



SAAA Partnership & Press Kit

Scottish American Athletic Association

Official Sanctioning Body for
Scottish Highland Games Heavy Athletics

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1981

saaa-national.org



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Executive Summary: Who We Are

The Scottish American Athletic Association (SAAA) is a California-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1981 and serving as an official sanctioning body for Scottish Highland Games Heavy Athletics. SAAA establishes and maintains standardized rules, safety protocols, judging requirements, and competition oversight for men's and women's amateur and professional Heavy Athletes.

SAAA partners with Scottish, Celtic, and community cultural festivals, as well as public and private venues, to deliver high-quality athletic competitions that enhance festival programming, attract attendees, and uphold the integrity and heritage of Celtic strength sports. Through experienced leadership, certified officials, and a safety-first operational model, SAAA supports festivals of all sizes, from long-established events to first-year or emerging gatherings.

Operating primarily throughout Southern California and Arizona, SAAA brings structure, legitimacy, and entertainment value to create a premier athlete experience while supporting host organizations in delivering a compelling, well-managed festival experience for spectators, sponsors, and communities.

SAAA's role is to elevate Heavy Athletics while supporting festivals in delivering a safe, engaging, and well-managed event.

Why Partner with SAAA

SAAA is more than a sanctioning body. We are a program partner that enhances festival offerings, upholds operational excellence standards, and contributes directly to attendance, engagement, and risk-managed execution.

Value to Festivals & Event Organizers

Enhanced Entertainment & Audience Engagement

Scottish Highland Games Heavy Athletics provides a highly visual, continuous, and engaging attraction that naturally draws spectators. Heavy Athletics creates a central focal point throughout the festival day, encouraging attendees to remain on site, circulate among festival offerings, and return for multiple viewing periods.

Athletics complement music, cultural programming, food, and vendors by adding live competition and spectacle that appeals to a broad audience, including families and first-time festival attendees.



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Increased Attendance & Ticket Sales

SAAA events consistently attract 60–100+ competing athletes. Athletes are typically accompanied by friends, family members, coaches, and supporters who purchase festival admission to watch the competition.

Based on historical experience, SAAA estimates approximately 200–300 incremental attendees attributable to the athletic competition alone. These attendees contribute not only to ticket sales, but also to vendor traffic, food and beverage purchases, and overall festival activity throughout the day.

While attendance varies by festival size and location, Heavy Athletics has proven to be a meaningful driver of foot traffic and on-site engagement.

Stronger Festival Programming & Credibility

For new or emerging festivals, sanctioned athletics establish immediate legitimacy and depth of programming. For established festivals, they reinforce tradition while providing a reliable, crowd-drawing feature that audiences expect year after year.

SAAA-sanctioning signals to athletes and spectators that the competition will be professionally managed, fairly judged, and conducted according to recognized standards.

Professional Operations & Reduced Risk

SAAA supports festivals and venues through a structured, safety-first operational model.

- All athletes, judges, and authorized field personnel are required to sign liability waivers prior to entering the competition field, and are collectively briefed on safety standards and safe practices prior to competition.
- Competitions are conducted under standardized safety protocols and field layouts designed to protect athletes, judges, and spectators.
- SAAA maintains event insurance that includes coverage for spectators in the event of injury related to athletic competition.

These measures provide hosts and venues with added confidence that the athletic component of the festival is professionally managed, responsibly conducted, and aligned with common risk-management expectations.

Athlete Recruitment & Quality of Competition

SAAA-sanctioned events attract a broad and competitive field of athletes, increasing the quality and excitement of the competition. Higher-caliber competition enhances the spectator experience and strengthens the festival's reputation within the Highland Games community.



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Value to Venues & Land Managers

Defined Field Layouts and Controlled Access

Clearly designated competition areas, safety buffers, and spectator boundaries reduce uncertainty and simplify venue planning and approvals.

Safety-first competition model

Standardized rules, trained judges, and on-site oversight prioritize the safety of athletes, officials, and spectators.

Adaptable to diverse venues

Competitions can be successfully hosted at public parks, schools, community properties, and private land, with layouts tailored to the available space.

SAAA's Role as a Sanctioning Authority

SAAA serves as the governing and sanctioning organization for Scottish Highland Games Heavy Athletics within its operating regions. Sanctioning ensures that competitions meet consistent standards of safety, fairness, and professionalism. SAAA works collaboratively with festival organizers and venue partners to support the athletic portion of each event while respecting the host organization's autonomy, priorities, and vision.

What Sanctioning Includes

Standardized Rules of Competition

Clearly defined rules governing all athletic events to ensure fairness and consistency.

Certified Judges

Trained and approved judges who oversee competition and enforce standards.

Athlete Safety & Field Protocols

Established safety procedures, equipment requirements, and competition flow designed to protect athletes, officials, and spectators.

Integrity & Fair Play

Oversight of competition conduct, including drug-testing standards for sanctioned events.

Operational Guidance

Support for Athletic Directors and festival organizers before and during events to ensure smooth execution.



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Athlete Experience & Operational Excellence

SAAA is committed to delivering a consistent, professional, and well-managed athletic program that integrates seamlessly into each host festival or venue. Our operational approach is designed to support organizers on event day while providing athletes with a fair, organized, and high-quality competitive experience.

Structured Competition Flow

Sanctioned Heavy Athletics follow a defined competition structure managed by experienced Athletic Directors and certified judges. Events are scheduled and conducted in a logical sequence that maintains momentum, minimizes downtime, and allows spectators to engage throughout the day without disrupting other festival programming.

