

OAA COMPETITION CIRCULAR - 11.22 - Oceania Cup 2023

30 September 2022

You will be aware that OAA was due to host three (3) Regional Championships in 2023. Unfortunately, following a site visit and further audit of the facilities available in the region by OAA, the Oceania Athletics Council made the difficult decision to re-introduce the Oceania Cup in 2023 in favour of the Regional Championships.

After inspection of Lautoka (Churchill Park) the Oceania Council has found that the venue is not suitable for any level of competition and consequently, not suitable to host the 2023 Oceania Athletics, Melanesian/Polynesian Regional Championships. Other venues were inspected in Fiji, including Suva and Lawaqa Park in Sigatoka, unfortunately neither were suitable to host international events.

The OAA Office and the OAA Council will continue to lobby for an upgrade to Churchill Park and the Suva Track and after a very positive meeting with the Nadi Athletics Association we are hopeful that a Nadi track is not too far in the future.

The update confirmed that there are currently no tracks in the Melanesian or Polynesian Regions that can host an international event (outside of Australia or New Zealand). In addition, many facilities do not have sufficient equipment that could be considered suitable for an international event. The Council is excited that over the next 12 months there will be more facilities available and that the options for international competitions will increase. We look forward to seeing the completion of the Solomon Islands facility in time for the 2023 Pacific Games.

Covid has no doubt played havoc with each of Member Federation's ability to host events and therefore the athletics facilities that were once the pride and joy of the cities and MFs have been left to disintegrate and we are now paying the price. There is no doubt that MFs need to be more proactive with local authorities to ensure their facilities are built and importantly maintained into the future.

The Council has considered the ramifications of hosting our Regional Championships at a sub-standard facility. Firstly, the opportunity for improved results is negated and importantly World Athletics Ranking points will be compromised for all athletes at a time when we are trying to improve ranking opportunities. In addition, this initiative will align with the Oceania Athletics Council's vision in the Oceania Strategic Plan (2021-2024) Mission:

Inspire

Create appealing and accessible competitions, events and activities so our talented athletes can entertain and inspire."

Our KPIs listed in our Performance Pillar include:

1. Improving overall performance standards
2. Support MFs to maximize athlete qualification opportunities
3. Maintain three Olympic Qualifiers in the Pacific

After taking this information into account, the OAA Council considered the following options, based on information that we have been able to gather from past Regional and Area Championships:

1. Host all Regional Championships in Australia at one time (June/July 2023)
2. Host all Regional Championships in Auckland at one time (November/December 2023)
3. Host Polynesia/Melanesia Regional Championships in Australia (June/July 2023)
4. Host Polynesian Regional Championships in Auckland (November/December 2023)
5. Micronesian Championships already agreed upon for Saipan (June/July 2023)
6. In 2023 the Oceania Regional Championships are not conducted in the current format:
7. In 2023 the Area Association host the Oceania Cup, consisting of teams from: Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia, Australia, New Zealand, Regional Australia (self-funded), Host Member Federation, (one other team to be confirmed).
8. The three (3) Regional Teams consist of athletes from their Region

Other information

1. Regional Team Selections will be made by OAA Selection Committee
2. All Member Federations will have a quota based on the same quota system of World Athletics
3. Invitational events be held alongside the Oceania Cup for those athletes not included in the OC Teams
4. OAA will supply Regional Teams with uniforms, other teams will wear their team uniform

Benefits

1. All MFs will be eligible for selection
2. All MFs will be represented
3. Quotas will be maintained for all MFs
4. The level of competition will be enhanced
5. The best athletes from each Region will be selected based on their performances

6. Selection of athletes will be transparent
7. Athletes will represent their Region or MF and at the same time represent their MF
8. The Regional Championships will still exist, however in a Team environment
9. The Oceania Cup was reintroduced in 2021 on the Gold Coast and was popular amongst the athletes and MFs – this is a competition that we can continue to build on

After considering all options, the Oceania Council made the final decision to adopt and host the updated format of the Oceania Cup in the Northern Mariana Islands in June 2023, considering the following rationale:

1. To take advantage of the legacy of the Pacific Mini Games in 2022
2. It is the only feasible ‘Pacific Island’ option that we currently have available
3. We should not host all events in Australia – this does not develop our MFs
4. New Zealand cannot currently give a commitment to host Oceania because of the difficulty of dates
5. The new concept will encourage development of our Athletes in all Member Federations

We are excited to announce that the 4th edition of the Oceania Cup will be hosted in Saipan, Northern Marianas. Previous editions have been hosted by Vanuatu, Samoa and Australia. Oleai, Stadium in Saipan, was the venue for the 2022 Pacific Mini Games, and is currently the best facility in the Pacific. The local Organising Committee and Athletics Federation demonstrated an outstanding record in hosting major international competitions with the Mini Games.

The OAA Council continues to work with the Oceania Masters Athletics Association to ascertain where they will host their 2023 Championships. Further information on this event will be made available in the coming weeks.

OAA is still working on another competition to allow Member Federations an opportunity to have international relay qualification. The OAA Competition Commission is now examining the feasibility of a proposal and is looking at possible venues.

In 2024 Oceania Athletics will host the Area Championships, Expressions of Interest to host the Championships will be circulated in the coming weeks.

Any questions relating to the Oceania Cup and upcoming events should be directed in the first instance to Tom O’Shaughnessy - competitions@oceaniaathletics.com