

There's something about the sharp pop of a starter's gun that excites a track and field enthusiast. On Dec. 4 and 5, that sound will echo repeatedly in the Liberty University Indoor Track Complex as the Commonwealth Games Indoor Track Meet returns after a year hiatus.

For Meet Coordinator Theo Mclvor, it's time to get up and running again.

Mclvor has worked as meet coordinator since the Games added the indoor meet when the partnership with Liberty began and the Indoor Complex could be used. He's been the outdoor track meet coordinator since 2007.

He also managed to get two-time Olympic gold medalist Francena McCorory to be the speaker at the Opening Ceremonies. Mclvor saw her at Bethel High School run the fastest 300 meter time in the country and kept up with her career. McCorory was on the gold medal-winning 4x400 relay teams in London and Rio, so she wasn't hard to find.

"She posted on Facebook that she wanted to get into meet timing and I reached out to her. We've been good friends ever since," Mclvor said.

He also brought in Para-Olympian Antoine Craig to be a torch bearer.

"Antoine emailed me and asked if he could come and compete. I said yes." Mclvor said.

Being the first indoor meet since losing a year to COVID, Mclvor is not sure what the numbers will look like. There's a mixture of excitement to return to competition and reluctance by some coaches to brave the crowds.

The Saturday meet, Dec. 4, is for high school teams. Past high school meets have attracted upward of 1,100 athletes, Mclvor said. The number this year could be down because of the pandemic and the fact a large meet in Virginia Beach was scheduled for the same day.

The Sunday meet is for youth, clubs, open, masters and unattached – anybody who wants to compete but is not on a high school team.

"We say the masters start at 30 and go to 105," Mclvor said. "We've had masters come in here at 87 years old. One year we even had a 92-year-old."

There are plenty of age groups to offer competition to anyone who wants to lace up their trainers and hit the track. The Sunday meet will have 31 events – 15 for men and 16 for women. For the first time, women have the extra, combined event of heptathlon. Mclvor said the open meet usually draws 600-700 people.

"The Commonwealth Games can be really busy and can be serious. When you've got the masters involved they take it seriously," he said. "This year we've got the World Games (July 2022 in Alabama) so everybody's gearing up, from college to masters to professionals. They want to qualify."

As a track coach himself, Mclvor is enthusiastic about running a meet that brings together so many teams. He was head track coach at Heritage High School in Lynchburg until his daughter Kandace started

high school at Jefferson Forest. He stepped down from the head coaching position to help her through her scholastic career where she excelled in track, naturally, and volleyball. In the meantime, he will continue organizing track & field events and his support of the Virginia Commonwealth Games.