



## Around The Rings

### USAMG Podcast

2/27/17



**Kevin Nutley, Around The Rings:** I'm joined by USA Masters Games CEO, Hill Carrow, on the latest edition of ATR Radio. Thank you for joining us today, Hill.

**Hill Carrow, USA Masters Games:** Kevin, thanks so much. It's an honor and pleasure to be with you today.

**Kevin:** The second edition of the USA Masters Games is on the horizon. Could you give us a brief description of the Games?

**Hill:** Yes. The Games are designed to be a multi-sport festival for adult athletes ages 21 and over. We have 24 different sports in the Games, mostly Olympic related sports such as Masters Track & Field and Masters Swimming etc. They are all incorporated within the Games, which will be held in San Diego this summer. [Editors Note: Five sports (Soccer, Softball, Tennis, Track & Field, and Triathlon) will be held June 23-25; nineteen sports (Archery, Badminton, Basketball, Beach Volleyball, Cycling, Diving, Figure Skating, Ice Hockey, Judo, Pickleball, Powerlifting, Road Race, Swimming, Synchronized Swimming, Table Tennis, Volleyball, Water Polo, Weightlifting) will be held July 13-16.]

**Kevin:** What was the real emphasis to start the USA Masters Games last year and the goal of the competition?

**Hill:** I myself am a Masters athlete and have been involved with US Masters Swimming for a very long time - over 3 decades. My background is very in - depth in Olympic and amateur sport multisport events. I started the State Games here in North Carolina, and ran the US Olympic Festival when that event existed. I've even done work for the US Olympic Committee on the Africa Youth Games and been part of 14 different Olympic Games among others. I really enjoy multisport events and think they can be quite special if they are done well. I love the fact that they bring together athletes, officials, coaches, and fans from different sports.

The Masters Games phenomenon has actually been going for a good while, for over 3 decades around the world. They started the Granddaddy of them all, the Australian Masters Games, in 1985. The World Masters Games, which is held every 4 years, also started in the 80's and has continued since that time. The next World Masters Games are coming up in April of this year in New Zealand. There is also a European Masters Games, Pan-Pacific Masters Games etc. The concept has been out there and the United States has never had one.

The World Games were hosted once in 1999 in Portland, but we haven't had our own Masters Games. Given my background and the timing, it seemed opportune. The sport tourism market continues to grow and there are a lot of cities that are interested in these types of events. All those factors came together and presented an opportunity.

The final piece of it was that I've done a lot of significant projects in Greensboro, North Carolina. I ran two US Figure Skating National Championships there, the USA Gymnastics Championships, and a couple of National Championships for Masters Swimming etc. They have really excellent facilities that are very convenient and easy to access. Greensboro is a great community for supporting these types of activities. All those factors just came together at the right time and helped us launch a really successful Games last year. And we wanted to continue the concept on into the future.

**Kevin:** What lessons were learned from the inaugural USA Masters Games last year in North Carolina, and what improvements can be made looking forward to San Diego?

**Hill:** I think the main lessons we learned are that the sports market place has obviously grown tremendously over the last several decades, and there are a lot of events and activities, as well as entertainment options and distractions, that go on throughout everybody's life. So to get on everybody's radar is perhaps a little harder than you would think, particularly for a new event. When we did surveys afterwards among participants, we found that the number one way people found out about the Games was word of mouth, which as we all know is the number one best advertising you can have. Secondly it was from our presence at other significant events, particularly other Masters National Championships and similar events that target those athletes.

We are doing the same this year: really working hard to get the word out and we've supplemented it with social media. We'll do some traditional advertising and all. For an event like this you would never have the size advertising budget you'd really need to reach the whole country, so we have to be very selective in that regard. That's one of the things we learned. It is probably the most important. That is, just to get it on people's radar screens, particularly adults that have to plan often well in advance with their families and their work, you have to start early.

**Kevin:** This year's event begins the end of the June. How are preparations for those Games coming along? Are there any issues?

