

Tracy in no big hurry to slow hectic pace

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Lynn Tracy has no intention of slowing down.

Whether it's her race walking or her dog training business, it's full speed ahead for the 56-year-old Racinean.

The 18-year veteran of competitive race walking recently learned she was named the 2008 Outstanding Female Race Walker of the Year in the 55-59 age group by USA Track & Field (USATF).



Lynn Tracy, right, pulls away from Mary Snyder of Idaho at the 2008 USATF National Masters Outdoor 10k race in Spokane, WA, in August. Tracy, 56, won her age group with a time of 58:52 and was the third female finisher overall in the race.

It's the third such honor for Tracy, who won the award in 2004 and '05 in the women's 50-54 age group.

The latest award comes after a season in which Tracy won her age group in all 12 races in which she competed, including the USATF National 10K Championships in Albany, N.Y., the USATF National Masters Outdoor Championships in Spokane, Wash., and the USATF National 5K Championships in Kingsport, Tenn.

"It is such a part of me, I can't imagine my life without it ... nor do I want to," Tracy says of her race walking. "The records and recognition that I've received for my race walking accomplishments are the frosting on the cake for me. The main reason for my athletic endeavors is to be as fit and healthy as I possibly can be — feeling fit and strong is empowering. I'm not a spring chicken anymore and being in top physical condition helps me cope with things like cancer, injuries, illness and everyday stresses much better."

Tracy knows all too well about coping with adversity, having battled breast cancer and chronic ulcer disease. But she's come back stronger and more determined from each challenge in her life in much the same way she approaches her race walking.

"When I started race walking, I never dreamed I'd be setting records," said Tracy, who holds numerous state and national records, including the American 5K record in the women's 55-59 age group. "I'm a very determined person. I've always set goals for myself. I know what times I want to do at any given race and work very hard to achieve them."

One of Tracy’s biggest goals is to qualify for the World Masters Athletics Championships next July in Lahti, Finland. The Worlds are held every two years, but Tracy couldn’t afford to go in 2007, when the meet was held in Italy.

“Judging from the results, I could place very well (at the meet) if I train consistently and stay injury-free,” Tracy said. “I’d love to get some local sponsors to help get my butt there.”

But first things first for the proprietor of Waggin Tails Dog Training, a professional dog training company that provides private in-home training for dogs and their owners.

A long-time member of the Parkside Athletic Club, Tracy is preparing for the USATF Wisconsin Indoor Championships at Carthage College in January and the USATF National Masters Indoor Championships in Landover, Md., in March.

Bill Baxter, a fellow member of the PAC, has no doubt Tracy will achieve her goals. In October 2007, Baxter nominated Tracy to be included in the “Faces in the Crowd” weekly feature in Sports Illustrated and he continues to be one of Tracy’s biggest supporters.

Baxter said the keys to Tracy’s success are that she works with one of race walking’s top coaches in Mike De Witt, that she’s a smart competitor and is able to get a quick feel for the field in a race and that she’s perfected the race walk gait.

“This straight-leg requirement results in the hip-wiggling gait of a race walker,” Baxter said. “To many, the race walk stride looks weird, even funny, but Lynn is so smooth, coordinated and fast, it’s a pleasure to watch her in action.”

Besides staying in top physical condition and maintaining her competitive edge, Tracy’s main motivation for training is her three dogs — Sophie, an 8-year-old German Shepherd mix; Kelly Girl, a 7-year-old Border Collie-Pit bull mix and Seamus, a 15-month-old Boxer.

“They need the physical exercise as much as I do,” Tracy said. “All three of them are trained to accompany me and having my best buds (buddies) as my training partners every time I walk out the door is great motivation. They’re always rarin’ to go.”

<p>THE TRACY FILE: Lynn Tracy, 56, of Racine, recently was honored by USA Track & Field as the 2008 Outstanding Female Race Walker of the Year in the 55-59 age group. It’s the third such honor for Tracy.</p>	<p>BEYOND THE TRACK: Tracy is the proprietor of Waggin Tails Dog Training, a professional dog training company that provides private in-home training for dogs and their owners. The majority of Tracy’s clients are in the Gold Coast area of northeastern Illinois, from Lake Forest to Wilmette. Among her clients has been Chicago Bears’ cornerback Charles Tillman, and the producer of the Tony-award winning musical “Spamalot.”</p>
<p>2008 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS: Tracy competed in and won her age group in 12 races at the local, regional and national levels. She won her age group and was the 10th female overall in the USATF National 10K Championships in Albany, NY, in May with a time of 59:04. She won her age group and was the first female overall in the 5K race (28:35) and won her age group and was the third female overall in the 10K race (58:52) at the USATF National Masters Outdoor Championships in Spokane, WA, in August. She won her age group and was the third female overall in the USATF National 5K Championships at Kingsport, TN, in October (28:09) and she won her age group and was the second female overall in the USATF North Region 5K in Chicago, IL, in September (28:33).</p>	<p>WHERE IT STARTED: Tracy is a member of the Parkside Athletic Club. The 30-40-member club is comprised of race walking enthusiasts from southeast Wisconsin ranging in age from 30 to 77 and is headed by Parkside track & field and cross country coach Mike De Witt. The PAC members have weekly workouts and train year-round. “I wouldn’t be as successful at this sport were it not for my coach, Mike De Witt, and the camaraderie of my Parkside Athletic Club pals,” Tracy said.</p>

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