



## WMA Annual Report 2024

It has been another memorable year for World Masters Athletics as the organization continues its development of Masters Athletics worldwide on a voluntary basis.

WMA's impact as the worldwide governing body for the sport of Masters Athletics is shown in the events and projects the organization oversees and the partnerships it has created and nurtured. Governed by a 5-member volunteer WMA Board and supported by the 6 regional representatives and the WA representative forming the WMA Council, the past twelve months has seen high level performances by Masters athletes competing at the WMA Stadia Championships held at Gothenburg, at the stand-alone WMA Marathon in Bucharest, the Mountain Running World Championships in Canfranc, the IAU/WMA 100k in Bengaluru and at regional and national Masters Championships.

An overview of the year 2024 :

### **WMAC 2024 Gothenburg August 13 -25**

The major event for WMA in the past year was our stadia championships hosted by the City of Gothenburg/Sweden. These championships were hugely successful in so many ways. 8029 athletes including 2,711 women competitors registered from 112 countries. This number of nations represented was the largest ever at a WMA event and the whole delivery was organised and managed in an exemplary fashion by the LOC advised by the WMA Management Team. On-line meetings were conducted regularly with the 2024 Gothenburg LOC to ensure all athlete requirements, venue facilities and the competition schedule met the WMA requirements.

The championships ran superbly both from a technical and logistical manner. The local officials were of the highest quality and the WMA international cohort proved, once again, to be invaluable in terms of expertise and experience of masters' sport. All in all, a memorable experience for so many people.

The well-attended **Opening Ceremony** in the historic Slottsskogsvallen Stadium marked the start of the championship and included a live performance by Nora Hedin of the championship's official song – *Golden Stars*.

The **WMA Gallery of Champions** project was another WMA initiative which highlights the outstanding performances of a range of Masters' athletes from around the world. A Media Launch was conducted and then awards given to the selected athletes in a separate function.

Announcement of the **2023 WMA Best Male and Female Athletes of the Year** at the Gothenburg Championships also highlighted the high standards shown by Masters' athletes in competition.

**WMA Research Studies** in cooperation with the DLR and the TAFMAC study being undertaken at each championship continued in Gothenburg and forms a valued part of each event, providing health advice to the athletes involved.

## General Assembly 2024

The WMA General Assembly took place on 16 August 2024 at Ullevi Stadium in Gothenburg, Sweden. From 9 a.m. to 5:40 p.m., 101 delegates from 52 Countries, plus guests and the future WMA Championship host, were present. The agenda covered 17 topics; below is a summary of the main ones.

- Re-election of Margit Jungmann as the WMA President.
- Election of Colleen Barney as the new WMA Treasurer.
- Approval of the WMA updated constitution.
- The amendment to the “Change of Competition and Technical Rules” part of the updated constitution. It was agreed that the Competition Committee should consult the Members either during an in-person meeting at a WMA Indoor or Outdoor Championships or via an electronic meeting scheduled by the Competition Committee. This successfully occurred on November 26 with an online consultation involving 24 countries from the six regions.
- The following General Assembly is to take place at Daegu, Korea, on 26 August 2026.

The WMA General Assembly is also the opportunity to thank all those who have worked for Masters athletics over the years (at national or international level). The WMA Council honored the following individuals for their life service and support to our sport:

Honorary Personal Life Member: Jean Thomas (FRA) and Brian Keaveney (CAN)

For extraordinary service to WMA the **WMA Silver Pin** was awarded to María Alfaro (MEX) and Jean Thomas (FRA)

**Bronze Pins** were awarded to Wilma Perkins (AUS), Michael Serralta (PUR), Mushin Turkkal (TUR), Mary V. Rosado (USA), Marilyn Mitchell (USA), Richard Blurton (AUS), Kannan Arumugam (SGP), Bill Murray (USA), Helena Carvalho (POR), Jerry Bookin-Weiner (USA), Mauro DeCarly (ITA), Vern Christensen (CAN), Franz Kropik (AUT), Michel van Osch (NED), Hossein Gholami (IRI), Claude Hemmer (LUX), Alex Rotas (GBR).

There are still things that can be improved, but overall, the assembly, though intense, went smoothly and covered all the agenda topics, leaving the delegates satisfied.

### Partnerships:

WMA continues to work in partnership with WMRA, IAU, WA and race organisers to deliver stand-alone WMA Championships alongside the bi-annual WMA Stadia and Indoor events.

During 2024 WMA engaged in many initiatives that showed progress in our strategy to widen and develop the quality of the events offered to masters athletes globally.

For some time, WMA has worked to develop partnerships with other competition providers so that joint ventures can include masters' competitors in established competition. In 2024 there were three examples of that joint approach being successfully implemented.

