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MARCH / APRIL 2022

WELLINGTON MASTERS ATHLETICS INC NEWSLETTER | VOLUME 21 – ISSUE 1

Athletes in action *Wellington Champs / Capital Classics*



Athlete profile: Roger Robinson
– Why I still love racing at age 82

See article on pages 10–11
Photo Roger's Facebook page

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Liz Bentley, on her way to breaking longstanding Wellington Masters W60 800m record in a new time of 2.54.67.
Capital Classics, Wellington | Photo Sharon Wray

President's report *March/April 2022*

Wellington had been due to host Nationals this last quarter, something we eventually had to postpone. Arriving at that decision was not an easy process.

Being in the red level of the traffic light system meant we would need to have the event run in separate bubbles. As per the venue's booking conditions, these bubbles would need to stay intact the entire championship i.e. whatever bubble you were in on day one is the bubble you must stay in on day two and day three. We managed to work out a plan with events assigned to three bubbles (sprints & jumps, middle distance & walks, throws) although we hadn't quite worked out how to manage the track pentathlon. This would mean disappointing athletes who like to mix disciplines (e.g. you wouldn't be able to run both the 400m and the 800m as that would mean switching bubbles) but that couldn't be helped. We also needed to source physical barriers and position them to prevent athletes leaving their bubble. Figuring out how to meet this last condition from the council was proving difficult so we looked at how other large meets in Wellington were doing it. What we found was a general failure, particularly from the athletes, who ignored the barriers and moved between bubbles at will. We would need to recruit a large number of additional volunteers to police the barriers; or to risk the loss of our council-provided funding for failing to meet the council's venue conditions if non-compliance became public knowledge.

The other problem we had was the prospect of a very low turnout because of the "close contact" rules in force at that time. Flying away from home at that time was a risk – if someone on your inbound plane was identified as a case, you would be forced to isolate in Wellington for a couple of weeks before being allowed to fly home. On the upside, if we did have fewer than 100 athletes, we'd be able to go ahead without bubbles and barriers, although our council-provided funding was granted on the basis of attracting people to Wellington so that would be at risk, which would compound the impact of reduced entry fees. Finally, we lost

our ambulance booking as WFA advised they were switching to "emergency response" mode and cancelling any event-bookings being held during the peak of the omicron wave.

For those of you who maintain an interest in entering the World Masters Athletics, note that the 2022 edition closes in April 2022. Unsurprisingly numbers are not high and we will have what is probably the smallest contingent from New Zealand, with just four entrants currently.

World Masters have also announced that the 2023 World Indoor Champs will no longer take place in Edmonton. Due to the pandemic and the diminished local financial support, the Edmonton advised they could no longer host the event. World Masters advise they will immediately open the bidding process for a new venue for 2023 in an attempt to still hold a Championship; it will be interesting to see if anyone comes forward.

There are no full Indoor tracks in Oceania. I don't think Africa has one either and there is only one in South America as far as I know (2577m above sea level!). Asia, Europe or North & Central America are presumably the host regions to be approached.

My guess, which is only my personal opinion, is one of the 2023 continental indoor championships will be convinced to promote their event to Worlds. Only Europe have their event arranged: Madeira in Portugal have the 2023 European Championships. I don't see any notice of either the 2023 Asian or North & Central American Indoor Championships so unless there is something in the works, I doubt they would have enough time to make the arrangements. The 2022 World Champs in Tampere came about by converting a scheduled European Championship into a World Championship, so there is precedent for EMA stepping in and upscaling.

Michael Wray | President

Health

How to improve the quality of your sleep



Not sleeping well?

Here are five possible pitfalls to avoid

Are you one of the millions of people across the globe who dread going to bed each night knowing you're in for a sleepless slumber full of tossing and turning? If that sounds familiar, it's important to remember that you're not alone – and more so – we're here to help.

Here are a few different culprits of poor sleep and what you can do to help give your body the best chance for a solid night of rest.

1. You're lacking a sleep routine.

A sleep routine helps prepare your body for slumber each night. A good sleep routine includes going to bed at the same time every night and waking up at the same time each morning. You can also incorporate things like light stretching before bed or reading a few pages of a book to help your brain wind down.

2. Too much screen time before bed.

Most electronics emit blue light, which can throw off your circadian rhythm and make it difficult to fall asleep. Try to cut screen time at least one hour before bedtime. If that's not possible, see if your device has a yellow light setting that can be turned on in the evening hours.

3. Your mattress is due for an upgrade.

As a general rule of thumb, a mattress typically lasts around six to eight years. If you find yourself waking up with aches and pains, an old mattress could be to blame. Other signs of needing a new mattress include squeaky springs, not feeling rested upon waking, and sinking into the middle of the mattress without proper support.

