

## Joyce Wighton



### **Level 4 Track Official and Discipline Head for Scotland**

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

I was a club athlete when I was at high school encouraged by my teacher at school. I took part in middle distance and cross-country when I first joined a club – Shettleston Harriers Ladies which later became City of Glasgow AC. Latterly I did the 400m hurdles and I would sometimes do a few different events. By the end I was running the 400m hurdles which was usually at the start of the meeting, I'd get the club some points and then move over to officiating for the rest of the programme.

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

I've been officiating for 40 years. My dad really got me into officiating. Like many parents he would take me to the track then have time to spare while I was training or competing. So, my dad would get asked to rake the long jump pit. Eventually he was asked to take the officials exams.

He wasn't so keen on taking an exam, so I rather flippantly said "if you take the field exam, I'll take the track exam" and that was that. From then we both started officiating together, took the various exams and moved up the officiating ladder together. Looking back, it was great to have a shared hobby. When he passed away a few years ago it was lovely to have those memories.

I stopped competing in my early to mid 20s and moved into officiating mostly as I didn't really have time for the training as well as studying to be an architect. I did some team management and took the officiating exams and moved up to achieve level 4 track (previous referee grade) in the early 1990s. I have been the track

referee, a track judge, a track umpire, and I have done some photo finish. In Scotland I am also sometimes the National Technical Delegate or the Meeting Manager where I manage the championship and look after all the officials. Next year I am Meeting Manager at the Birmingham Indoor Grand Prix.

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

With over 40 years as an official I have many special moments.

I have witnessed many great competitive moments. At the 1986 Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh, I was a Track Judge and witnessed Liz McColgan win her 10,000m gold medal, in the pouring rain. More recently I was Track Umpire when Laura Muir did the double at the European Indoor Championships in Glasgow in 2019. It is always special to see Scots win on home territory.

Another highlight for me as a 400m hurdler was seeing Ed Moses at Crystal Palace – he was the guru of the event at that time - when I was in my early 20s and this was the only time I officiated when he competed. I also got a photo taken of me with him which was special.

In the 1990s I was an official at the Special Olympics in Glasgow. It was an amazing week and at the closing party a group of six young athletes, with Downs Syndrome, danced to Whitney Houston's "One Moment in Time". They were inspirational and there wasn't a dry eye in the house. This is the example I always give when people ask why I do officiating.

My officiating highlight is probably being Chief Track Judge at the Commonwealth Games in my home city of Glasgow in 2014. It was really the dream job as I was sitting next to the Track Referee but I felt like he had all the responsibility and I was having a great time, on the radio to all the team leaders and able to soak it all in from the best seat in the house!

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

I have always enjoyed helping others and I think this is why I love officiating so much. My role is to ensure everything is fair and I like to ensure fairness. To be able to provide quality competition and help youngsters understand the need to compete fairly is so important.

I enjoy working with the athletes and working with all the other officials. I have made lots of great friends and we have such a laugh together while doing our work. We are all volunteers but we work hard to do a good job while still having an enjoyable time.

I love the big international events but I also love working with the grassroots and helping youngsters who are just starting in the sport, especially those with disabilities who I love to see getting a real kick out of participating.

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

I am very lucky that I get the chance to do some big meetings and I would like to carry on doing that as I really enjoy it. I have applied for the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham so we will have to see if I am successful, although I recognise the English officials (as home nation) will get priority. If I am selected it will be amazing as it would be my third Commonwealth Games.

The level 4 officials all get the chance of some of the big, televised meetings which are shared out amongst us so I am very fortunate to be part of that. I did Gateshead Diamond League earlier this year.

Now I am retired [from my job as an architect and manager with a local authority] I will maybe try to take the level 5 course and exam. I enjoy a challenge and it might give me more access to management of meetings or perhaps even enable me to work towards being an International Technical Official.

I'd definitely like to do more Para athletics events.

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

I would recommend it and say go for it. It is fun and you meet lots of new people – committed officials and volunteers as well as young athletes and top-class experienced athletes.

We have such camaraderie at the events. You feel you are doing something worthwhile and rewarding.

I have just taken over as Discipline Head for Track in Scotland, so I am involved in trying to recruit new officials and getting them through their qualifications, especially some younger people. It is possible to fit officiating in around your other commitments and we can accommodate you. We are all volunteers so I say to people, come along as we will be very glad to have you.

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

- Rewarding
- Fun
- Challenging