

News

By EVA MILLETT

DISCOVERING you are one of the best marathon runners in the UK and in the top 125 worldwide was simply “mindblowing” for a Derbyshire athlete – especially at the age of 66.

Sue Pinder from Heanor Running Club didn’t realise her performance at the London Marathon would have such implications as she now prepares to jet off to Cape Town to compete in a world championships.

Sue said: “I just couldn’t believe it. I really could not believe what was happening. It was just mind blowing, really. It took me a few days to get it into my head.

“I told my family and they just said ‘Wow,’ in complete disbelief.”

Sue, from Ilkeston, took a 15-year break from marathon running until 2021 when she ran the Manchester Marathon. This year, after receiving a notification on her phone for the last chance to enter the ballot for the London Marathon 2025, she decided to enter.

Despite falling during the run and having to walk part of the way, she completed the course in four hours and two minutes.

“It was the slowest I’d ever ran a marathon,” says Sue. “I thought, perhaps it’s time to call it a day now because I’ll be 67 in a few weeks’ time. I thought it was my body telling me to stop.”

But that time was enough to qualify her for the Abbott World Marathon Majors Age Group World Championships in Cape Town, where she will compete later this year.

The Good for Age (GFA), qualifying times are based on age and gender, which Sue used as a benchmark for her most recent marathon.

The GFA time for her age category was four hours, 13 minutes, which her recent time came within 11 minutes of.

“I’ve got three hours 50 in my legs – I’m sure,” says Sue.

“That was how I found out about it. I was gobsmacked because I’m not an athlete. I’m a grandma, a club runner, I’ve got four grandkids.”

Sue has a long history with running and competed in marathons during her 40s, with personal bests of 3:19 and 3:20.

She returned in 2021 for the Manchester Marathon, finishing in 3:50, but said it “took it out of me.”

She joined Heanor Running Club around ten years ago and says the group has been a big part of her return to fitness and racing.

“My first session at Heanor nearly killed me,” says Sue.

“I was so unfit, competitively. But I thought, ‘No, I’m going to stick with it.’ And I’m so glad I did because

Proving age is just a number as runner is ranked one of the best in UK

Sue Pinder from Heanor Running Club will compete in Cape Town later this year



IN HER AGE GROUP SHE IS RANKED IN THE TOP 125 WORLDWIDE AND 10TH IN THE UK

they’re such a lovely crowd, they’re so supportive and the coach is great.”

The club is well-established in Derbyshire and known for its strong community spirit and competitive presence on the local racing scene.

Although she races against runners much younger than her, Sue continues to win her age category in most events – and often even outpaces younger brackets.

“I have won my age category in virtually everything I’ve run so far for a while now,” says Sue.

“I look to see, okay, I’ve won that category. Now what was the winning time for the category below me? And often I’ve won that.

“I can go down and I’ve done it for the 55s.

“That’s where I look to see how good I am running.”

Running has been a constant through Sue’s life, especially during

challenging times. “I’ve had many years of real hard struggles – family breakdowns and things like that,” says Sue.

“At one stage I had three jobs to keep things going. I couldn’t afford to do anything like pay for gym memberships. So the only way I could do it was to run.

“You run away, and then you sort things out in your head when you’re running, problems you have at work, issues you have.”

She describes running as a form of therapy, saying, “If I was to be told that I couldn’t go running in a rela-

tionship, there wouldn’t be a relationship.”

Sue has now signed up for a travel package to take part in the world championship race in Cape Town, and her son will be accompanying her.

The Abbott World Marathon Majors Age Group World Championships is a global competition that invites top-ranked marathoners aged 40+ to compete against peers in their age bracket.

For Sue, the 2026 championship is set to take place within the prestigious Sanlam Cape Town Marathon.

“The race starts at six in the morning,” says Sue.

“

Anybody over 50 thinking, ‘I’m too old for that now,’ – you’re never too old for anything. You’re only as old as you think you are.

“If I’m running for four hours, within a couple of hours the sun will be up full. So if the humidity and the heat – it’s not going to be an easy marathon.”

She says she has no ambition to complete all seven Abbott major marathons, citing the strain of doing too many full-distance events in a year.

“I think one a year is ample for me,” she said. “But I am going to try and get that ranking down if I can.”

As for advice to other people in their 60s who are considering running, Sue is clear.

“Just have a go because there’s nothing to fail,” she said. “You’re not failing. You’re not – you can’t fail. Just give it your best shot.

“Anybody over 50 thinking, ‘I’m too old for that now,’ – you’re never too old for anything. You’re only as old as you think you are.”