4. You're drinking caffeine before bed.

While sipping evening tea may sound relaxing, if it's caffeinated you could be doing more harm than good to your sleep schedule. In fact, you shouldn't consume caffeine within four hours of bedtime for optimal slumber.

5. Your nervous system is out of balance.

Your nervous system helps regulate all of the other systems in your body. When it's not in proper balance, problems like insomnia and disrupted sleep can happen among others.

Ed: This article has been reproduced with the kind permission of Dr Louise Blair. Contact Louise at Back to Living Chiropractic, Level 1, 50 The Terrace, Wellington 6011, phone 04 499 7755 or visit the website at www.chiro.co.nz.



Our heartfelt appreciation is extended to all officials – our events could not take place without your valuable contribution

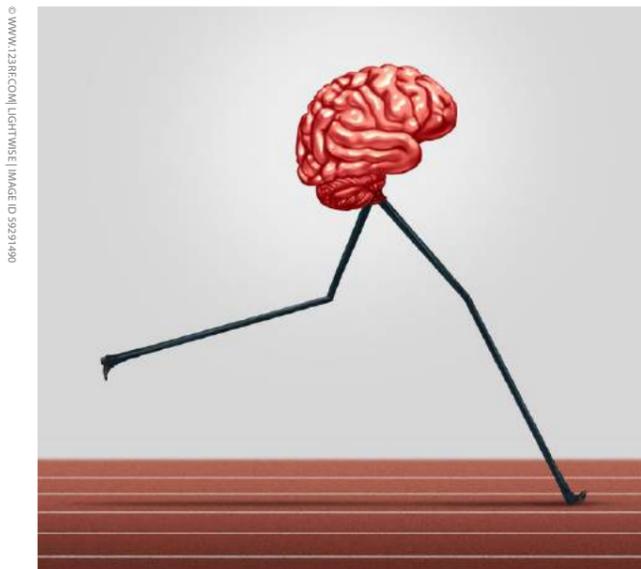
KUDOS TO OUR AMAZING TEAM OF OFFICIALS.

SPECIAL MENTION FOR SMILING THROUGH AND STAYING

THE COURSE DURING THE DELUGE AT WELLINGTON CHAMPS!

Health

Running and the brain



Much more than physical

The benefits of being a runner stretch beyond being just a great form of exercise. Our minds and the act of moving our feet are interconnected in ways you'd never guess, and scientists continue to learn more about. Many problems that plague the brain can be alleviated, and chances of developing reduced, by going for regular or even occasional runs.

Endorphin Release and Happiness Hormones

Ever wondered why runners are seemingly so on cloud nine? The famed runner's high and elevated levels of endorphins are to thank. And lucky for everyone, it doesn't take an hour-long run or great distance for an endorphin release to occur, resulting in feeling the mood-boosting effects. Researchers have found that on average, women experience it after just 9 minutes of running and men after 10 minutes.

Another key ingredient to being a happy human is serotonin. It's easy for serotonin levels to become depleted throughout fast-paced days and prolonged periods of stress. Running happens to be one of the most effective forms of exercise to not only promote its release but increase the production of it. Post-run serotonin levels remain elevated, aiding in feelings of wellbeing and a blissful mood.

Running aids happiness by providing a feeling of achievement and satisfaction that you've accomplished something.

Dopamine, a hormone and neurotransmitter that sends signals from the body to the brain, is responsible for feelings of motivation and another contributing factor to the runner's high.

This promotes a general sense of accomplishment and simply feeling good along with providing a boost in self-confidence.

Stress Reduction

Taking to the pavement, tree-lined trails, waterfront walkways, or treadmills to run for stress relief is a benefit many runners cite as being a top motivator to stick with their routine. Acting as a great way to clear our heads, running can play a huge part in maintaining a sound mind and mental health.

Regular running is thought to reduce stress over the long term by building resilience to cortisol levels – our body's primary stress hormone. Moving those feet helps create a higher tolerance to cortisol by triggering the release of it, resulting in a gradual resilience to, and reduction of stress levels over time. You'll be better primed to adapt to daily stressors and less prone to experience cortisol spikes during stress.

Depression and Anxiety

Depression is suffered by countless New Zealanders and approximately 1 in 4 Kiwis will struggle with anxiety at some stage in life. It's estimated 15% of the population are affected at any given time. Both are complicated to battle, but the mental benefits of running have proven to be incredibly valuable for easing the overwhelming feelings caused by depression and anxiety.

