



National Senior Games Association

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Personal Best Athlete Profile

Oscar Peyton, 60

Accokeek, Maryland

Making up for lost time...FAST

Oscar Peyton always knew he had natural athletic ability and could run fast, but he didn't discover how fast he really was until his fifth decade of life. Taking up formal track competition at the age of 49, the man people say deserves the title "SpeedDemon" has sprinted to capture a slew of medals - mostly gold - in Senior Games (state and national) and various masters events. According to World Masters Athletics, Peyton is currently ranked #2 all-time in world for the men's 55-59 100 meters outdoors (11.46) and #3 all-time in the men's 55-59 200 meters outdoors (23.47).

It makes you wonder what might have been, and Oscar Peyton wonders about that too. But the competitive nature of the young Peyton was more focused on finding a successful career path to run. From early on he did not feel that track and field would lead to the success he dreamed of. The path out of Bogalusa, Louisiana led to a business administration degree from Grambling University

and then to Washington DC where he worked as a computer specialist and programmer for the federal government for the next 31 years. Peyton reveals that some of his work required a top secret clearance. What he realized as he neared retirement was that he held a personal top secret - an elite sprinter had been inside waiting to emerge. But Peyton looks beyond the competition and sees that the real gold he is earning is his good health, and paying forward what he learned from others who helped show him the way. That's what really represents his personal best.



How did your inner athlete wake up and decide to run track after so many years?

It started when I was just a couple months shy of 50 years old. I was five years from retiring and thinking about what things I might want to do. I had just had a physical and my cholesterol was above 200 so I knew I had to become more active. I played around in the sandlot growing up in Louisiana but I just never pursued anything in organized sports. I was always a natural athlete, always fast. Speed was in my genes. So I was watching the world track and field championships on TV and wondered if there was anything like that for people my age that I could try.

I got on the computer and discovered the senior games. So my very first attempt at an organized track meet was at the Maryland State Senior Olympics in 2002. I didn't have any formal training, I just went on out there and ran - and I actually won the 100 and 200 meter events! I knew I could sprint but that was really something for me.

Six months later, I decided to go to Boston for the USA Track and Field Masters Indoor National Championships and got introduced to the really top level of track athletes in the country. Again, I just showed up and ran and I won the silver in the 60 meters. But I injured my groin muscles and couldn't do any more there. I didn't know how to train, I just ran some treadmill and did a lot of stuff that was wrong for me. It was time to get to work.



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So what did you do when you realized that even with natural talent you needed to train to avoid injury?

First, I got to talk to all of those elite guys in Boston and picked up a lot of good advice. Secondly the Internet has a world of information.

You gotta put a little sweat and work into it. Some of the training is tough and competition is even tougher. Good health is just not going to come to you either. Like anything else, you have to work for it, and then you have to work to keep it.

Actually I've now collected a lot of useful information and created my own "[PeytonProject](#)" website as a quick reference source for anyone looking to find training help like I needed when I got started. It's especially geared for people to improve their speed as well as their health. I try to cover all the phases, training, diet, the importance of nutrients and drinking enough water. You need to pay attention to all of that if you want to be the best that you can be.

At the same time I wanted to extend out to anyone who knew me and anyone interested in masters track exactly what I've been doing along the years. I guess you could call it an athletic biography.

So it's the competition that drives you?

I'm just so highly competitive by nature that I don't look outside for motivation. It's just the kind of person I am. I cannot deny that I enjoy competing and enjoy winning, but that is on the back burner. First and foremost, I know I need to exercise and it gives me the motivation to get healthy and stay healthy.

There's another thing that's more important to me. The older gentlemen I met when I got started would bend over backwards to help me. That's the kind of camaraderie we have in this world of track and senior games. Everybody is willing to help others especially in areas of injury prevention, maintenance and treatment. It just had to rub off on me. So what was given to me, I'm trying to give back.

But there is one other thought that does motivate me to strive for my best. Back in the day, I didn't have interest in track and field because it's an amateur sport and I couldn't see a future in it for me. How could you make a living at it?

Now I think I let it all slip away when I was younger. I want to put some marks down now that I'm older so people will say "I wonder what would have been like if this guy had been competing back when he was at his peak?" I guess I just want to make up for the lost time in a way.

Beyond your website, is there anything else you do to help others with your sport?

I train at local high schools and while I'm there the coaches give me the green light to help out. So when I go out there I enjoy helping the sprinters with some drills to improve their technical skills. The coaches do a good job of getting them into great condition, so I focus on the sprinters like me with both the technical and mental side of preparation.

Has anyone else told you that you are their inspiration?

Oh, a ton of people have done that. A lot of the kids at the high school tell me that. I also participate with a local track club and I'm the oldest one there. They all look up to me. It's the same when I go to USA Track and Field masters events, because you can participate starting at age 30 and a lot of the younger guys come up and say I inspire them. There was a spectator who came up to me and said he had not run track since high school and watching me inspired him to get back into it. So I was able to share with him the steps he needed to take.

At the Senior Games it's a different situation. It more like we are helping each other move ahead.

Like many, you got busy with your life and got away from being as active as you could have been. What do you tell people you see about getting out of the rut?



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I tell them just to be active -even to people I don't know because I care about everybody. I try to tell the older persons that it doesn't matter what you choose to do but that you have to exercise. If you are taking medications you'd be surprised how much just a little regular exercise can do to get you off a lot of that stuff. And if you do it right and often enough, you might even find you can get off your medications completely. Then, if you stay active you may get motivated to get into something organized.

You mention you have an athletic gift that you now put to use. Are there any other sports you might take up besides track?

I've actually been bowling a lot. I'm in a senior league and enjoy that. I haven't pursued it beyond that for senior games. There's a lot of sports I've tried that I know I could participate in - basketball , volleyball, swimming. I love doing it all. I stick with track and field for the serious competition.

I can't think of anything that will get you into better shape than running track. I'll tell you this: if you take all the elite athletes in different sports, and you put them into some kind of competition in a variety of activities- running, kicking, throwing, what have you, I'll bet the sprinter will probably turn out to be the best overall athlete of the bunch. I remember some TV competition like that with guys from football, baseball and other sports on an obstacle course, and the track guy came out on top.

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