For Simmons, proof of age required

The running notebook, which features area athletes and events, appears Wednesdays during the summer.

By JIM CNOCKAERT
NEWS SPORTS REPORTER

Kenneth "Red" Simmons had more trouble convincing Michigan Senior Olympics organizers of his age than he later did winning five gold medals.

Simmons, 81, a professor emeritus and former track coach at the University of Michigan, won the javelin, long jump, high jump, shot put and discus in the men's 75-79 age group last weekend at Post Field in Battle Creek.

But not before he produced proof of his age.

"I'm four months short of being 82, but my hair has never changed color," Simmons said with a chuckle. "People see that and can't believe I'm as old as I am."

Simmons competed against eight others in his age group. His winning distances were: 99-8 in the javelin, 13-9 in the long jump, 4-2 in the high jump, 38-2 in the shot put and 92-0 in the discus.

"I hadn't practiced any of those events until I got there," he said. "But it's like riding a bicycle. You know how it should be done."

Simmons, a former multi-sport competitor in the mid-1920s at Redford High School, came to U-M in 1959 as a physical education instructor and assistant men's track coach. He retired in 1976, but came back a year later to form the women's track team, which he coached until 1982.

Hair isn't the only thing that keeps him looking like a younger man. He works out in the weight room every day, doing light repetitions to maintain his flexibility and tone. He does plenty of stretching, and then either walks or jogs.

"You always think you're better than you are, but Father Time gets to everybody," he said.

"You don't have to be too good to win medals at my age, but I do know I'm in better shape than most fellows my age."

MORE SENIORS: Jack Hippel of South Lyon won three gold medals in the men's 65-69 division at the Michigan Senior Olympics.

He won the 100-meter dash (14.04 seconds), the 200 (30.07) and 400 (1:11.0). David Rocha, 66, of Ypsilanti, finished second to Hippel in all three events.

Hipple, 67, also earned ribbons in softball hit and throw, and basketball free throws.

FAIR RUN: Belleville's Jeff Pepper couldn't quite catch three pace horses, but he did win the second annual Wayne County Fair Run last weekend.

Pepper's time for the 4-mile run was 21:30. Flint's Lisa Veneziano was the top woman finisher in 25:11.

Members of the Wayne County Sheriff's Mounted Unit led the runners around the flat loop course for the second straight year. And, as happened a year ago, the horses barely beat the lead runners.

Canton's Betty Cespolo was the women's winner in the 4-mile walk (45:52), and Belleville's Judy Ward was second (49:28). Wayne Garnatz of Romulus won the walk (41:40).

BEACH BIATHLON: Ann Arbor's Kurt Gardner crushed the course record en route to winning the fourth annual Metro Beach Biathlon in Mount Clemens.

Gardner, 18, was clocked at 27:46 for the 1K swim and 5K run. The old record was 30:15.

Two other Ann Arbor competitor placed in their age groups. Mike Highfield was second (31:09) in the men's 40-44 division. Cathy Simpson was third (45:44) in the women's 35-39 class.

TRY ROLLERBLADES: A Rollerblade demonstration van will be at the Gallup Park pavilion Wednesday, Aug. 21 from 4-8 p.m. to provide free test rides. A technical representative will be available to answer questions. For more information, call 769-5016.

Submit items to Jim Cnockaert by calling 994-6816 or by writing The Ann Arbor News, P.O. Box 1147, 48106-1147.