair three times a day, and the results were stunning.

"After a week, I started running a bit," Shaheed said. "After a month, I was running pretty well, and after two months, I would say my pain on a 1-to-10 scale was about a three. Now, I have no pain at all."

Shaheed fast-tracked his conditioning, which resulted in a slight tweak of his hamstring. The hamstring proved a minor annoyance in Saturday's 1,500-meter run in the 65-69 age division.

Shaheed took the lead on the second turn of the opening lap, and never trailed winning in a time of 5:16.79. It's not an age group world record, but it is significant progress considering his prognosis just over half a year ago.

"I wasn't ready to give up running, and I'm glad I didn't," Shaheed said, who has not seen his doctor since his original diagnosis. "Why would I? He told me I wouldn't run again."