Incorporating outdoor runs in nature is one of the best things to do to reduce anxiety. Not only is the simple act of being outside a mood booster, so is soaking in some valuable vitamin D, which a deficiency of has been linked to depression and could also be a factor leading to anxiety disorders. A lesser known and surprising fact about running is, for some with mild to moderate cases of depression, it can be just as effective as antidepressants by causing mood improving neurotransmitters like serotonin to stay in the system for longer. But always be sure to consult with your doctor regarding what's best for you and don't be afraid to reach out for help and support from others when life gets hard.

Neuroplasticity and Neurogenesis

Scientists once thought the brain was incapable of change and ceased producing new neurons at or shortly after birth, but they've since discovered it's highly adept at rejuvenating itself and continuing to make new connections throughout our lifetimes. Scratching your head at this fairly new science and two peculiar words? Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to change itself and evolve by forming new pathways and connections. Neurogenesis is the creation of brain cells through the birth of new neurons.

Although neuroplasticity sounds as if it could be a negative characteristic of brain health, there's nothing plastic about your brain when it's working to create new connections from region to region and strengthening existing pathways. The better our brain plasticity, the better able we are to effectively learn new skills, access older memories, retain new information and even recover from brain injury.

Neurogenesis occurs in the brain when we do things to promote its health. You may be surprised to learn some of the things scientists have discovered so far that help spark neurogenesis in your brain. Chewing crunchy things like corn chips and carrots, eating blueberries, drinking a single glass of red wine or green tea, consuming omega 3's and curcumin, activities like meditating or hanky panky and our obvious favourite, RUNNING.

Exercising and running in particular triggers the growth of new nerve cells, along with blood vessels, which come together to increase brain tissue volume. Scientists haven't quite pinpointed why exactly this occurs in the brain during exercise but have identified a plethora of positive benefits. The act of running is potentially such a great contributor to cell regeneration thanks to boosted blood flow and the high level of hormones released when we're in motion.

Not only do these rewards pay off by helping your brain to "stay young" by renewing itself – but in the bigger, long term picture of brain health – neurogenesis also aids in **slowing the progression of cognitive decline** or possibly even helping to prevent the onset of neurodegenerative disorders.

Brain Fog

Researchers have found a lack of exercise can be a contributing factor to experiencing brain fog – a feeling that can often result in not being able to find the right words, forgetfulness, fatigue, and an inability to concentrate.

Aerobic exercise at a heart-pumping rate provides an increase in blood flow to the brain and can offset many of those feelings by improving quality of sleep, memory, and mental clarity. An increase in blood flow is an enormous bonus for brain health because it positively improves areas dedicated to memory function.

Researchers have even discovered the size of certain regions of the brain is larger in individuals who exercise! It's been found runners have a larger hippocampus, which is critical to learning and memory. Another part of the brain to have a greater volume in people who exercise is the prefrontal cortex, responsible for short term memory and our highest cognitive functioning. Functions like considering the consequences of our actions, focusing attention on a task, solving problems, and anticipating events in our environment. Exercise can even aid in maintaining the amount of grey matter and white matter volume in the brain over our lifespan.

Overall Wellbeing

Regularly lacing up those running shoes is beneficial for brain changes in other unexpected ways as well. Here are some of our favourite surprising facts about the brain and running:

- Decision making and the ability to reason has been shown to improve with 30 minutes of running.
- Creativity or creative thinking is spurred with a run. It's thought this comes about in part from being in forward motion and the brain associating that state with looking towards the future.
- The hunger hormone, ghrelin, decreases production during a run helping to curb cravings, quell the desires to reach for junk food, and reduce appetite.
- It's been found runners possess elevated brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), an important protein that impacts brain function by working to encourage new neuron growth, enforcing connections, and supporting the survival of cells.
- As mentioned, studies on runners have found them to have a bigger hippocampus which not only helps in forming memories but in better accessing old ones along with potentially even protecting from dementia.
- A boost in grey matter is beneficial because it plays the most significant role in normal brain functioning – controlling movement, sensory perception, emotions, memory function and more.

Health

The Athlete's Kitchen

© Nancy Clark MS RD CSSD | February 2022

Yes, even runners get heart disease

As he indulged in a jumbo sugar-covered fried pastry, the runner unabashedly remarked, "I'm skinny; I can eat this." Well, the truth is even skinny runners die suddenly of heart attacks and strokes. Heart disease is the number-one killer, ahead of cancer, and accounts for one in four deaths. No one can out-run a bad diet.

While we've all heard let food be thy medicine, the latest dietary advice from the American Heart Association (AHA) focusses less on individual foods and nutrients (such as eggs, meat, fat, sodium) and more on lifestyle and lifelong dietary patterns. Given cardiovascular disease (CVD) starts in the womb, adopting heart-healthy eating patterns early and maintaining them throughout one's life is important. Thankfully, the same food plan that invests in heart health invests in sports performance — as well as reduced risk of type II diabetes, mental decline, and environmental issues.

