



## FIRST LOOK

BY LYNN CAMERON AND BETH RIVERS

I TURN 103 IN AUGUST, IT SHOULD BE A MONDAY SO I'LL JUST TRAIN

# GOLDEN OLDIES

**THE WORLD'S OLDEST COMPETING ATHLETE DOESN'T LOOK TO BE SLOWING DOWN ANY TIME SOON. A NEW DOCUMENTARY SHARES HER FEATS**

MONEY, celebrity or social connections won't get you membership into one of the world's most exclusive clubs – the only way to gain entry is by being very, very old.

And, with centenarians representing the fastest growing demographic both here in Australia and around the world, membership is certainly booming, as ABC doco *The 100+ Club* reveals.

Meet 102-year-old Brisbane-based Ruth Frith, who is the world's oldest competing athlete and, if that's not impressive enough, she's practically blind.

*The 100+ Club* follows her quest to break her own records in events at the 2010 Australian Masters Athletics Championships in Perth.

"There are no 90s-plus competing now so when you go out you've only got yourself," Ruth says.

"You just go out and do it and hope it's going to be better than the one

you did the last time."

Ruth says she took up Masters Athletics when she was 74, after being a spectator to her former-Olympian daughter Helen Searle's efforts.

"(I didn't want) to go somewhere and just sit. If you love something you want to be out there doing it," she says.

Ruth, who represented NSW in hockey in her youth, has certainly proved her love for athletics.

Her 100th birthday fell on a Saturday, which was competition day.

"That was very special," she says.

"I'm not a party girl. I didn't want a 100th. To me, 100 is a special thing and it's yours, it's not people who you don't know coming to a party – it's your day and you do what you feel."

A regular week for Ruth involves weights training at home on Monday and Tuesday, track training Wednesday and Thursday and resting on Fri-

day before Saturday competitions in the morning.

"I turn 103 in August, it should be a Monday so I'll just train," Ruth says.

Although, due to recent heart problems, Ruth had to have a pacemaker put in but hopes to be back in action for the 2013 Masters in Victoria.

"I'm back to exercising now and will start training in September/October,"

she says. "I'm going to keep going. I'll be there at the next Masters."

Ruth jokes she blames her father for the family's athletic passion.

"In those days there were no clubs, you were just an athlete and ran for money," she says.

"It's more or less in your blood."

However, Ruth admitted it was strange that not one of her 11 great-grandchildren were currently athletically minded.

**THE 100+ CLUB**  
SUN, 6.30PM, ABC1

