

CHAPTER 47

Muir athletes excel in the 1970s and 1980s

Athletes followed up the achievements of the nineteen-sixties in great style. In 1971 alone, twelve new school records were set at the Inter-house Championships. Names that stood out at inter-schools and provincial level were A. Hübsch (100 metres Hurdles U/17) and C. Harris (3000 metres U/19). John Clark won the U/19 400 metres at the 1973 EP Inter-Schools meeting in a record time of 51.7 seconds. He improved on this at the opening of the new tartan track in Port Elizabeth in 1974 with a new schools' open record of 50.7 seconds. 1976 Athletics captain Henry Slater set a fine example during the season in which Muir athletes represented their school at seven meetings. At the EP Schools meeting he gained first positions in both the Triple Jump and Long Jump and second position in the Triple Jump at the EP and Border Schools Meeting.

At the same meeting, future champion Russel Sheppard came second in the 3000 metres. Wayne Marshall set a new Triple Jump record at the Uitenhage and Despatch Schools Meeting, where he also won the High Jump. In the 1977 season that followed, he repeated his victory in the High Jump at the same meeting, slipping down one position in the EP Schools meeting. Russel Sheppard dominated the 3000 metres races at most inter-schools competitions in 1977, including the EP Schools event.

Muir continued to participate in at least six inter-schools meetings per year. New to Muir in 1978 was the triangular meeting between Grey, Pearson and Muir, where Muir came second to Grey. Russel Sheppard was the star athlete in 1978, representing EP on a regular basis and setting a new EP and South African record in the 2000 metres Steeplechase. His 1500 and 3000 metre victories at the Uitenhage and Despatch, EP Schools and EP and Border Schools competitions were added to by his first position in the 800 metre race at the Uitenhage-East London-Border Platteland Schools meeting. Muir was awarded the cup for middle distances at this meeting as a result of Sheppard's performance. Muir still had a presence in the shorter races in 1978, thanks partly to Mark Preddy's victory in the 200 metres at the Uitenhage-Despatch Meeting.

Muir's EP representative in 1982, Tyrone Bayman, excelled in the U/17 javelin event in a number of competitions. He gained a place on the podium in an inter-provincial meeting and won the event at the Holiday Inn Top Ten meeting. Owing to a clash of priorities when it came to talented athletes choosing a major summer sport in preference to athletics, it was decided in 1983 to move the Inter-House Championships to the first term. With the ever-increasing popularity of water polo at Muir (and its sometimes spectacular success), athletics came under more and more pressure as many boys opted for the aquatic summer sport. As pupil enrolment at Muir Senior remained around the 350 mark, boys were spread rather thinly across the various sporting codes. The once-per-year inter-house competitions continued to draw the best athletes, but very few boys took part in athletics beyond this level. School records continued to tumble at the inter-house meetings; Dugmore House dominated this event in an almost uncanny run of victories over the years.

In 1984 one surprising achievement at the Hirsch Shield meeting was Rowan Pienaar's victory in the U/16 High Jump. The fact that he accomplished this without any training underlined the status of athletics as a 'minor' sport in these times. No victories at the Hirsch

Shield were recorded in 1986, although Muir was placed 8th overall, but Brent Werth won his EP Colours for the 3000 metres U/17 and Wayne Venter gained his in the long jump U/17. At the Muir Inter-House Championships Venter broke both the school and EP records in the long jump with a leap of 6.64 metres. Werth and Venter continued their very good form in 1987, now in the U/19 division. Both represented Eastern Province against Border and South Western Districts (1500 and 3000 metres, and long jump respectively). A most promising newcomer from Muir Primary, Glen Elferink, made the EP U/14 100m relay team.

The Hirsch Shield athletes improved their overall position to 7th in 1987. 'Conflicting commitments prevented us from entering a team in the Hirsch Shield competition this year,' it was reported in 1988. Another factor that may have played a part in this decision was that the weight of athletic talent now resided in the junior ranks. This was seen in the fact that Glen Elferink and Mark Wanless were chosen to represent EP in the U/15 division against Natal and Border teams and again against South Western Districts and Border. V Walker represented EP in the latter event at U/19 level.

Promising indicators of performances to come at the 1989 EP Championships and Hirsch Shield meetings were laid down at the Inter-House Championships early in the year. Elferink, still in Grade 10, broke some old records in the 200m and 100m U/17 (the latter that of Roger Gilson set 20 years before). M. Wanless broke records in the triple jump, high jump and 400m U/17. G. Wilmot broke the U/17 javelin record, S. Irving set a new time in the U/17 1500 m, while P. Kosaber and G. Kunneke did likewise in the U/15 and U/14 1500m respectively. All these achievements indicated that athletics was enjoying a rosy outlook for the immediate future.



Roger Gilson congratulates Glen Elferink on breaking his 20 year-old U/17 100m record



Mark Wanless wins the 400m at the Uitenhage-Despatch athletics competition in 1989



Glen Elferink leaves the field behind in the Uitenhage-Despatch sprint events in 1989

At the EP Championships Elferink was 1st in the 100m and 200m, Wanless 2nd in the 100m and high jump while Graeme Roberts came 2nd in the 400m. The Muir relay team of Elferink, Wanless, Roberts and Maniatis came first in a time 44.3 seconds. At the Hirsch Shield competition in 1989 Elferink won the 100m, 200m and long jump while Wanless broke the 18-year-old triple jump record. The relay team of Wanless, Claassen, Davidge and Elferink broke the 4 x 100m relay record, winning in a time of 44.5 seconds. The U/16 team won the Howard Kirkby Cup for sprint events and were placed third overall in that age group. Finally, a sweet victory for the Muir team was gained at the SA Transport Services Top Ten Meeting in 1989.