Below are the latest AHA dietary guidelines. Because these guidelines are targeted to the "general public," runners might want to make a few appropriate tweaks to support optimal sports performance.

Adjust energy intake and expenditure to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight

Most runners do a good job with weight control. Just remember, large portions of even "heart healthy" foods can contribute to weight gain.

Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables

Choose a wide variety: Fruit and vegetables – in particular, those with deep colors (such as peaches, berries, spinach, carrots) – offer natural vitamins as well as phytochemicals that improve heart-health. Many fruit and vegetables are rich in potassium, which has been associated with lower blood pressure. Some fruit and vegetables, such as arugula, Romaine lettuce, beets, rhubarb, are nitrate-rich and improve blood flow and running performance.

If you have trouble including plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables in your daily meals, make food prep easier by using frozen fruit and vegetables instead. They can offer more

nutrients than the wilted produce that has been sitting in your refrigerator for several days. Frozen produce is ready to use, reduces food waste, and costs less than fresh.

Choose foods made mostly with whole grains rather than refined grains

The fibre in whole grains helps feed gut microbes that enhance your immune system and over-all health. While most of your breads, cereals, and pastas should be whole grain, eating refined grains at one meal a day will not undermine your health. That is, if you eat oatmeal for breakfast, whole wheat bread at lunch, and popcorn for a snack, enjoying white pasta for dinner fits within the guideline more than half your grains should be whole grains.

Choose healthy sources of protein

Protein mostly from plants (legumes and nuts); fish and seafood; low-fat or fat-free dairy products instead of full-fat. If meat or poultry are desired, choose lean cuts, avoid processed forms. Plant protein is excellent for heart health: lentils, hummus, edamame, tofu, all beans and nuts. The more nuts and nut butters, the lower the risk of CVD and stroke!

The benefits of low-fat and fat-free vs full-fat dairy is controversial and continues to be debated. To date, the AHA reports full-fat yogurt and kefir are positive additions to your diet. If you choose to consume plant-based beverages, note that almond milk and other nut milks are actually nut juice – low in protein, lacking in nutrients. The more nutrient-dense choices are soy milk or pea milk.

Processed meats (ham, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, pepperoni, salami) have a stronger link to CVD than lean red meats. The potential adverse effects of red meat on heart health have been attributed to a combination of factors, including saturated fat, heme iron, the gut microbiota, and TMAO (a metabolite of red meat).

The AHA has historically limited eggs because of their high cholesterol content; currently there is no specific limit on dietary cholesterol. The question arises: Are eggs a contributor to CVD? Or are the bacon and sausage that accompanies the eggs the culprits?

The intake of dietary cholesterol and saturated fat tend to increase in parallel (i.e., eating eggs with bacon and sausage). Dietary cholesterol itself is currently less of a concern.

Use liquid plant oils rather than tropical oils

Examples include coconut, palm, and palm kernel, animal fats (butter and lard), and partially hydrogenated fats.

Replacing saturated fats that are hard at room temperature (butter, coconut oil, lard) with soft, polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, or an oil (at room temperature) such as walnut, olive, canola, peanut butter, has robust scientific evidence of protecting against heart disease by lowering bad LDL cholesterol. This reduces the risk of developing heart disease. In comparison, coconut oil has a high saturated fat content; it raises LDL cholesterol, with little evidence of positive health benefits.

Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt

In general, reduced salt intake is linked with reduced blood pressure. That said, most runners have low blood pressure. Runners also lose salt (more correctly, sodium) in sweat. Runners who sweat heavily can appropriately replace sodium losses by eating salty foods.

The leading sources of dietary sodium are processed, restaurant, and packaged foods. If your sports diet is mostly unprocessed foods, it can be low in sodium. If you find yourself craving salt, eat salt!

Choose minimally processed foods instead of ultra-processed foods

Ultra-processed foods (noodles, cheese curls, commercially baked cookies) are easy to over-consume! Choose minimally processed, if not unprocessed foods, such as homemade granola bars and trail mix made with nuts and dried fruit.

Minimise intake of foods/drinks with added sugars

Sugar comes in many forms: glucose, dextrose, sucrose, corn syrup, concentrated fruit juice, honey, and maple syrup. The same runners who scrutinise food labels for added sugar often consume lots of sport drinks, gels, and chomps. Simple-to-digest sugar is actually what your body needs during long runs, when the theme is survival and not good nutrition.

Sugar becomes a problem when runners skip wholesome meals, get too hungry, start to crave sugary foods, and then eat the whole plate of cookies. Preventing hunger is the key to preventing cravings for sugary foods. Eating a hearty protein-rich breakfast can set the stage for reduced sugar cravings towards the end of the day, making it easier to reduce your sugar intake.

