

James Morton Named USATF – New England Athlete of the Month



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BOSTON – **James Morton**, age 52, of Springfield, MA, who competes for the Mass Velocity Track Club, has been named USA Track & Field – New England’s Athlete of the Month for March 2007. At the U.S. Indoor Masters Track & Field Championships held at the Reggie Lewis Track & Athletic Center in Boston, Morton won medals in the 400m, 800m, and 4 x 400m relay.

On March 24, he competed in the M50 400 and placed 3rd in 54.92, three meters behind the winner, Ben James of Rochester, N.Y. Despite the bronze medal, Morton was disappointed with the race, feeling that he had made a tactical error by not coming off the last turn high enough to give him more speed and clear running room. The next day, as he prepared for the 800, he was determined “to run with a vengeance.” However, he described his “mantra” for the race as “run fast, run free,” and used this phrase to greet his fellow racers at the starting line.

At the gun, Morton ran both fast and free, moving quickly into the lead and breaking away from the field within the first 200-meter lap. Running with a smooth, powerful stride, Morton continued to pull away from the field on each lap as he ran to a 30 meter victory and a dazzling time of 2:04.67 – more than five seconds ahead of the next finisher. Afterwards, Morton said that he was so focused on running well and scoring points

for his team that he was not aware that he had opened a large lead. Morton added a second gold medal soon afterwards as he anchored the Mass Velocity M50 4 x 400 relay to victory.

Adding an extra dimension to his success on the track is the fact that Morton underwent surgery in 2005, in order to donate 2/3 of his liver to his best friend who needed a transplant in order to live. Morton had begun masters track competition the previous year at age 49. He didn’t know what effect the surgery would have on his athletic performance, but thought it likely he would no longer be able to compete. However, over the last year as he resumed training, he regained strength and form and clearly has arrived as a force in masters track & field.

Among many superb performances at the U.S. Masters Indoor Champs, those of **Bob Matteson** (USATF-New England Athlete of the Month for August 2006) also stood out. The 90-year old from Bennington, VT, representing Mass Velocity, competed in the 60, 200, 400, 800, and 3000. He lost the 60 by .02 seconds but won the other four events, beating American age-group indoor records by six seconds in the 200 (42.10), nine seconds in the 400 (1:48.71), and setting a world record in the 800, where his 4:50.81 bettered the old mark by eleven seconds.

Athlete of the Month
is a USATF- New England
program 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.