

Talk about a rapid recovery

■ PELHAM MAN, 70, SETS WEIGHT TOSS RECORDS A YEAR AFTER TRIPLE BYPASS

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PELHAM

Just over a year ago David Morris, a lifelong athlete, noticed a bit of discomfort while exercising.

The 69-year-old mentioned it to his doctor.

Morris hadn't had an angiogram for five years,

Tests at Hamilton General found three blockages of 100 per cent, 80 per cent and 60 per cent in his heart.

A triple bypass operation followed. "They took grafts from here and here," he said pointing to scars on his legs during an interview.

Over the next few months Morris underwent cardiac rehabilitation including a program run at the YMCA. Gradually, he returned to his Canadian Masters track and field training.

Last weekend, the Fonthill resident topped off his comeback at the Canadian Masters Track and Field Championships in Regina, where he won a gold medal in weight pentathlon – hammer throw, shot put, discus, javelin and weight throw – and five silver medals in five individual competitions.

The now 70-year-old was competing in the 70- to 74-age division.

In winning the gold, Morris set a record with 3,561 points breaking those he had set over the past couple of months in previous meets.

"I'm sure my doctors and trainers will be surprised by these results," he said about the multi-medal performance.

Not that they are unaware of what

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he was doing. The 28-year veteran of the masters athletic program made sure he consulted his family and heart doctors before returning to competition.

"You have to work with your physician and cardiologist. You can't be foolish about it. If you have any doubt, consult your doctor," he said about pursuing athletic programs.

The masters sports program encourages a lifelong participation in training.

"You want to get as many involved as possible," he said.

The Regina meet was called Master It 2008.

Competitive divisions are set in five-year age levels.

"I started in the 40 to 44 track division."



STAFF PHOTO/Wayne Campbell

David Morris, 70, of Fonthill shows off the gold medal he won in the weight pentathlon at the Canadian Masters Track and Field Championships earlier this month in Regina.

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All-season athlete once played goal against Tony O

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In his youth, Morris was an all-seasons athlete in his hometown of Sudbury, where he played football, basketball, fastball, hockey and ran track.

He was invited to the Hamilton Tiger-Cat training camp in the 1960s and played goal in a championship hockey game against future Chicago Blackhawks star goalie Tony Esposito from Sault Ste Marie.

"We lost 3-2, but I can say I was on the same ice."

Like most athletes, Morris eased off in his 30s.

He said he was drawn into the masters program when he was watching a track meet. On the field, he saw a competitor he used to run against.

After a short talk with him he realized he could get back into it. He has been competing ever since.

But it wasn't without adjustments. Knee and cartilage operations forced him to give up running after consulting his doctors.

"I asked them if I could run or jog," he said.

They said "no."

"I asked them if I could jump."

They said "no."

"So I asked them if I could throw."

They said "OK."

Morris has been retired from teaching high school electricity in St. Catharines for 18 years. He was originally an electrician in the Inco nickel mine in Sudbury.

His gold medal win in the weight pentathlon in Regina came down to a close battle with Emil Muller from Montreal. They both broke the existing total points record that Morris held. Morris edged ahead in his final throws.

Morris won his silver medals by finishing second on Saturday and Sunday individual contests in hammer throw, shot put, discus, javelin and weight throw.

"I could win on total points, but there were good individual competitors," he said in pointing out that Muller won three of the golds.

The master program is big, said Morris.

"If you had the time and money, you could compete 52 weeks of the year."