If you do not drink alcohol, do not start; if you choose to drink alcohol, limit intake

The link between alcohol intake and heart disease is complex, depending on how and how much you drink. Athletes are known to drink more alcohol than non-athletes. Alcohol has negative effects not only on heart-health, but also athletic performance and is linked to injuries, violence, digestive diseases, poor pregnancy outcomes, and cancer.

Adhere to this guidance regardless of where food is prepared or consumed

Because so many runners buy takeout foods, healthy eating patterns need to apply to both meals prepared in and outside of home. Occasional treats are fine; just be sure they are not the norm. By following the above guidelines, you will be taking steps towards a lifetime of better health, which means better quality of life and happiness.

Be wise, choose your foods wisely, and enjoy miles of smiles.

Reference:

Dietary guidance to improve cardiovascular health: a scientific statement from the American Heart Assoc. *Circulation*, 2021; 144 www.professional.heart.org/statements

Contact Nancy

Sports nutritionist Nancy Clark, MS, RD counsels both casual and competitive athletes in the Boston-area (Newton, 617-795-1875). Her best-selling *Sports Nutrition Guidebook* (6th edition, 2019) is a popular resource, as is her online workshop. For more information, visit NancyClarkRD.com.

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Results – Wellington Masters track and field champs 2022

Day 1, Saturday 12th February - Day 2, Sunday 20th February

Grade	Name	Result	Wind
60m			
W50-54	Theresa Bartlett	10.87	-0.9
W55-59	Petra Stoeveken	9.18	-0.9
W60-64	Liz Bentley	10.56	-0.9
W70-74	Veronica Gould	10.44	-0.9
	Beryl Rogers	13.91	-0.9
M35-39	Hiro Tanimoto	9.04	-0.8
M40-44	Shaun Broughton	8.06	-0.8
M45-49	Joshua Sharkey	10.84	-0.8
M50-54	Darcy Mellsop	8.75	-0.8
	Mark Ford	8.79	-0.9
M55-59	Chris Roberts	8.59	-0.9
M60-64	Gary Rawson	8.57	-0.9
M65-69	Ian Morton	11.84	-0.9
100m			
W40-44	Heidi-Jane Humphries	16.95	0.1
W55-59	Petra Stoeveken	14.77	0.1
W60-64	Liz Bentley	17.50	0.1
W70-74	Veronica Gould	17.16	0.1
	Beryl Rogers	22.60	0.1
M50-54	Mark Ford	14.16	-0.9
M55-59	Chris Roberts	13.92	-0.9
	Adrian Stockill	15.78	-0.9
M60-64	Gary Rawson	13.84	-0.9
200m			
M55-59	Chris Roberts	29.12	-0.1
400m			
M55-59	Peter Stevens	1:00.02	
400m Hurdles			
M40-44	Mathew Rogers	1:12.83	
800m			
W50-54	Michelle Van Looy	3:05.06	
W60-64	Liz Bentley	3:01.88	
M35-39	Hiro Tanimoto	2:09.03	
M40-44	Andy Ford	2:12.37	
	Mathew Rogers	2:12.72	
M45-49	Brad Thompson	2:43.39	
M50-54	Darcy Mellsop	2:24.81	
	Michael Waterman	2:31.76	
M55-59	Peter Stevens	2:17.68	
M60-64	Phil Sadgrove	2:34.28	
	Chris Speakman	2:43.47	
1500m			
W35-39	Susan O'Brien	5:45.17	
W40-44	Heidi-Jane Humphries	6:34.56	
W50-54	Michelle Van Looy	6:24.51	

