

Museum of World Athletics is launched online

Posted by Jason Henderson | Mar 15, 2021 |

Global governing body supports the heritage of track and field with the creation of a digital home for artefacts¹

Over the years there have been various attempts to keep the history of the sport alive. Athletics has a strong presence, of course, in the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, whereas the Olympic Museum in Barcelona was a temporary home to an IAAF centenary exhibition in 2012. [...]

In Britain, a group of enthusiasts have worked hard in recent years to maintain a collection of primarily written material such as old programmes, books and of course magazines like *AW*. There have been temporary exhibitions, too, such as at Alexander Stadium during the Diamond League in Birmingham. But plans to build a bricks and mortar museum² at the Olympic Park in London in 2012 did not materialise, which means of course that much of the historical material is currently inaccessible to fans.

During the past year, of course, museums have been largely inaccessible anyway due to the pandemic. Given this, World Athletics has created an online museum to allow fans to immerse themselves in the history of the sport without stepping outside their own homes.

The Museum of World Athletics – or MOWA for short – features 3D images of shoes, clothing and equipment, plus medals and more. It has evolved following the creation of the World Athletics heritage initiative in 2018 “to honour, preserve and promote the sport’s history” and includes attractive computer-generated images combined with actual high-quality photographs of various items and artefacts. [...]

The museum includes items such as Grete Waitz’s racing shoes from her heyday in the early 1980s and the singlet³ and number that Herb Elliott wore when winning the Olympic 1500m title in a world record in 1960. [...]

There is a section focusing on the ancient history of athletics and how it has developed in the past 3000 years. Iconic artefacts from every continent are on display too. However the focal point so far is, not surprisingly, the World Championships area where everything from Carl Lewis’ singlet through to Mo Farah’s racing spikes⁴ are on view. [...]

The sound effects aren’t intrusive and make it feel very authentic. Add to this the general design – which includes images of make-belief visitors and even the same style of toilets that you would find in a real-life museum – and at times it really does feel like you are there.

If you grew up playing *Space Invaders* and *Pacman*, you will be blown away with the graphics. If you are part of the *Fortnite* generation, you will feel right at home.

Much of the technology involved in the MOWA is down to a company called dcSPORT, which is headed up by Jason Gardener, the former world and European indoor 60m champion.

Gardener’s team took 36 photos of each artefact at successive 10-degree angles to create the 3D element. The pictures were high quality, too, so that if you zoom in you can see every scratch or mark on the footwear or apparel.

Gardener says: “We wanted it to be a stunning visual, immersive, engaging and enjoyable place to visit. To be part of this big project where anyone with internet access can tap into this rich history is amazing.”

www.athleticsweekly.com

¹ <https://www.athleticsweekly.com/news/global-governing-body-supports-the-heritage-of-track-and-field-with-the-creation-of-a-digital-home-for-artefacts>

1. objects exhibited in a museum
2. a real building (as opposed to a virtual one)
3. a sleeveless jersey, shirt
4. sports shoes with metal parts