



Age no barrier for Southland athlete Anthony Doak

Where it all started

Anthony Doak, 45, is no stranger to the world of sport. Growing up in Invercargill, he practiced athletics, bowls and gymnastics at his local primary school. But it wasn't until he became an intermediate student that he first became involved in Special Olympics. In 1983, one of his teachers who was on the Special Olympics Southland committee told him about the event.

Athletics is what Anthony loves most. It is what he invests his time and energy in when he isn't at work, driving a truck for AlSCO Laundry. He works from around 3 pm until the early hours of the morning.

The difference sport makes

When he's not working, Anthony is pursuing his love of athletics. One of the things he enjoys is the physical challenge that comes with competing. He once ran a marathon in three hours and five minutes, a personal record. Anthony says he isn't fixated on being first, only in doing his best.

Competing also means you get to meet other people in the community, including athletes.

"Some people, you don't see for three or four years, but it's nice to catch up when you see them again at events," he says.

Like others who take part in Special Olympics, Anthony finds it is a place where he can be himself.

"You don't get judged," he says.

Training hard for the National Summer Games

Anthony has made a lasting impression in athletics since he first became involved.

Ahead of the Special Olympics World Summer Games 1995 in Connecticut, USA, he made the news as one of the top runners to watch. In this year's Special Olympics National Summer Games in Wellington, Anthony will be competing in long jump, the 200-metre sprint and the 400-metre dash.

During winter, he and his fellow athletes are training a few times a week at the Stadium Southland velodrome, he says. When it gets warmer, they will go back to training on the outdoor track.

His message? Give Special Olympics a go!

Anthony says there is something for everyone who is willing to take part in sport. It's just a matter of finding your place.

"Give it a try and if you don't like it try a different sport," Anthony says. "Listen to some of the people who have been involved for a while."

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