



Dave McNair (third from left) lifts his leg to jump over the final hurdle at the World Masters Athletics Championship in Tampere, Finland.
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Dave McNair (left) crosses the finish line in the 100-meter finals at the World Masters Athletics Championships in Tampere, Finland. McNair earned his first world gold medal.

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When former Columbus resident and Columbus High graduate Dave McNair retired in 2016, he said he was looking to stay physically active, but he was concerned in retirement that he would get out of shape.

McNair, to avoid sitting around, forced himself to run a 5K once a month. He did that for 17 straight months and at one of the events, he learned from another runner about age-group running.

That led him on a course he never imagined running on.

McNair, 66, competed at two USA Track and Field (USATF) national championships and in July, he competed at the World Masters Athletics Championships in Tampere, Finland.

After winning a world title in the 100-meter hurdles, McNair will be featured during Sunday's Columbus Days parade with a reception at The Friedhof to follow.

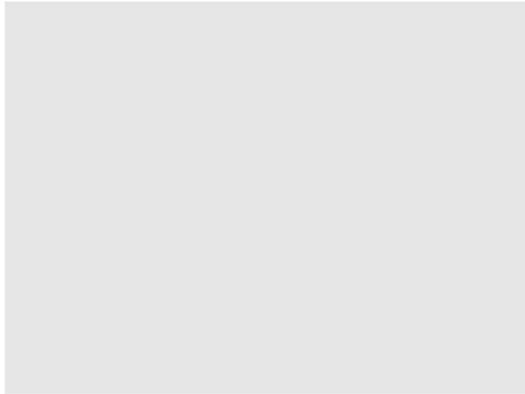
"It's an honor. You don't expect something like that to happen, especially as you get older like this, to have that honor of being recognized is pretty special," McNair said. "The Columbus Days parade, I know how important it is to people who live there. As a kid growing up in Columbus, it was something we always went to. It means an awful lot."

A graduate of Columbus High in 1974, McNair played football, wrestling and track. Growing up around athletics -- his Dad was a teacher and a coach -- McNair was a member of the Discoverers' first-ever state wrestling championship team.

"I think it's a little bit different than growing up in a metropolitan area or anything like that. Columbus, you knew everybody. We would ride bikes all over town. I grew up just a block from the old high school," McNair said. "We would ride our bikes to Pawnee Park and go swimming at the pool, watch the high school kids compete in various spots. It was just a pretty special experience to have that opportunity to grow in Columbus."

He picked up aged-group track in 2017 at the Cornhusker State Games. After running the hurdles in high school at Columbus, McNair was about to jump over his first hurdle in over four decades.

"I still remember walking onto the track that day in 2017 and my wife said to me, 'Are you going to be OK going over the hurdles,' and I said, 'It's been 45 years. We're going to find out,'" McNair said.



Dave McNair (third from left) lifts his leg to jump over the final hurdle at the World Masters Athletics Championship in Tampere, Finland.

COURTESY PHOTO

McNair compared jumping over hurdles as riding a bike.

"The hurdles, the way I look at them, I feel like the old saying they always say about riding a bike," McNair said. "You never forget. Once you get back up there on the bike, it's just natural. Same thing for me with the hurdles."

He picked up right where he left off, winning four golds at CSG. He then found out about senior games, which is an Olympics for people 50 years or older. McNair traveled to six different events, but the competitions didn't feature hurdles.

An athlete he met at one of the senior games told him about USATF masters track meets. He began running masters full-time in 2019.

At his first national championships, he placed third in the 100-meter hurdles and second in the 300 hurdles. His goal for 2020 was to win nationals, but the COVID-19 pandemic delayed that goal.

In 2021, he returned to the national championships in Ames, Iowa, and reached the top of the podium in the 100 and 300 hurdles. McNair posted a 100 time of 17.18 seconds, winning by 1.20 seconds. In the 300, McNair edged out the win by .29 seconds with a gold-medal time of 48.4 seconds.

One of the stadiums McNair competed at was Hayward Park in Eugene, Oregon, dubbed as Tracktown USA. It's the mecca of track and field in the United States, hosting the U.S. Olympic trials and most recently, the World Athletics Championships last month.

In July, McNair traveled to Tampere, Finland, to run in his first world championships. He competed in both hurdle races, earning silver in the 300 with a time of 49.44 seconds.

Dave McNair stands atop the podium with a gold medal wrapped around his neck after winning the 100-meter hurdles at the World Masters Athletics Championship in Tampere, Finland.

COURTESY PHOTO

On July 9, McNair hurdled his way to the gold medal with a time of 16.88 seconds. He crossed the finish ahead of fellow American Mahmoud Niroumand by .11 seconds.

"He was somebody I've never beaten, so it was fun to have the first time I beat him to be in the World Championships," McNair said. "The most special part about that, getting a gold medal at worlds was standing on top the podium and hearing the national anthem play. It brings tears to your eyes. It's such a special experience."



Dave McNair runs down the home stretch of the 300-meter hurdles at the 2022 USATF Masters Outdoor Championships in Lexington, Kentucky. McNair defended both of his national titles.
COURTESY PHOTO

Just last week, McNair returned to the USATF national championships in Lexington, Kentucky. He defended both of his national titles with wins in both hurdle races. McNair clocked in at 17.08 seconds in the 100 and 48.99 seconds in the 300 hurdles.

McNair said, like every kid, he had dreams and went through scenarios in his head of sinking a putt to win the Masters or a buzzer beater win in basketball in hopes to be in a position to achieve his goal in reality.

"With whatever sport I was playing, you kind of go through that mentality and it was the same thing with track. Nowadays, I'm on the track six days a week. My last rep, whenever I'm on the track, when I'm finishing a workout, I'll say to myself, 'If you run this in X-amount of time, you win worlds,'" McNair said. "You just bust your butt to get there and hit that time. When you do that every day and you're thinking about that in your mindset, it just becomes ingrained. You're visualizing that you're going to win worlds, but as a kid, no I never thought I would get to that level. You're always hopeful. You're always working and training for that."



Dave McNair stands atop the podium with a gold medal wrapped around his neck after winning the 100-meter hurdles at the World Masters Athletics Championship in Tampere, Finland.

COURTESY PHOTO

Dave McNair places his hand over his heart during the National Anthem after winning the 100-meter hurdles at the World Masters Athletics Championship in Tampere, Finland.

COURTESY PHOTO

McNair said he joked with his doctor that he couldn't wait to turn 65 so he would be the youngest in the five-year age group. The doctor responded to McNair saying it was the first time anyone has said to her that they can't wait to get to the age. The world champion said, no matter the age, anyone can achieve anything.

"The first thing I would want people to know is they can still be active and they can do anything. At World Masters and at nationals, there were people competing in their 90's. People, they don't have to slow down. They don't have to stop. They can keep doing. They don't have to do it on the level I'm doing it, but you just get out and started," McNair said.

"Maybe it's just walking laps around the track or doing something like that and then maybe you start jogging. You just try different things. There's something out there for everybody if they really want to and get really serious about it and they want to pursue it."

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