NSA spoke to one of the most innovative coaches in middle and long distances: Arthur Lydiard of New Zealand, who guided Peter Snell, Murray Halberg, Barry Magee, Jeff Julian, Bill Baillie, John Davies and Dick Tayler to their greatest victories.

Lydiard worked in New Zealand as Olympic Coach in 1964, and was Danish Olympic Coach in 1972 and one of the 1974 Commonwealth Games Athletic Coaches. Additionally he was National Coach for Venezuela in 1970 and '72, Finland 1967-69 and Mexico in 1965.

He is now 83 years old.

NSA | When and how did you become involved in athletics?
In 1932, I was a rugby player and overweight, working at a New Zealand shoe factory. I decided to change my life when I realised that rugby had done nothing to reduce my overweight. I was discouraged when I watched the runners in my region. They run very fast until they collapsed. Then I tried to develop my own endurance training schedule by taxing my own body. By applying long slow runs I could reduce my overweight and became kind of addicted to running.

NSA | What have been the most thrilling moments in your career as a coach?
Definitely the Olympic Games 1960 in Rome, when three of my neighborhood kids Peter Snell, Murray Halberg and Barry Magee - won distance running medals.

NSA | What is your profession today?
Today I’m retired, but I’m still advising interested athletes and sportsmen all over the world in training, equipment and nutrition.

NSA | Do you have a family? Do you encourage your family to practice athletics?
Yes I have a wife and she is a good marathon runner.

NSA | What are your hobbies and interests?
When I’m at home I used to gardening because I like nature.

NSA | What sport are you actually practicing?
Some years ago I had knee surgery on both knees, so it is difficult for me to practice, but I used to walk. My actual favourite ac-
tivity is Nordic Walking, which is walking with cross-country skiing sticks.

NSA Are you still involved in athletics somehow or do you follow international athletics?

Yes, I follow international athletics always.

NSA How do you judge the actual situation of international athletics?

The well-conditioned people succeed. The African Nations or Mexico are successful because they have a different lifestyle. To run is a natural activity for them. In the so-called developed countries the kids are used to watch television or play computer games. To catch up with the successful nations we have to develop early and naturally our kids' ability to run.

NSA What advice would you give to young athletes (and their parents) if they wanted to join athletics training?

Run far and not fast. Children have a good maximal oxygen uptake capacity, in comparison to adults, which enables them for long runs. Coaches should avoid any anaerobic-lactic work with their young athletes. The parents should reduce the expectations on the development their children's.