Competition schedules are coordinated with host organizers in advance to align with festival timelines, ceremonies, and entertainment programming.

On-Site Leadership & Coordination

Each sanctioned event is overseen by designated SAAA leadership responsible for competition management, rule enforcement, and on-field coordination. This clear chain of responsibility ensures that athletes, officials, and event staff understand their roles and that questions or issues are addressed efficiently.

SAAA leadership works directly with festival organizers and venue representatives to coordinate logistics, timing, and field operations throughout the event.

Athlete Conduct & Professional Standards

Athletes competing in SAAA-sanctioned events are expected to adhere to established standards of conduct, sportsmanship, and professionalism. These expectations support a respectful, family-friendly environment and reinforce the integrity of the competition. Clear communication of rules, event flow, and expectations helps ensure a smooth experience for athletes and minimizes disruptions during competition.

Consistency Across Events

SAAA-sanctioned competitions are conducted under consistent rules and operational practices across all host locations. This consistency benefits festivals and venues by providing predictable setup requirements, competition flow, and staffing needs, regardless of event size or location.

While each venue presents unique considerations, SAAA adapts layouts and schedules as needed while maintaining standardized competition and operational standards.



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Integration with Festival & Venue Operations

Heavy Athletics are designed to complement, not compete with, other festival elements. SAAA works with hosts to ensure competition areas, spectator viewing, and athlete movement are coordinated with vendor placement, entertainment stages, and general crowd flow.

This integrated approach supports a cohesive festival experience for attendees while allowing venues to maintain overall site management and oversight.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

SAAA regularly reviews operational practices based on feedback from athletes, judges, festival organizers, and venues. This commitment to continuous improvement helps refine competition flow, enhance the spectator experience, and support long-term success for partner events.

Events, Reach, & Track Record

SAAA brings more than four decades of experience supporting Scottish Highland Games Heavy Athletics and partnering with festivals and venues to deliver consistent, high-quality competition. Founded in 1981, the SAAA has built a strong track record of sanctioning and supporting events across diverse settings and host organizations.

Geographic Reach

SAAA primarily operates throughout Southern California and Arizona, regions that host a wide range of Scottish, Celtic, and community festivals. Within this footprint, SAAA works with both long-established festivals and newer or emerging events, adapting competition layouts and operational planning to suit each location while maintaining consistent standards.

This regional focus allows SAAA to provide experienced leadership, maintain a strong network of athletes and judges, and offer reliable support to host organizations year after year.

Types of Partner Events

SAAA-sanctioned athletics are featured at a variety of host events, including:

- Established Scottish and Celtic festivals
- Community cultural festivals
- Regional heritage celebrations
- First-year or developing festivals seeking to add athletic programming

Athletics may serve as a central attraction or as part of a broader festival experience, depending on the goals and structure of the host event.



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Scale & Participation

Sanctioned events typically draw 60–100+ competing athletes, spanning amateur and professional divisions and including both men's and women's classes. Athlete participation varies by festival size and season but consistently represents a meaningful and visible presence within the overall event.

Athletes frequently travel with friends, family, and supporters, contributing to increased attendance, extended dwell time, and on-site engagement throughout the festival day.

Consistency & Reliability

SAAA's longevity reflects its commitment to consistent standards and dependable execution. Festivals and venues that partner with SAAA benefit from:

- Predictable competition structure
- Experienced judges and leadership
- Clear expectations for athletes and staff
- Ongoing institutional knowledge that supports smooth operations

This consistency helps host organizations plan confidently and deliver a reliable experience for attendees and stakeholders.

Supporting Festival Sustainability

By providing a professionally managed athletic program that enhances entertainment value and draws attendees, SAAA contributes to the long-term sustainability of the festivals it partners with. Athletics help reinforce a festival's identity, attract repeat visitors, and strengthen its reputation within the broader Highland Games and cultural festival community.



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Sponsorship & Partnership Snapshot

SAAA partners with sponsors and community supporters to strengthen Scottish Highland Games Heavy Athletics and support the long-term sustainability of the festivals that host them. Sponsorships are structured to enhance the athlete and spectator experience while aligning partners with a respected cultural sport and a highly engaged audience.

Purpose-Driven Sponsorship

Sponsorship support helps offset the costs associated with hosting sanctioned athletics, contributing to safer operations, professional staffing, and high-quality competition. By supporting the athletic program, sponsors also help festivals remain accessible, financially viable, and attractive to returning attendees. SAAA approaches sponsorship as a partnership that benefits athletes, festivals, sponsors, and the broader community.

Audience Reach & Visibility

Heavy Athletics draws a diverse and dedicated audience, including competing athletes across multiple divisions, their friends and family members, and festival attendees drawn to live, continuous athletic competition. Athletics provide sustained visibility throughout the festival day, offering sponsors repeated engagement rather than a single moment of exposure.

Sponsorship Opportunities & Brand Alignment

SAAA works with festivals and sponsors to identify appropriate partnership opportunities, which may include:

- Event or season-level sponsorships
- Division sponsorships
- On-field branding or signage
- Digital and social media recognition

SAAA partners with organizations that value community engagement, athletic excellence, cultural heritage, and family-friendly environments.

Organizations interested in supporting SAAA-sanctioned athletics are encouraged to contact the SAAA to explore partnership opportunities.