Grade	Name	Result
1500m continued		
M35-39	Anthony Jackson	4:19.28
	Hiro Tanimoto	4:27.67
M40-44	Andy Ford	4:34.98
M45-49	Daniel Clendon	4:19.95
	James Waite	4:49.02
	Jeff Bannister	5:13.68
	Brad Thompson	5:38.48
M50-54	Andrew Kerr	4:52.25
	Darcy Mellsop	4:53.42
	Terry Fraser	5:07.55
M55-59	Peter Stevens	4:38.03
	Bruce Atmore	5:43.02
M60-64	Todd Kriebel	5:11.61
	Chris Speakman	5:28.36
5000m		
W35-39	Ingrid Cree	18:57.58
	Emma Bassett	21:11.21
W50-54	Sarah Bakker	22:44.43
	Michelle Van Looy	22:57.48
W55-59	Victoria Humphries	21:15.03
M35-39	Jamie White	17:49.20
M40-44	Alasdair Saunders	16:24.72
	James Richardson	16:39.45
	Andy Ford	17:42.17
M45-49	Stephen Day	16:31.79
	Simon Keller	17:17.57
	James Waite	17:19.62
	Chris Howard	18:31.46
	Darren Gordon	19:17.88
M50-54	Michael Waterman	18:45.36
	Darcy Mellsop	18:46.49
	Willie Gunn	18:51.59
M60-64	Chris Speakman	19:56.48
M75-79	John Skinnon	24:01.45
M80-84	Roger Robinson	26:14.34
3000m Track Walk		
W60-64	Julie Edwards	21:28.85
	Helen Willis	22:51.74
W75-79	Jacqueline Wilson	19:55.54
W80-84	Daphne Jones	22:53.85
M75-79	Geoff Iremonger	22:51.43
M85-89	John Hines	26:12.09 (B Grade)
2000m Steeplechase		
W50-54	Michelle Van Looy	9:33.19
W70-74	Jenny Mason	11:40.43

Grade	Name	Result	Wind
3000m Steeplechase			
M40-44	Mathew Rogers	11:36.74	
M45-49	Stephen Day	10:40.37	
	Trent Corbett	12:20.65	
High Jump			
W50-54	Theresa Bartlett	1.10	
M55-59	Adrian Stockill	1.20	
M60-64	Gary Rawson	1.30	
M65-69	Ian Morton	1.00	
Javelin			
W40-44	Heidi-Jane Humphries	11.33	
W50-54	Linda Rawlins	31.21	
	Theresa Bartlett	23.78	
M45-49	Joshua Sharkey	10.47	
M55-59	Adrian Stockill	32.01	
M60-64	Gary Rawson	25.68	
M65-69	Ian Morton	11.56	
M70-74	Tuariki Delamere	30.43	
M75-79	Graham Cook	14.39	
Triple Jump			
W50-54	Theresa Bartlett	6.58	-0.2
M60-64	Gary Rawson	9.03	-0.2

Grade	Name	Result	Weight
Shot Put			
W70-74	Beryl Rogers	5.18	3kg
M35-39	Thomas Waldrom	11.59	7.260kg
M70-74	Tuariki Delamere	11.08	4kg
M75-79	Graham Cook	6.29	4kg
	Peter Jack	4.71	4kg
Discus			
M35-39	Thomas Waldrom	38.15	2kg
M70-74	Tuariki Delamere	27.51	1kg
M75-79	Graham Cook	17.09	1kg
	Peter Jack	11.23	1kg
JHammer Throw			
W50-54	Theresa Bartlett	26.27	3kg
W70-74	Beryl Rogers	16.22	3kg
M45-49	Joshua Sharkey	10.33	7.260kg
M55-59	Adrian Stockill	30.42	6kg
M65-69	Ian Morton	12.04	5kg
M70-74	Tuariki Delamere	30.99	4kg
M75-79	Graham Cook	17.28	4kg
	Peter Jack	13.44	4kg
Weight Throw			
M55-59	Adrian Stockill	10.35	11.340kg
M65-69	Ian Morton	4.67	9.080kg
M70-74	Tuariki Delamere	11.07	7.260kg
M75-79	Graham Cook	7.83	7.260kg
	Peter Jack	4.23	7.260kg

Athlete follow-up

Surprise presentation to Jackie Wilson by Philip Secker



Philip Secker, Trentham Harriers and Walkers Inc President, surprises Jackie with congratulatory club certificates for her race walk world records, at a recent 5km run / walk! March 2022

Athlete profile

Roger Robinson – Why I still love racing at age 82



Roger Robinson, M80 in superb action! | Photo Rowan Greig

The strange duality of racing at age 82.

A pace that was once was a warm-up jog can set a record. Success overlaps with humiliation, fulfillment is interwoven with frustration.

On December 8, 2021 I raced 3,000 meters on the track. I finished last, way out the back, lapped and re-lapped by the entire field. But I ran hard and broke a record that had stood for ten years. That's the strange duality of racing at age 82. A pace that was once was a warm-up jog can set a record. Success overlaps with humiliation, fulfillment is interwoven with frustration.

To explain: I ran in a mixed open field at a midweek twilight meet in my current hometown of Wellington, New Zealand. I lined up alongside 19 others. Apart from me, the oldest

competitor was 49. The moment the horn sounded, they were gone, and I was running alone, until the leaders came pounding by with a whoosh to lap me soon after I'd completed one circuit. I used to run faster than that, I thought, briefly flashing back to the day I ran my PR for 3,000 meters in 8:10, but it's little consolation.

