

Record Internationals For Wellington's Marathon

More than 4000 runners from a record 23 countries will line up on June 23rd for the 37th Gazley Volkswagen Wellington Marathon. Although the race they'll take on is almost unrecognisable from its modest beginnings.

Established in 1986, what was then called the Harbour Capital Half Marathon was a popular local event for almost 20 years. But since 2003, when the race shifted to Sky Stadium and established a safer and more scenic waterfront course, the event grew to become central New Zealand's premier marathon event.

"Entries are still open and we're tracking for more than 4000 come race day," says event manager Michael Jacques.

"The fact that we have participants from a record 23 countries really does speak to the stature of the event."

Jacques, who has been a runner for 50 years and the Wellington Marathon event manager since 2007, says the event's success revolves around providing something for everyone.

"The Stadium is a great venue, and the course is incredibly scenic and also flat and fast. But I think the big thing is that we cater for runners and walkers of all age and ability."

"People come from different fitness backgrounds and have different goals. Not everyone has the time or inclination to train for the Gazley Volkswagen Full Marathon, but most people can achieve the Shoe Clinic Half Marathon, or the Mizuno 10K. And The Hits Kids' Magic Mile adds a great family flavour."

Two who like to keep it in the family are Levin's Pauline and Barry Coupland, who at age 83 share the honours as the eldest participants in 2024. Pauline is entered in the half marathon and Barry in the 10k. In the full marathon 80-year-old Aucklander, Colleen Falloon is aiming to be the eldest ever female finisher for the full 42.2k

At the other end of the scale there is an impressive 27 teenagers taking on the full distance, with Otaki 16-year-old Andrea Dakin being the youngest. Youth win the day

among teams too, with Tawa Intermediate having more than 50 entries, while the Shoe Clinic is right behind them at 47.

Jacques says it is great to see people like Wellington's Des Young continuing his streak as the only person to have run all 36 previous events. Another who knows a thing or two about marathons is Wellington's Mike Stewart who lines up for the classic 42.2k for his 607th time on Sunday.

A goal many entrants choose is to participate in support of the New Zealand Heart Foundation, which is the official charity of the Gazley Volkswagen Wellington Marathon. Their "Have A Heart" programme provides a platform for participants to raise money for heart health research.

The 37th Gazley Volkswagen Wellington Marathon kicks off on Sunday June 23 at Sky Stadium. Entries are still open at wellingtonmarathon.co.nz.

