

Transcript of John Meagher's Interview

2024 Nominee WMA Best Male Athlete of the year

What would winning WMA Best Athlete mean to you?

I always strive to be the best role model I can be, both as an athlete and coach. If I won this award I hope it will inspire others to continue to achieve the best that they can in track and field athletics and cross country regardless of age or ability. It would personally be one of the single greatest awards in my lifetime of running and it would be even further inspiration to continue my own running career for many more years to come.

What were the highlights and key moments from your competitions this year?

Setting goals for myself on the track and road – and achieving them in 2024

I set myself a goal of aiming to break the 10km track world record for M60 and achieved this by 7 seconds in July 2024. (33:32.09 mins)

I set myself a goal of winning 4 gold medals in 4 events at the World Masters Athletics Championships, Gothenburg (Aug 2024) – and almost achieved this (achieving 2 gold medals, and 2 silver medals – in all individual events). (Cross Country, Half marathon, 10 km and 5 km respectively)

I set myself a goal of winning 4 gold medals at the Australian Masters Athletics Nationals Championship (Hobart, Australia) (April 2024) and achieved this (4 gold medals) – in all individual events. (Cross Country, 10 km, 5km and 1500m)

Racing quality athletes at the highest level at the World Masters Athletics Championships in Gothenburg.

Making new friends in the athletics community at the Nationals and the World Championships.

What was your biggest challenge this year, and how did you overcome it?

My biggest challenge was to continue training and to stay injury free and changing my training methods if needed, particularly as I get older. I had minor back surgery in December 2023 and had a recovery period which I managed well and was able to successfully continue with my training.

How do you balance physical training with mental preparation?

I follow a high kilometre volume method of training as I am a long distance runner and competitor – ranging in events from 1500m right up to Marathons on both track and road. I train daily with many, many kilometres of slow and medium paced effort, interspersed with track sessions ranging from 200m & 400m reps up to 1km and 5 km track/training reps.

I am a life member of Box Hill Athletics Club, Victoria, Australia, and have been training daily and competing in Summer and Winter athletics competition since I was about 13 years old – so now being 61 years old I believe I have honed my mental preparation and mental strength for high-level competition from the years and years of racing and participation in track and field, and cross country competition at State, national and international level. I can confidently calm my nerves pre-race and I approach each race with a positive attitude, knowing I have personally done the preparation and knowing my race plan.

How do you balance intense training with rest and recovery?

My recovery regime usually includes 30 – 45 minutes stretching daily, swimming and water recovery, and an afternoon nap is a bonus. I include regenerative activities such as massage and chiropractic therapy at least fortnightly during competition season. I have a well balanced diet and ensure I get a lot of sleep. Running remains the highest personal priority for me and my family's lifestyle and travel revolves around this sport.

Have you worked with any coaches or mentors this year that made a significant impact on your performance?

I am a coach myself and usually design and undertake my own training programs. I seek occasional advice from my mentor Dr Keith Livingstone for occasional support.

How important is teamwork and support from your coaches and teammates in your individual success?

Whilst I enjoy training solo, particularly to achieve the kilometres I need to complete on a weekly basis, as a coach I prefer all my athletes train, travel and compete as a group. A group setting helps to foster team work and comradery, and is a great motivational setting. I always train with my athletes during their sessions and this provides them with a consistent role model and a sense of support.

What are your goals for next year? Do you have any specific targets or events you're focused on?

My goals for next year are:

World Masters Athletics Championships Indoors (Florida) – I am competing in the 8km cross country, 3km, 10km road race. (March 2025)

National Championships Adelaide, Australia competing in 5km, 10km, 8 km cross country and 1500m. (April 2025)

Marathon – Sydney, Australia (September 2025)

How do you plan to continue improving and evolving as an athlete?

Keep on training hard

Manage my lifestyle and my teaching work around training and travelling for running events as much as we can.

I want to continue to be the best athlete and the best role model I can be

What do you enjoy doing outside of masters athletics?

I enjoy coaching, travelling and spending time with my family. My other interests are building and farming on our property.

What else would you like people to know about you?

I have been a secondary school teacher for more than 30 years teaching Building, Technology and Woodwork subjects, combined with being the Head Coach of Cross Country and the Head Coach of Athletics responsibilities at one school. Through this school I have made some life long friendships especially with the students who participated in the school cross country and athletics programs. I have coached many junior athletes at school and through my athletics club from the beginning of their running careers right through school, State, National and up to international level competitions. This has also extended into masters level competitions for some of my former students. I have helped guide athletes to strive to achieve their best in cross country and athletics, and I have encouraged and helped athletes from Victoria, Australia apply for and obtain College athletics scholarships in the United States.