

## **OFFICIALS PROFILE: AYO AFOLABI**



### **Welsh Athletics**

#### **Track Judge**

#### **Do you have an athletics background?**

I have two children who take part in athletics at our local club, Cardiff Archers. I used to do some athletics in high school myself so when I was looking for something to keep my son active I thought of the athletics club. He was a bit tall and very quiet at school so I felt he needed a challenge and I was sure he would enjoy athletics and benefit from it.

Both children still compete – my daughter as an under 13 sprinter and my son as an under 17 multi-eventer. About three or four years ago the club asked the parents if they could help out as volunteers.

#### **Where are you in your officiating journey?**

After I'd helped out a few times the club suggested I went on a course being put on by Welsh Athletics to gain my level one track judge training. I then did some official duties to finish the qualification.

I have started working towards my level two and I am ready for that once competition resumes next year to get my experience at events.

I have always been interested in athletics and we watch it on TV. I had thought I might like coaching but when Welsh Athletics suggested officiating, I thought I'd give that a go.

The knowledge is useful and I would still like to help with coaching at some point as I do feel there are a lot of children with talent that may not have access to coaches or clubs, especially those in primary school.

I have covered most areas of the track including checking lanes, registering finishers and, even, monitoring the hurdles.

### **What is your favourite moment as an official?**

Just being at the events is great. I was scared and nervous when I started and, after lockdown, I did worry about if I would remember everything, but it was fine. I enjoy seeing the children develop and monitoring their progress.

### **What do you love most about officiating?**

Actually when I am volunteering as an official I feel I am having a break from looking after the children! I know a lot of the young athletes and I enjoy watching their progress.

I love the inclusive nature of it – as a black woman I wasn't sure if I would feel like I belonged, but I have always been made welcome. Everyone interacts with you, even those with higher qualifications.

### **What are your ambitions in officiating?**

I hope to be successful in getting my level two next year. I have registered for all local events in the Welsh junior league for next year. I would like to try to get a role outside Wales in the future.

### **What would you tell others about becoming an official?**

Go for it. If you have the passion for it and are interested in athletics, then it is something you will enjoy. It is a long day, so you do need to be interested in it. I have encouraged some young people to think about volunteering as we definitely need more younger officials.

### **Using just three words describe what officiating means to you.**

- Enjoyable
- Welcoming/sociable
- Rewarding