

WORLD MASTERS ATHLETICS

The international governing body for mature-age athletes is the World Masters Athletics – WMA (www.world-masters-athletics.org) .

Any country, subject to meeting established criteria, may become affiliated to WMA. Administration of WMA is the responsibility of a Council consisting of its President, Vice Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer, delegates from regions, a Women’s representative, and an IAAF representative. The council is elected at a General Assembly of Affiliates, held every two years in conjunction with the WMA Stadia Championships. These have previously been held in odd-numbered years but from 2016 will be held in even-numbered years.

Strength

WMA today is a strong organisation with considerable and increasing responsibilities. The costs of running such an organisation are high, and are basically funded by levies on competitors at WMA Championships. There are also six regional bodies – North America, South America, Asia, Europe, Africa and Oceania.

WMA has a close relationship with the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), the controlling body for world athletics (www.iaaf.org). One member of the IAAF Council specifically representing masters athletics interests also sits on the WMA Council, and the IAAF recently recognised that WMA has jurisdiction for athletes over 35 years of age.

History

Older athletes had been continuing to compete in open athletics over the years with some notable successes, but it was not until 1972 that positive moves began towards what was to become the very large Masters Athletic movement we know today.

In 1968, road running became the first international veteran organisation when IGAL was formed. This body held regular international marathon and road races until it was eventually absorbed into WAVA (World Association for Veteran Athletes, the former name of WMA), with the first WAVA Road Championships being held in Birmingham, England in 1992.

New groups

Groups of Masters athletes were gradually forming new associations. Following the 1972 Olympics at Munich, groups of athletes from the USA, Canada and Australia took part in the first truly international veteran track and field meeting at Crystal Palace, London and later visited other European countries.

Their enthusiasm led to the first World Veteran Athletic Championships being held in Toronto, Canada in August 1975, organised by the Canadian Masters Association. At that meeting a steering committee was formed to create a formal world association, and WAVA was officially formed at the second Championships at Gothenburg, Sweden in 1977.

WAVA/WMA Championships for both stadia and non-stadia events have been held every two years since their inception.

Track & Field Championships have been held in the Oceania Region in 1981 (Christchurch, New Zealand), 1987 (Melbourne, Australia), and 2001, (Brisbane, Australia). The IGAL road championships were held in Palmerston North, New Zealand in December 1980. Auckland in New Zealand held the WMA Non-Stadia – i.e. cross country and walks - Championships in April 2004.

New Name

The name change to World Masters Athletics occurred at the General Assembly in Brisbane in 2001. In 2005 the IAAF recognised WMA as the controlling body for male (and female) athletes aged 35 years and above.