### World Mountain Running Championships – Canfranc Spain 13-15 September.

This was the latest event in a well-established partnership with the WMRA. The races all included masters' athletes and the programme, conduct and organisation of the weekend was another successful collaboration. This was also the first formal occasion where the two international bodies implemented their agreed policy of no official entries over 79 years of age (as confirmed by WMA General Assembly in Gothenburg).

### **Bucharest International Marathon October 13<sup>th</sup>.**

This was the first real occasion when WMA collaborated with an established marathon to include the WMA championships for individuals and teams. The strategy proved to be well received by the masters global family with 500 entrants joining the field in Bucharest. This is significantly more than any marathon organised by WMA as part of a stadia championships in the past. Collaboration with any new partner has its challenges (on both sides). In Bucharest the partnership was immensely co-operative but issues, such as the computation of master's team awards and age definitions were problematic. WMA has learned from that experience and is already alerted to more rigorous management strategies with other partners as the two-yearly cycle is developed. The advert for bids for 2026 is already in the public domain. One unfortunate aspect of the Bucharest race was the passing of a Finnish athlete during the event. A sad and unavoidable occurrence with no blame attached to any of the organisers.

### **IAU 100k Race Bengaluru/India December 7<sup>th</sup>.**

This was the latest collaboration with the IAU. For WMA it serves a small but dedicated group of ultrarunners who are of masters age groups. The race was a success and the number of masters entering did justify our involvement. For future events WMA is investigating a joint process of entries so that an LOC will take direct control of all registrations and finances with a joint agreement on costs being negotiated per event.

### **Strategic developments in competition**

As the WMA events become larger and more complex, we realise that some aspects for the technical management of events need to be improved and expanded. The most important feature in that work is the way in which aspects for the organisation are planned some time before the beginning of an event. For Gothenburg a technical visit was arranged 6 months before the start of competition. This allowed advice to be given, improvements to be made and to further develop the trust between partners.

Additionally, through the new WMA management structure, information and co-ordination with designated team managers was strengthened so that ' firefighting management ' was reduced, if not eliminated, during the delivery days. This joint approach will further develop and become more sophisticated for future events.

Finally, it should also be noted that the updating and consolidating of the WMA Rules for Competition was completed successfully within the new framework agreed at the General Assembly in 2024. This work was underpinned by the excellent work of the Competition Committee.

### **Anti-Doping Commitment**

WMA is 100% committed to clean sport. In 2024, doping testing was conducted during the WMA Championships in Gothenburg and as part of WMA's partnership with the Bucharest Marathon.

### **Finances:**

WMA remains committed to fiscal responsibility and growth. 2024 is ending with net positive accounts. We are investigating several cost savings initiatives for 2025 by focusing on insurance, travel, and IT services. We expect to implement changes to several of our services to reduce costs while maintaining high quality for our athletes and our members. We will then turn our attention to growth measures and expect an even more positive report for next year.

This goes together with the great work of the media and marketing team to promote masters athletics and to put the base for future sponsorship opportunities.

## **Legal:**

2024 was a big year for WMA with the establishment of our Updated Constitution. We are currently nearing the end of our work with all of our internal legal documents. After significant collaboration with the Competition Committee, the Competition and Technical Rules have been updated to reflect changes required by the new Constitution and have been approved after a constitutionally mandated consultation with our Members. Our By-Laws have been reviewed, revised, and substantially rewritten to comply with the new Constitution. The new By-Laws will be divided into three sections:

- 1) General Affairs,
- 2) WMA Championships, and
- 3) Standards of Conduct.

By integrating these items into one complete set of By-Laws, Members and individuals will be able to go to a single source for information on how WMA conducts itself, its office holders, its athletes and its Members. We expect to have a final document for approval of the Council by the end of the month and to implement the new By-Laws by the end of January. We will continue to strive to improve our legal documents, including our bid documents and our Championship contracts in the coming year.

## **Looking to 2025 and the future**

- 2025 WMA Indoor Championships, 23-31 March in Gainesville Alachua County, Florida USA
- 2025 Road race Festival in cooperation with WA in San Diego, Mountain running in Meduno/Italy with WMRA and 50k and 24h in Albi with IAU
- 2026 WMA Championships, Daegu, Korea

Communication with Hosts and Bidders for future WMA Championships will form a large part of the Board and Council work during 2025. This will include inspection visits to ensure the quality of competition facilities and other organisation matters. The current development of stronger guidelines for conduct of a championship will assist future LOCs with their planning and programming.

## **Conclusion**

WMA continues to grow with the support of its member federations, event local organizing committees, partnerships, athletes, media, and brands. We thank all Members for their collaboration, our council members for the commitment to our sport, all committee members for their advice and support and all WMA Managers for the continuous work and inputs. We are proud to be part of the WMA Family. We are proud to be part of this wonderful WMA family and to be in charge of its development

December 2024

WMA Board Members

*Margit Jungmann, Lynne Schickert, Juan Ordoñez,*

*Alan Bell, Colleen Barney*