

## Mary Harada Named USA Track & Field - New England Athlete of the Month for March



Photo: Larry Lebow

BOSTON – **Mary Harada**, age 70 of West Newbury, MA, who runs for the Liberty Athletic Club, has been named USA Track & Field New England’s Athlete of the Month for March 2006. Competing in the W70-74 division at the World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships held in Linz, Austria, March 15-20, Harada won bronze medals in the 800m and 3000m and a silver medal in the 1500m, clocking 6:58.09. Less than a week later, at the USA Masters Indoor Track & Field Championships held at the Reggie Lewis Center in Boston, Harada scored double wins in the W70 800m and mile. Her victory in the mile on March 24 with a time of 7:12.59 broke the W70 age-group world record by almost seven seconds.

Harada, a retired college professor, has been running since 1968. Initially a road racer and marathoner, over time she gravitated to racing middle distances on the track. She credited Liberty AC coach, Lesley Lehane, with convincing her to focus her training on the mile this past winter and tailoring her workouts so that she could go after the record.

Asked about her outlook as a masters competitor, Harada observed, “As you age you not only don’t get any faster, but you lose ground”. She noted that she no longer runs “junk miles”. “I’ve tried to maintain what speed I have with higher quality and more specifically focused training,” she stated.

In her record-breaking mile, Harada said that she went out too fast, completing the first 200-meter lap at a pace that projected to a 6:15-6:20 mile. Although she settled down after that, given her early burst of speed, she knew that the second half of the race would be challenging. Regarding her ability to maintain a record pace, Harada said, “Quite frankly, it’s 90% mental. If you don’t have a positive attitude, you won’t stay with it when it starts to hurt”.

Also excelling in March was Roger Pierce, age 61 of Essex, MA, a two-time winner of USATF-New England’s Athlete of the Month award (June 2005 and September 2005). At the world championships in Linz, Austria, Pierce won a silver medal in the M60 400m, then added a gold medal in the M60 4 X 200 relay, as the US team set a world age-group record. He was also 4th in the 60m and 200m. At the national indoor championships, he won the 400m and placed a close 2nd to masters hall-of-famer, Stan Whitley of California in both the 60m and 200m.

**Athlete of the Month** is a program for USATF-New England and is designed to recognize outstanding performers at all levels of the sport. USATF-NE will name a new honoree each month and feature the athlete on the USATF-NE website.

*USATF-NE provides opportunities for athletes of all ages to pursue excellence in running, race walking, and track and field, from grassroots to the elite level.*

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