At this age, every track race is a solo time trial. Social joggers don't often do track, so there's no one my pace. To make it feel like a competition, I aim for age-group records, so it's like a virtual race against someone my age who posted his time ten years ago. My 16:03.45 broke the Wellington record for men aged 80 to 84.

That competitive fun is mixed with a sense of inadequacy. I clutter the track. I'm in a different dimension from the young runners, like pedaling a bicycle in a Nascar race. Not that they complain. "Go, Rog," they gasp kindly as they fly past. They cheer for me as I finish, and then we hang out and compare times. Some say they find me inspiring, a role model for how they want to age. Often their kindness makes me feel good. Other times I feel like a decrepit but willing old dog who gets a pat when he still tries to chase his ball.

Much is new and good. I'm busy learning. I've been competitive and often elite since 1953. I've raced on six continents, set masters records at the Boston and New York City marathons, run a 5K in 14:12, and written seven books about running, yet this obscure little 3,000-meter event on a windy evening was another learning curve. By racing after 80, I'm still learning about the sport, about aging, about today's society, about myself.

I learn that one of the joys of being a long-term runner is that every season is an experiment, a new experience. Year by year, you test your changing body, your mind's ingenuity, and your spirit's resilience against each inevitable stage of getting older. Those who choose to retire at their peak may think they evade the losses time brings, but they can only look back, not forward. They miss this ongoing journey, which truly is an exploration of the whole of life, its last 6.2 miles as well as the first 20.

I'm learning the hard way that age is not just a number. Age is a biological reality. It's inescapable, even cruel, if you see nature in that personal way. Age brings decline that is almost mechanically predictable. In the long term, the best I can do is slow down the process of slowing down. The challenge is how to encounter that process, how to live with it, and running is the best way I know. I train and race to the limit of my will just as I always did, and that brings me the small triumphs of improvement gained by training. Don't underestimate the effect of that on mental attitude. Today I'm eager for the next arduous challenge, plotting how to do better next week than I did last night. How many 82-year-olds can say that?

That triumph – outwitting time for a while – is one of many. Being in race shape gives me overall health, the respect and friendship of men and women 60 years my junior, the delight of an activity that is stimulating and full of change, and, above all, the feeling of being totally engaged with life's journey, not merely lingering in its departure lounge. One of my regular training venues is a sports field overlooked by a large retirement-community building. I run my repeats in constant terror that staff will mistake me for a resident, dash out with a big butterfly net and capture me.

My slow pace at full effort teaches me that our running performances are always about relativity – run better than last week, last year; beat your rivals, the record, or your PR. That doesn't change. The next time you see a white-haired old man or woman running at the back of the pack, please do not dismiss them as shuffling at some standard, meaningless, old-person pace. They may be as immersed in the race's drama and significance as any other competitor, battling for the few seconds that will measure this day's result as successful.

The big picture is that we older runners are leading a major change in society's perception of aging. "How old are ya, mate?" asked the friendly teenage groundsman the last time I ran interval 400's at his park. I told him. His surprise was expressed in a monosyllable. The public is beginning to get used to seeing old runners just as they once got

used to seeing any runners, and then women runners. That's how change happens. And change is long overdue. The marginalization and stereotyping of older people is arguably the last great prejudice of our society. When the retirement home enters a team in a local 10K, I'll know that my prediction is fulfilled.

Why do it? The simple thing at 82 would be to run without competing. But for me, that would only be half the pleasure. I don't race track to lead a social movement, or for the attention, or to feel humiliated, or to be an inspiration. I merely want to race. Even at the back, that makes me a participant with others who share the same impulse.

I race because I still love its challenge and commitment, its drama and its finality, the ways it tests the spirit. During times in my life when I couldn't race (after knee-replacement surgery or when mending broken bones), I felt like a pianist whose hands had been crushed. Now, since I am again fortunate enough to be able to race, it feels almost like a duty. My next race is a festive-season one-miler. Senile folly. Four minutes won't even get me halfway. I'll be dead-last again. But I've done my 400's, and I'm as ready as can be. Hey, maybe I can "run my age": 80 and two-tenths would give me a finish time of 8:12.

There's always another incentive. I can't wait.

Editor's note:

This article was reproduced with the kind permission of Roger Robinson. Since Roger ran the 3000m (story above) he went out at the Scottish Night of Miles at Newtown Park on 18/12/21 and set a new National and Wellington Masters mile record in a time of 8:22.38.

On 20 February in the 5000m on the second day of the Wellington track and field championships at Newtown Park Roger broke the M80 5000m Masters record he set in November 2021 by 30 seconds. The new record now stands at 26:14.34.

Also this year Roger has set a National and Wellington Masters record in the M80 3000m recording a time of 15:48.04 bettering his time 16:03.45 set in December 2021.

