

WRITE ON

Letters to the Publisher

SENIOR GAMES - Setting the Record Straight

I'm writing in response to Lou Vodopyz's note in the April edition. Unfortunately, Lou has received some incorrect information from someone that he has passed along in his note. I'd like to try and set the record straight on several issues he raised.

First, I believe the Summer National Senior Games has required qualifying at one of our Member State Senior Games since its inception in 1987. I specifically checked the archives for the 1999 and 2001 Games that he referenced and found that qualifying was a requirement then and I know has been since. We feel very strongly about that requirement as it clearly supports our Member State Games. Virtually all of them experience higher numbers in a qualifying year. Second, we are absolutely not trying to limit the number of Track & Field entries and we definitely want any all USATF masters athletes to feel welcome if they want to compete in our meet. I am not an official but I can tell you we take great care to use experienced USATF meet directors and qualified USATF officials to conduct our meet. If they are not scheduling events within the prescribed parameters then I must defer to the Masters Committee. I assure you that NSGA is not dictating schedule deviations. We leave field of play decisions to the expert officials. We want to the championships conducted per your rules.

Further, the last thing we're trying to do is "steal your field". For those who don't know, our mission is not about service to elite level athletes. We are about promoting active healthy lifestyles for people over the age of 50. We use sport to send that message and yes, track & field is one of the better ways to get people involved. Bottom line? We want to partner with the Masters Committee of USATF to the fullest possible extent.

So Lou, see you at the Games. Thanks for being there all these years. Good luck.

And to National Masters News, see you there too. We're looking forward to having you on site again. With about 20 days to go until registration closes we have 1,409 athletes registered for Track & Field. It promises to be a great event in a great venue.

Sincerely,

Philip H. Godfrey

President & CEO
National Senior Games Association

Let Our Citizens Run Open Access to Track & Field Facilities A Major Nationwide Problem

Submitted by Eric Braschwitz, President of North Carolina USA Track & Field

In July of this year, the USA Track & Field National Junior Olympics will attract about 7,000 youth athletes from all 50 states to Greensboro, North Carolina. As a sponsoring organization, North Carolina Association of USA Track & Field volunteers have spent thousands of hours to bring this week-long event to our state. We

expect to show great hospitality to our guests, as well as great performances and participation by North Carolina youth athletes.

However, we have a problem, and that is most, if not all track & field facilities have locks on their gates when schools are not in session. Access for our members and general citizenry is denied. Our athletes do not have the facilities they need to prepare for an event to be held in our own backyard.

Many of our members have spoken to several High School Principals and Athletic Directors (as some posted signs suggest) about the use of their facilities. Each one has granted access to their track and looks forward to a relationship. Unfortunately, that is where the goodwill stops. These same Principals and Athletic Directors can grant us access, but in many cases, ultimately they must work with groups such as booster clubs and other organizations that control use of these facilities. While these groups may seem well intentioned, staffed by volunteers and other interested citizens, they often act like "neighborhood bullies." Such control of these facilities includes attempts at extracting usage fees and volunteer services from clubs and individuals attempting to properly negotiate access to track facilities.

These fees can total thousands of dollars in a month or two. For all but the very wealthy among us, this is simply not sustainable. Finally, while permission may be granted to use a track, it is not often the case, without great difficulty, time and effort.

Running on asphalt or concrete is not a good option since it tends to create injuries to youth and adults alike; our bodies were not made to deal with such hard surfaces.

Personally, as one with a profession that carries with it hours into the night, I used to stop at the local high school on my way home and run a couple miles on the track. I would usually see several others walking or running, often times small groups of women and couples as late as 9 pm. I have a friend who works until 10 pm and he used to do his training at the local track at midnight.

We have been shut out for about 3 years now. Running on the roads at that hour is not a good option. Weekends present the same problem for clubs and groups of friends. The tracks are locked and there is nowhere to go with a soft surface outdoors.

This problem is by no means limited to North Carolina. In California, the Santa Barbara Community College track is locked when not being used by the school, the excuse being to protect the investment in facilities. It turns out there is a clause in a 1962 agreement between the college and the city which reserves the right of the community to use the facility without a permit when it is not being used by the school or for special events. I wonder if there are similar clauses in other locales to allow free and unimpeded access to track facilities.

The solution is simple - just take off the locks.

We at National Masters News would like to hear from our subscribers. Does your neighborhood track & field

WRITE TO US

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facility have free and open 24 hour access? If not, what may be blocking such access? What can we do about it?

Newly Wed Thank You

We would like to thank the editors of the NMN for giving our marriage as much space as they did on p. 3 of the May issue. Perhaps next year, our pictures will be in for our athletic accomplishments at the 2010 Masters Indoor Championships in Boston, or the Outdoor Championships in Sacramento, which we plan to attend and visit with our old friends, and young ones too, from the masters community.

We hope to see some of the throwers at the Throws Championships In Portland, Oregon, in August.

Jerry and Suzy Wojcik
Eugene, Oregon

Record Correction

Randy:

Just received my May '09 issue of NMN and noticed in your write-up of the Indoor Championships in Landover (p17), you credited me with setting the World record in the pentathlon and setting a new American record (9.38m) in the triple jump. The TJ mark you quoted was the old American record. The World record was 9.4m and my jump was 9.63m as shown in your tabulated results for the meet on p. 37. Thus, I set both World and American records with my jump. Can you post a correction next month?

Incidentally, my LJ mark of 4.37m beat Mel Larson's American record of 4.31m but I had jumped 4.44m earlier in the Heptathlon Championships in Kenosha, WI.

Bob Hewitt

More Records

Dear Editor,

Ever since 1996, when I started the precursor to masterstrack.com, I've been astonished by the errors and omissions in official USATF masters track and field records.

On my blog, I've documented dozens of marks that merit publication as American age-group records -- but weren't. Many reasons exist for this shameful state of affairs, but I'm done complaining. On May 4, I launched an online petition that calls on the USATF Masters Track & Field Committee to simplify the masters records form and modernize -- and humanize -- the records ratification process.

My hope is that the spirit of this petition will be translated into USATF Operating Regulations

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