



MASTERS ATHLETICS IN THE UK

Many people find they come to running later in life or resume running after a break from running as a child/young adult due to family/work commitments, joining the few who have competed all their lives, and often find they would like to compete in road races against other athletes of a similar age. The same occurs in all the athletics disciplines – track & field events (outdoors and indoor), race walking, cross country and trail running. Since 1931, when the Veterans Athletics Club was established, this has been possible not just as an afterthought in senior athletics competitions, but in dedicated masters athletics events.

To see what this means to one such masters athlete click [here](#) to watch the video he made.

The British Masters Athletics Federation was set up with the agreement of UK Athletics to administer the sport in the UK. The BMAF promotes, organises, and regulates masters athletics and it has three semi-autonomous regional associations, covering Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and eight area clubs in England, covering London, South, South West, East, Midlands, North, North East and Isle of Man.

The cost of area club membership varies, but is generally around £20 p.a. Area club members are then automatically members of the BMAF without further payment and are eligible to compete in area, inter area, national and international championships. The individual championships are open to everyone of the right age; there are no qualifying standards required to enter, even at international level.

Most masters athletes are members of a senior club as well and these clubs can help their members by entering teams in the British Masters Athletics road championships, road and cross-country relays and the county masters track and field leagues, where they exist.

World athletics rules define masters athletics as starting at age 35 for both men and women. Competition is in five-year age groups, i.e. 35-39, 40-44, etc. up to 100+, because of the relative decline in performance that comes as one gets older. BMAF competitions adhere to IAAF/UKA rules, with the exceptions permitted by World Masters Athletics, the organisation designated by the IAAF to conduct the sport worldwide. In addition to the 5-year age bands, the rules allow for shorter hurdles races, with lower hurdle heights, reduced weights of throwing equipment and one additional instrument the “Heavy Hammer”, which enables throws pentathlon competitions to take place.

British teams are very successful in international championships, usually finishing in the top three. In 2016 in the World Masters Track and Field Championships in Perth, Australia, the team was third in the medals table and in 2017 in the World Masters Indoor Track and Field Championships in South Korea and the European Masters Outdoor Track and Field Championship Denmark, they were second on both occasions.

Many of those competing are European and world record holders in their events for their age group and the levels they achieve are obliging the WMA to make regular revisions to the aged-grading tables used in parkruns and other competitions, which allow everyone to judge their own performance, independent of their age.

The BMAF and the regional associations are also supported by the home country athletics federations to a limited extent wherever the competition is based on selection - for instance the annual track & field inter-area challenge events and the British and Irish Cross Country International. England Athletics has recently started to promote its own England masters age-group competitions in the marathon and the 10km. At the

Chester Marathon this year, there were several hundred runners there who had qualified to compete for England and many of them were also competing in the BMAF marathon championships.

Athletics governing bodies throughout the world are now beginning to appreciate the need to encourage masters athletics, because of the financial opportunities this part of the sport could open up, At several recent IAAF championships, they included demonstration masters events, which is likely to be the start of more international representative competition.

The 2018 calendar has a full range of area, inter area and some 25 national fixtures and three international events, all in Spain: the European Indoor Track and Field Championships in Madrid in March, the European Non-Stadia Championships in Alicante in May and the World Track and Field Championships in Malaga in September.

The following are the major benefits of joining a masters athletics club and/or entering masters athletics competitions:

1. Opportunities to compete in area, inter area, national and international championships against people of the same age
2. BMAF and area club magazines covering reports, interesting articles, details of fixtures and results
3. Option to subscribe to Athletics Weekly magazine at rate of £7.49 per month (by direct debit)
4. Improved health by continuing to compete without regard to age

For more information visit the BMAF website bmaf.org.uk which also provides links to the area club websites.

Peter Kennedy

BMAF IT Manager/VAC Membership Secretary



2014 Cross Country International, Nottingham



2017 BMAF Road Relays, Birmingham



2017 BMAF Half Marathon Start, Northampton



Steve Peters, world's best M60 sprinter at aged 64 (3 gold medals in 100m, 200m, 400m in Denmark 2017)



Angela Copson, world's best W70 middle-distance runner (6 gold medals from 800m to HM in Denmark 2017)



2016 EMA Indoor T&F Championships, Italy