

World silver medal for 88-year-old sprinter

“New boy” Hamish Mackenzie, an 88-year-old retired chartered accountant from the Grange, has returned with a silver medal from his first appearance at the World Masters Athletics Championship in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Although a regular runner over half marathons and 10ks – he still goes for pre-breakfast jogs – Hamish had not thought about sprinting before. Then Marc Malone, who runs the Inside Out Fitness Training classes for all ages out of Carlton Cricket Club, spotted something special in the way his client strode out.



You're never too old: 88-year-old sprinter Hamish Mackenzie proudly displays his silver medal from the World Masters sprint competition.

"That was in late January/early February" recalls Hamish, who

adds: "next thing we were on our way to the Meadowbank track to see if I could participate in the World Masters (85-90 category) without disgracing myself!"

Far from disgracing himself Hamish was drafted to a four man GB| relay team which chased home Germany and finished ahead of India in the final.

GB's time was 1m 15 secs – five seconds behind the winners.

Still Hamish, who used to captain the Watsonian rugby 4th XV from centre three-quarter back in the day, wasn't totally satisfied as his competitive nature emerged.

"In the individual event contested by about 20 athletes I let myself get a bit spooked even though I had adjusted to the different technique demanded for sprinting compared to longer distances and maintained my stamina.

"I hadn't run (in a lane) with people either side of me since I was at school and it got to me a bit on the day.

"Fortunately the essence of the World Masters is friendship and fellow competitors were assuring me this was quite a normal reaction for someone who hadn't sprinted against others before.

"I was the new boy!"

Over 8000 athletes aged between 35 and 100+ descended on Gothenburg but coach Marc Malone, having intended to accompany Hamish, had to pull out after injuring an elbow in the European over-40's long jump championship in Albania shortly beforehand.

Marc is already encouraging his star prodigy to set sights on the European Championships next year.

"I maybe felt like an amateur among professionals – a lot of the competitors knew so much about times, records etc – but

the camaraderie and international friendship makes me want to do more.

“It wasn’t so much a case of running against people as running with them and the Swedish people could not have been more hospitable.

“The Euros are scheduled for Madeira which sounds a very nice place to visit” adds Hamish who still plays golf at the Murrayfield club having represented the Edinburgh University team earlier in his sporting career.

Although athletes are self selected for the World Masters Hamish had to join the local Edinburgh Veterans Club and affiliate to the Scottish and British Masters organisations.

That, he says, is a further benefit from an experience which might have been a long time coming but one he is determined to keep enjoying.

“After all, I’ve got to keep myself fit” says this inspirational figure who will be 89 years young next May!