

Investor profits in high jump at USTA Masters

By Patrick Newell/For the Journal

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Bruce McBarnette of Sterling, Va., competes in the men's 50-59 high jump at the USA Track and Field Masters Indoor Championships on Sunday at the Convention Center. Greg Sorber/Albuquerque Journal
Bruce McBarnette's résumé is long and diverse.

A real estate investor based out of Sterling, Va., he's also a real estate agent, attorney, part-time actor with an active Screen Actors Guild card, teacher, public speaker, and coach.

Oh, and he's also a world-class masters track and field athlete.

McBarnette was at the Albuquerque Convention Center on Sunday for the final day of the USA Track and Field Masters Indoor Championships.

It took a little more effort than anticipated, but McBarnette — a 12-time world champion — emerged with his 35th USA masters title capturing the high jump to beat longtime rival Peter Hlavin in a jump-off.

McBarnette made a small adjustment that allowed him to clear 1.73 meters (5 feet, 8 inches), while Hlavin faltered on his attempt.

"Peter and I go back a long time," McBarnette said. "I like to see him jump well, and when he jumps well, it gives me even more incentive to jump well. I like to encourage him on to do the best that he can. It's all about bringing

out the best of what we have today.”

McBarnette found himself in some fierce competition as the top three finishers in his division would have easily won the 50-54 men’s division.

“I’m so pleased to be out here and hone my skills with the best jumpers in the world in my age group,” McBarnette said. “In the past, we’ve finished 1-2-3-4 in the world championships.”

McBarnette, 59, said he has never stopped competing since he graduated from Princeton University and New York University Law School. For several years he plied his trade against the world’s elite, and once he turned 30, became a fixture at masters track and field events.

He has become arguably the greatest masters high jumper in history, and each time he enters a competition, it’s an opportunity to set an example.

“As masters’ athletes, we can be role models for the world when it comes to the importance of staying fit into your later ages,” McBarnette said.

And at nearly 60 years old, McBarnette said a level of gratefulness to still compete at an elite level has outshined his desire to finish first. Sure, he wants to win, but winning isn’t a be-all-end-all.

“You don’t have that will to win so badly that you can’t encourage competition,” he said. “It’s about getting the most out of your abilities today. That’s what makes track and field such a delight.”

McBarnette drew on decades of competitive experience to get the most out of his abilities. After missing at a higher height to force the tie-breaker with Hlavin, McBarnette moved his starting position back one inch. That one inch made the difference as he cleared the winning height with ease.

“I had been taking off a little too close to the bar in my jumps at 5 foot, 8¾ inches,” McBarnette said. “I backed up a little to give myself a more room, and to try to use more speed in my approach. I was incorporating more speed as the competition went on.”

Sunday’s notebook

- Bob Lida (Wichita, Kan.), set a world record in the men’s 80-84 200-meter dash. Last year’s male athlete of the year in the 75-79 division clocked 29.84 seconds to beat his nearest competitor by three seconds.
- Neni Lewis (Queens, N.Y.) broke the women’s 55-59 world record in the weight throw with a toss of 15.22 meters (49 feet, 11 inches).
- Kathy Martin (Northport, N.Y.) set her third record – and second world record – in as many events. Martin set the new women’s 65-69 world record in the 800 meters clocking 2:44.35. Friday, Martin set the American record in the 3,000 meters, and she broke the world record in the mile on Saturday.
- Sonja Friend-Uhl (Boca Raton, Fla.) was on pace for a world record in the women’s 45-49 800 meters. On the last lap, though, Friend-Uhl said she couldn’t lift (her legs) as the Albuquerque altitude conspired against her form. “I know the record is there, I just need to get at sea level and keep working hard,” Friend-Uhl said. Friend-Uhl clocked 2 minutes, 18.69 seconds, the best time among all women’s age groups.



Sonja Friend-Uhl won the women's 45
800 meter run at the USA Track and
Field Masters Indoor Championships on
Sunday at the Convention Center.
Greg Sorber/Albuquerque Journal

- Nolan Shaheed (Pasadena, Calif.) made it 2-for-2 this weekend. The jazz great captured the 65-69 men's 800 meters, turning on the jets on the final lap to win in 2:31.59. Shaheed breezed to a victory in the mile on Saturday. "My first priority was to win the race, and my second priority was to do it with as little effort as possible," Shaheed said.