

## Wendy Davis



**Lagan Valley AC, Northern Ireland  
Track Official**

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

I competed as an athlete and, in fact, still run a lot having recently completed the Belfast marathon. I was a middle distance runner, mainly 800m and 1500m and my greatest achievement was representing Great Britain at U20 level at a match in Spain. I was also privileged to get a scholarship to train and compete for the University of South Alabama in the USA.

In 2013 Belfast was set to host the World Police and Fire Games so I thought how about helping out as an official? I had dabbled a little bit as you do when you're at the track and they need an extra pair of hands. But I hadn't done any formal officiating.

The Games were looking for volunteers so I put myself forward, thoroughly enjoyed it and have never looked back! I was part of the track team and it was great to see at first-hand how an athletics track meet worked. As an athlete you are sort of aware of the officials but you are so focused you don't really take in what they're all doing, and take them for granted.

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

Having volunteered and been observed at the Police and Fire Games I was able to rush through levels one and two of the formal track official training. I also met my mentor, Jim Callandar who set me a goal to qualify as level four by 2017 as we knew London would host the World Athletics and World Para Athletics championships in that year. Of course as an athlete I thrive on a challenge so I rose to it, and I was selected as a track official at both champs.

I have worked my way up the levels and I currently hold level four for the track; level 2 for race walks and I am currently working towards my level two field official. It has been a massive learning curve but one I have enjoyed. I felt it was good practice to try other disciplines although my heart will always be on the track. I have officiated at BUCS, CAU, Anniversary Games, Diamond League events, British indoor and outdoor championships as well as lots of local and Northern Irish meets. Whenever I am selected for championships it gives me a sense of pride and excitement and, even after a few years, I still feel like a newbie.

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

Officiating at the world championships was incredible. The roar of the crowd in the Olympic Stadium, especially when the British athletes came out, will stay with me forever. The whole experience of being in the stadium, wearing the uniform and meeting all the other officials as well as the world class athletes was amazing.

I was a track official for the men's 4 x 100m relay when Usain Bolt sadly pulled up – I was one of the actual officials on his relay leg; I still find it hard to believe!

I was track referee at the British Indoor Champs in Birmingham in 2019 which was a great honour. I was in charge of ten officials there. This was quite daunting but there is always support and others to talk to.

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

First and foremost, I love meeting people and there is a huge variety in the people you meet doing this job. Working up through the levels I went to a few of the officials' conferences which was very enjoyable and extremely useful. It was great to spend time with people with a shared passion. I have so many friends and I love meeting up at events but, also, getting together with some of them outside athletics.

I love travelling and this role gets me to new places, to new cities and to work in some amazing stadiums.

I also love the buzz of a big event and the interaction with the athletes – albeit that they may not even notice us. I am always up for a challenge and with no two events ever the same I am always learning and that keeps me on my toes.

More recently I have also qualified as a Level 1 Tutor for Track Officials, and so this gives me the opportunity to share my love for the sport and experiences I've gained over the past eight years with others who want to learn about our role. I can then help mentor them as they begin their officiating journey.

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

I have put my name forward for the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham next year– it will be so exciting to be at another home Games. I really think UK officials are the best in the

world and we are brilliant at delivering events. I hope to be involved with the British indoor and outdoor championships again next year.

As far as officiating levels go, there is level 5 that I could work towards which would give me the opportunity of more of the big international events. But that involves many more years of learning and studying to sit the required exam and gain the necessary experience.

As a PE teacher [in a large secondary school] I am entitled to time off if I am 'representing' my country as an official so I would like to get to a big, foreign champs or a Diamond League at some point. But, even if I don't, I wouldn't necessarily be disappointed as I thoroughly enjoy what I do.

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

I would say definitely give it a go; don't shy away from it thinking you can't do it because you will be part of a team and everyone helps out. We all make mistakes; we just learn from them. No-one is accountable on their own, we all support one another.

I would certainly encourage athletes to consider it after competing or towards the end of their careers. We could provide more information about what is involved to point athletes towards officiating after competing.

I know it isn't paid but at major champs we get all our transport, meals and accommodation provided and a uniform. I just enjoy it for the buzz and never knowing where in the world I might end up and with which athletes. Who else gets to tell Dafne Schippers she's in the wrong place for her relay leg!

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

- Challenging
- Rewarding
- Exhilarating