**Hill:** Originally the vision for the Masters Games was to be held every other year in the even year. Some of the other Masters Games of the world like the Australian Masters Games are held every other year. The same thing for the Pan Pacific Masters. The Australian Masters Games are every other year in the odd year. The Pan Pacifics are held every other year in the even year. That's kind of a traditional formula that's out there, and we thought that would be the original vision for this event.

But what happened was we got past the Greensboro Games, and we did surveys of all our athletes. The surveys came back extremely positive for the Games and with strong comments indicating “why wait two years?” Why don’t you do this every year? We also thought to ourselves that it might be easier to continue the momentum of the Games, and it would be a big help if we just did the Games every single year. That’s the direction we decided to take.

Unfortunately in one sense we weren’t able to reach that conclusion until around October. Needless to say San Diego is a very popular destination. They have a lot of big things going on there. That’s one of the reasons we chose them obviously. But if you select San Diego to do something as big as this with only eight or nine months lead time, sometimes you have to go with the flow in terms of what you’re able to schedule there. So the reason the Games are separated into a June segment for five sports and a July segment for the remainder of the sports (the other 19) is because of the way hotels, venues, and things like that were already booked out in the San Diego market.

In 2018 (we selected San Diego to be the host for both 2017 and 2018), we’ll have it all together over a seven to 10 day period, consolidated instead of being broken up like it is in 2017. This year we had to be a little bit flexible in that regard. But we are going to have entertainment and social events for athletes every single night, even for the June group. Even though Opening Ceremonies and Closing Ceremonies are during the July sports, we will have social and entertainment events for the June sports, too, such as attending a Padres game and things like that. Athletes are welcome if they are nearby to come back in July and attend some of the Ceremonies as well.

**Kevin:** How would you compare the USA Masters Games to the biggest multi-sport event in the world - the Olympics?

**Hill:** Obviously the Olympics are huge, cost several billion dollars, and take some of the biggest cities in the world to be able to host The Games. The goal of the Olympics in terms of bringing athletes together from all over is the same for the Masters Games. By the way, even though it’s called the USA Masters Games, athletes from International countries are welcome. We actually had six continents of the world represented just in our inaugural edition last year.

The concept of the Olympic Games, where it’s about participation and enjoying the journey, all those kind of really good and positive aspects of the Olympic Games are something that we want Masters athletes to feel. Some of the Masters athletes have been in the Olympic Games. We have that level of athlete in the Games, but we also have the weekend warriors and people who just enjoy getting together around a big event and testing to see where they are in the sport they are training in.

We have all those varieties of people who participate and that’s why we call it the National Sports Festival for Adult Athletes - “festival” being the operative word there. We want it to be a celebration. We want it to be fun. We want them to compete hard and feel like

they've done really well in their sports endeavor, but also come out on the town afterwards. Come to where we are having the social event for that evening. Meet their fellow athletes from all over and just enjoy their time in the Masters Sport community as well as at The Games.

**Kevin:** You mentioned that San Diego is hosting this year's event and 2018, and they also host a number of other events. What do you think makes San Diego such a hot spot to host a major competition like that?

**Hill:** San Diego has numerous attractions, great weather, and excellent experience hosting large events. I'd like to encourage everybody who may be listening to come and join us in San Diego for the Games. I guarantee they will have a good time and good competition if they're going to be an athlete. We'd love to have everyone out there.

Our intent is to certainly try to grow this event significantly in the years to come, and San Diego is the next step in that. That's why we're there for two consecutive years. We thought that it could be an opportunity to break in the local host committee, and then they could take it to the next level the following year. And that might be a pattern that we adopt going into the future where we give cities two years to help raise the bar.

We welcome everyone from everywhere to join us for the 2017 USA Masters Games. Please visit the Games website at [USAMastersGames2017.com](http://USAMastersGames2017.com). We guarantee a good time and hope to see everybody in sunny San Diego!

**Note:** This transcript has been edited for clarity. The full podcast can be found at

[http://aroundtherings.com/site/A\\_59202/Title\\_USA-Masters-Games-Gaining-Momentum-with-Yearly-Event---ATRadio/292/Articles](http://aroundtherings.com/site/A_59202/Title_USA-Masters-Games-Gaining-Momentum-with-Yearly-Event---ATRadio/292/Articles)