

Gloria's Adventures at the World Masters Games – Sydney 2009

Contributed by her daughter – Eddie Raphael



Gloria Collaco DeZwart Sydney World Masters 2009

Gloria Collaco DeZwart, for those of you that know her, there's only a few things that she truly loves: her family and all of those adorable grand children, she's not at all one-eyed, her garden that she tirelessly spends hours nurturing in all types of weather to then reap the rewards of fresh flowers, just picked fruit and a seasonal supply of vegies, and lastly LIFE to which she lives to the fullest.

This is a story of her most recent jaunt.....

My mum's escapades at the Sydney World Masters Games 2009.

At the tender age of 71 she took up Karate and within 2 years had achieved top 5 placements in both State and National championships for her age group. This year I suggested she compete with her Karate in the Sydney Masters Games, she competed but not in Karate! When she called to register she was given the unfortunate information that Karate was not an event at the Masters, could she try something else? Mum was asked if she could run and that was it. The gauntlet had been raised, even though she had not run since her childhood years; she started to prepare for the Masters Games. Not enough to just go and compete, she wanted to beat her PB and win. She started training which consisted of a 2K run daily around her neighbourhood, and then she joined up with a local athletics club. They couldn't believe her attitude and ambition and encouraged her to train with them at no cost so in return she cleaned the toilets and amenities. She trained along side a blind girl who gave her more inspiration to get better. "If she can do it and can't see, so can I".

Unprecedented for those that know her, she was at the athletic track at 8am for an hours training before church on Sunday mornings. She had her sights on Sydney Masters 2009 but it was going to be a costly exercise, she was trying to arrange

sponsorship to cover the cost of her transport and accommodation when Casa and Ed Rozario came to her rescue and sponsored her. She didn't know I had planned a 'support crew' of my own.

As the time got closer she began to get more excited, not that she'd tell you. She increased her training and fitness regime including her diet. You must remember she is 73 years old!!! She was grazing as all elite sportspeople do, extra vitamin tablets and protein shakes all for a go at GOLD. When you see her, ask her to show you her legs, she's very proud she's finally got some muscle and tone rather than those scrawny chicken legs she used to have.

Clock ticking, she had continued to improve her time, now she was checking the record books to see what her competition was running at, she was 3 seconds off!!!

Two weeks before the games she tore her hamstring, off to the masseurs and osteopath for some treatments. I think they also said rest but soon after she was back on the track.

It was down to the last few weeks before she was going to Sydney, she was starting to get anxious about her arrangements. She's pretty hopeless with time management and is directionally challenged in her own home town, so I let her in on a little secret...Now, I'm a good daughter and would never intentionally lie to my mum but I had to confess and let her know that I was coming to Sydney to make sure she got to the right venues at the right time and cheer her on and I was booked on the exact same flight sitting right there with her to help her through. She was very relieved and grateful, now she didn't have to worry about time and transport.

So off we went, Sydney Master's here we come, mum had her itinerary which read like this:

- Saturday, 3pm, Flight Melbourne to Sydney, arrive, settle in, free time.
- Sunday, 10am, Register attendance at Games Central, Homebush Sydney then free to check out venue.
- 3pm, Register as participant in opening ceremony.
- Monday, Participate in the heats and if successful.
- Tuesday, 2pm, Compete in Women's 70 – 74 Final.
- Wed – Sat, Attend games as a spectator.
- Sunday, leave Sydney for Brisbane to spend some time with family before returning home to Melbourne.

That was the itinerary and the plan, but not all plans get to fruition. Mum's time at the games went like this:

- Saturday, Flight Melb to Syd—unchanged.
- Sunday, 10am, Register at games, ushered off to Athletics area to register for race today, 3.10pm Final only.
- No heats, as some athletes had not turned up, and therefore no elimination heats were required. One race with 12 runners competing.

11am–2pm, Relax and watch the other competitions including running, long jump, pole vault, shot put, javelin etc.

2pm, Preparation and warm up so off to the practice ground, lots of people warming up, stretching and jogging. Off there with mum I realised how fit and agile she is, she was doing moves I could only dream of.

Then it happened, practice starts and PAIN written all over her face, something's wrong, she tried again and discretely limped back to where I was with her bag, she then applied her cream and began rubbing her left thigh, she didn't stretch enough! She showed, some might say stupidity but in my eyes tenacity and courage she wasn't letting this stop her.

3pm, Marshalling, this is where I left her to the officials. I could do no more, she was in the right place at the right time, now it was all up to her and the marshals to make sure she got to the starting line. I went back to the grand stand and met up with Ed, Sunti and David to cheer her on.

3.10pm, First was the line up, there were 12 70-74 year old's. Mum's name was up in lights on the scoreboard. The starters' gun fired all 12 athletes were off, there was a definite leading pack, mum was in the middle then about half way through I saw that grimace again. I then saw guts and determination as she continued through the pain barrier to claim her own victory of finishing her race. As we were seated at the finishing line I saw again the pain she was suffering as she finally put her foot over the finish line and was swiftly marshalled away. She finished 9th with a time of 20.78, the winner's time was 16.90.

No she didn't win, no she didn't get her PB, but she's still a winner to me.

3.20pm, As I mentioned before she is directionally challenged so when she didn't return to us, I went looking for her and found her in First Aid having ice applied to her thigh. "I'm OK, I'm fine, I thought I'd be nervous, I wasn't nervous" came blubbling out when she greeted me limping, barely able to put weight on her leg. We hobbled to the stands where we realised how much pain she was in and felt the massive lump on her thigh. We said our congrats, took more photo's presented her with her banner and started to discuss plans. "I want to go to the Opening ceremony" said the woman who could barely walk. We shimmied down the stairs and thought we'd be better off getting a wheel chair. That was easier said than done....Master's Games with competitors up to 101 years old and limited access to wheel chairs? Go figure.

4.00 pm, We had a very helpful first aid attendant come pass to help and advise that mum should see a doctor and also there was no first aid support after 5pm. This was then arranged not before a quick check up by paramedics who confirmed she should get an ultrasound and be checked out at hospital. A visit to hospital was arranged as we discovered alternative modes of transport: wheel chairs, stretchers and an ambulance all for mum who by this stage was visible struggling. Unfortunately radiology does not operate on Sunday afternoons and we were none the wiser about her leg.

6.30pm, Mum said she was fine and had her heart set on being part of the Opening Ceremony, it was still early enough and we wouldn't have missed much. So onto crutches and a taxi back to the games venue to watch the opening ceremony.

10pm, From there it was a train and taxi home and a good nights rest.

Monday, Mum woke up stating she was fine, look my leg's OK. Hhmmmmm. Our plan had gone out the window yesterday so what now??? Now we had done all we set out to do in four days in one, plus more. As mum is not one to sit idle as she has a huge zest for life and now just wanted to explore Sydney, we had free days to sight see, great planning. Off on the trains, buses and ferries to see Sydney in the tourist

fashion. Mum did cut her stay short as she finally confessed to being in a bit uncomfortable and didn't want to be in a strange city on her own.

Thank you to the Casa for their support and making arrangements for her.

Since her time in Sydney mum has been back to the doctors and had an ultrasound on her leg, she actually tore her muscle and is now recovering and resting, not for long knowing her.

My mum, Gloria Collaco DeZwart, with her love of life she puts in more than 100% each and every day no matter what she is doing, from spending time with the family, her garden, or living life itself to the full as in this one of many examples of her conviction in keeping herself healthy, active and young at heart.

Hey mum you put some of us to shame, what's next?????