

# Move over, Geoff ! 74-year-olds with one-track mind still push each other to limit

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Geoffrey Cooke, left, and Geoffrey Wiles are among Britain's most accomplished cycling veterans. They race regularly and spend 15 hours a week on their bikes ANDREW FOX

Here come the speeding septuagenarians. More than 50 years after they started entering races, a superfit pair of superannuated cyclists were tearing up the track yesterday with a fire to match athletes a third their age.

At the national track championships of the League of Veteran Racing Cyclists in Derby this weekend, Geoffrey Cooke and Geoffrey Wiles, both 74, faced one another in no fewer than five events.

"We want to beat each other," declared Cooke, who before this weekend had won 191 cycling medals in national and international races. He hopes to keep racing long enough to win 200 and got off to a good start in Derby, where he picked up three more golds in early events.

## WORLD RECORD HOLDERS ... AND THE FASTEST BY AGE

### 100 METRES

#### Men

World record **Usain Bolt**  
Age 40+ **Kim Collins**  
Age 60+ **Ronald Taylor** (UK)  
Age 100+ **Fauja Singh\*** (UK)

#### Time

**9.58**  
**9.93**  
**11.70**  
**23.40**

### MILE

#### Men

WR **Hicham El Guerrouj**  
Age 40+ **Bernard Lagat**  
Age 60+ **Nolan Shaheed**  
Age 100+ **Fauja Singh\*** (UK)

#### Time

**3:43.13**  
**3:54.91**  
**4:50.95**  
**11:53.45**

#### Women

WR **Florence Griffith-Joyner**  
Age 40+ **Merlene Ottey**  
Age 60+ **Karla Del Grande**  
Age 100+ **Julia Hawkins**

**10.49**  
**10.99**  
**13.63**  
**39.62**

#### Women

WR **Svetlana Masterkova**  
Age 40+ **Yekaterina Podkopayeva**  
Age 60+ **Kathryn Martin**  
Age 90+ **Colleen Milliman**

**4:12.56**  
**4:23.78**  
**5:42.65**  
**13:26.46**

Wiles, a former world champion in the 70-74 age category, has become Cooke's most dangerous adversary and may deny him a clean sweep of Derby golds. "It's wonderful that I've been able to come and rattle his cage," Wiles chortled. "I suppose I'm a 74-year-old who thinks he's a 34-year-old."

The two men are among Britain's most accomplished cycling veterans, symbolising the remarkable growth of bike racing as a pursuit for pensioners. Many clubs boast riders in their seventies, with some still turning out in their eighties on lightweight carbon bikes and put many a boy racer to shame.

Cooke's sprint medals include a Commonwealth gold medal and 42 world masters championship golds. Chatting before his latest races began in Derby, he said he hoped to win at least three of the five races.

"I don't wish [Wiles] any harm but I know when I go onto the track I want it more than anybody else," he said.

He is still sore about losing a race in July when he claims to have eased off and warned: "No favours this time."

Wiles responded: "By the time you get to our age, it's still competitive but it is a Corinthian thing — it's not 'at all costs'. We wouldn't put each other on the deck just to get a medal."

At his peak in the 1960s and 1970s, Cooke remained an amateur and competed at the Munich Olympics in 1972 and won his Commonwealth gold in 1974. Wiles, a 1976 national road race champion, turned professional and their paths diverged.

Cooke went on to coach Sir Chris Hoy and Chris Boardman, then returned to racing as a veteran in the mid-1990s and began to win the world titles that had previously eluded him. He was comfortably the best in his age group until six years ago, when Wiles returned to the fray.

Wiles, who lives near Tonbridge, Kent, with his wife Barbara, began training at the London velodrome created for the 2012 Olympics and found his old winning form. Since then the two men have been slugging it out.

Cooke, who lives with his wife Lynda in Long Eaton, Derbyshire, said: “A lot of people don’t ride [against us] because we’re head and shoulders beyond. That’s a bit unfortunate but you can’t help it.”

Both men spend at least 15 hours a week on their bikes and boast of having resting heart rates under 50 beats per minute, a key sign of super-fitness (the adult average is 60-100bpm). Their exploits have confused some medical experts. Cooke, who has a chunky build, was recently told off by a nurse for his excessive BMI score.

“She talked to me about getting fit, until she remarked that I was quite muscular. I said: I am the world masters champion, an Olympian and a Commonwealth gold medallist,” Cooke said.

“I couldn’t help myself. I wasn’t having her talking down to me like that.”