2022 UPCOMING EVENTS

March		
11-13	Cancelled – NZMA Track & Field Championships	Newtown Park
19	Postponed – Queenstown Full Marathon, ½ Marathon & 10km	Queenstown
April		
3	Cancelled – Nelson ½ Marathon, 10km, 5km & 2.5km	Saxton Field, Stoke
10	Cancelled – Christchurch Full Marathon, ½ Marathon & 10km	Christchurch
May		
7	Postponed – Rotorua Full Marathon, ½ Marathon, 10km & 5.5km	Rotorua
22	Masters Classic Club Cross Country Relay	Trentham
June		
19	Gazley Full Marathon, ½ Marathon & 10km	Sky Stadium
July		
2-3	42nd Gold Coast Full Marathon, ½ Marathon, 10km & 5km	Gold Coast
30-31	Cancelled – Winter Forest Festival – Sat: Runners & Walkers - Sun: Riders	Rotorua
September		
17	New date – Rotorua Full Marathon, ½ Marathon, 10km & 5.5km	Rotorua
November		
6	Nelson ½ Marathon, 10km, 5km & 2.5km	Saxton Field, Stoke
19	Queenstown Full Marathon, ½ Marathon & 10km	Queenstown
December		
10	New date – Ironman NZ & Ironman NZ 70.3	Taupo

2023 UPCOMING EVENTS

February		
11	Buller Gorge Full Marathon, Marathon Relay, ½ Marathon & 10km	Westport
April		
16	Christchurch Full Marathon, ½ Marathon & 10km	Christchurch

Please note:
 Race information available and correct as time of print. Whilst every attempt is made to provide correct information, intended dates and venues can change. It is advisable to check the information from official entry forms, websites or event organisers.
 We'll keep you informed when more race details come to hand. Remember to check the website for the most up to date information.

Editor's note | March 2022

- With Omicron spreading throughout New Zealand and many events being cancelled or postponed I have stopped adding events to this page until there is some certainty that the Covid situation has abated and that events will actually take place on their scheduled dates.



Registration Form

2021/2022 NZMA / Local Masters Centre Registration Form			
Name:			
Address:			
	Post Code:		
E-mail:	Telephone:		
Masters Centre:	Date of Birth:		
Are you an Athletics NZ club registered athlete? No / Yes (CIRCLE ONE ONLY) (Please complete section below)			
Athletics NZ Club:	ANZ Reg. No.		
Fees for 2021/2022 year (Please select the option that better suits your needs):			
OPTION 1:	ANZ Competitive Members (ANZ club members must be financial for the 2021/2022 season). N.B. All fees are paid to ANZ online or via your club registration process		
\$0.00	NZMA Fee (ANZ club athlete DO NOT pay a fee to NZMA as per the MoU)		
\$0.00	Local Master's Centre Fee		
Note: ANZ Social Members are required to be a Competitive member of either ANZ or NZMA if they intend to compete at local, NI, SI, NZMA, OMA or WMA Championship events			
OPTION 2:	NZMA Members (non-club members) N.B. All fees are paid to your Local Masters Centre as per previous years		
\$60.00 (CIRCLE)	NZMA Competitive Member. Eligible to compete at local, NI, SI, NZMA, OMA or WMA Championship events.		
\$45.00 (CIRCLE)	NZMA Social Member. Eligible to compete at local Masters' events only.		
\$0.00 (CIRCLE)	Local Masters Centre Fee (optional)		
Total Fee to pay \$			
Registration options:	Post, e-mail or hand completed registration forms to Veronica Gould.		
Online banking payments only	Wellington Masters Athletics Inc., ANZ, The Terrace: 06 0565 0064415 00. (Please insert your name in the reference box)		
Postal Address:	Wellington Masters Athletics Inc. PO Box 5887, Wellington 6140	Telephone:	04 973 6741
		E-mail:	gvgould@xtra.co.nz
OFFICIAL USE:			
Verified by:	2021/2022 NZMA Reg No		



We need more officials!

We are ever grateful to all our officials who ensure track and field events can take place, and take place safely. But we are currently experiencing a shortage of officials for all events.

We provide full training in a friendly environment. Our next training intake will potentially be August/September. To register your interest, please contact Eddie Soria on email: eddie_soria@fastmail.com.

WITH THANKS | ATHLETICS WELLINGTON

Wellington Masters Athletics Incorporated

2021-2022 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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LIFE MEMBERS

Jim Blair 2004	Bruce Perry 2008	John Palmer 2010
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Committee Meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at 89 Amesbury Drive, Churton Park, commencing 7.00 pm.

Club representatives and members are always welcome.

CLUB CO-ORDINATORS

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Scottish	John Hines	04 384 3231
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