

## **TRACK & FIELD CHAMPIONSHIPS 2021**

Due to the Covid restrictions under which we are all living this year, and the fact that we wouldn't be able to hold the Championship over two days, with the normal almost 2000 athletes taking part in 300 events for around 100 sets of medals, it has been decided that this year's Championship will take place over three days at the Regional Athletics Centre, Rowsley Street, Manchester, M11 3FF in Manchester, with one age group competing each day and events starting at around 12:30pm each day.

Even though the Government guidelines suggest that restrictions may be lifted on June 21<sup>st</sup>, we all know that the situation for schools and for students will not be anywhere near normal before the end of term. We already know that many counties will not allow students to stay away overnight on school trips, which is effectively what the championships are from an educational point of view. We therefore need to plan so that as many athletes as possible can travel on the day and that the remainder have the opportunity to travel with parents or another appropriate adult and be met at the Championships by one or more Team Managers. Athletes will not be able to attend the championships except on the day they compete. Depending on restrictions at the time, it may be that they must arrive a set time before their event and leave immediately afterwards, but we hope they will be able to stay for the whole session to watch their team-mates.

The entry fee will be much lower than normal and counties which need accommodation for their athletes the night before their competition will receive some support from ESAA, thanks to the grant received from England Athletics and the partnership with New Balance, the title sponsor.

As far as possible the championship will be contact-free and paper-free, with as little interaction as is possible and necessary at such an event.

### **Event Details:**

Senior Girls & Boys: Friday, July 9<sup>th</sup> – Start time 12:30. Last event 17:55

Intermediate Girls & Boys: Saturday, July 10<sup>th</sup> – Start time 12:30. Last event 17:55

Junior Girls & Boys: Sunday, July 11<sup>th</sup> – Start time 12:30. Last event 17:30

Three long throws will take place at an alternative venue, which we expect to be the East Manchester Academy, approximately one kilometre from the stadium which has a hammer / discus cage available. We are still negotiating with the school to be sure of this.

Entries will be limited in each event to a maximum of 16 athletes to ensure the competition can be completed within the afternoon session.

Athletes will be able to compete in one event only, as usual, although counties can enter them into two events and indicate a preference in case they are not ranked in the best sixteen entries in their first choice event but are inside the top sixteen in their second if, for example a number of people enter the same events and are selected in their first choice event. This is an entry system just for this year to try to ensure as many athletes have the chance to compete at the championships under these difficult conditions.

Counties can enter up to their normal entry number, and a maximum of three athletes in each event. Entries will close on Tuesday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> at 22:00 and athlete selection will commence the following day. Counties will be informed of athletes selected from those entered by the end of Friday, June 24<sup>th</sup>. A timetable and seeded start lists will be published soon afterwards. Discussions

are still ongoing as to whether the 300m, 400m and 800m (as well as the long hurdles races) will be held as timed, seeded finals or as heats and finals, taking the short recovery time into account. Endurance races will be held as straight finals. Short sprints and hurdles will be held as heats and finals, possibly with a "B" final as well as an "A" final. All field events will be finals, with all athletes having three trials and the top eight receiving an additional three trials. We are aware that there has been less preparation time for athletes, especially in technical events such as high jump and pole vault and a decision will be taken about starting heights and progressions when entries close.

In light of the postponement of the rule concerning the height of steeplechase barriers for Under 17 boys, they will remain at the previous height this year, rather than as shown in the rule book. This rule change has been put back a year by UKA.

A new rule has been instigated by World Athletics and confirmed by UKA concerning shoes. We would ask athletes to be aware of this rule regarding the thickness of soles. We feel it is unlikely that athletes at the Championship will be wearing experimental or illegal shoes and so checks will only be made if a protest is made by another athlete or the Referee is aware of an athlete wearing such shoes. The athlete would then be liable to disqualification after the race.

Before arrival all athletes, team staff, officials and spectators (where allowed) must take a Covid test at home the day before they arrive at the stadium and another when they return home. These are now available free to anyone from local chemists, supermarkets and other places. This is a necessary precaution we can take to protect everyone who attends but also when you return home to protect your community and school. Clearly, if anyone is showing any symptoms or tests positive, they must stay at home and not travel to the Championships.

When athletes arrive, they will need to check in, have a temperature check and then be directed to their team area in the North Stand where their team manager will meet them to give them their kit and bib numbers. Parents and other accompanying people will enter by a different entrance, also having been temperature checked and go to the seating in other parts of the stadium. Free car parking will be close by and details will be circulated later.

Again, depending on restrictions and risk assessment, it is probable that warm up will take place on a temporary track surface laid close to the stadium on the upper car park area. This will avoid athletes being indoors in large numbers. There will be no Call Room this year. Athletes will report directly to their event site according to the schedule. Track athletes will deposit their outer kit in a box close to the start area and return there immediately after their race. This will avoid the need for others to touch athletes' clothing and carry it to the post-event area.

There will be no medal ceremonies and athletes will be escorted to the area set aside for them to collect their medals and certificates immediately after their event. There will be no team competition this year to avoid the need to gather at the end of the competition to collect trophies. There will be no stand to purchase National Standard badges, but athletes will be able to order them after the championships and have them delivered by post. Details will be circulated before the championships. The Home International, due to take place the week after the Championship has been postponed due to the inability of at least one other country to travel to Derby, the host city of the event. It is hoped that it will take place in September, but this depends on circumstances closer to the date. Information will be given when it is available.

There are still many details to be finalised, and all the planning depends on government restrictions allowing us to stage the event in a particular way. We are working with an experienced expert in Covid planning at sports events as well as taking advice from the local authority who we will have to convince of the effectiveness of our plans before we are allowed to go ahead.

More details will be circulated when available.