

2022 Commonwealth Games Birmingham – 28 July 2022 - 6 August 2022 by Carole Clark

Some thoughts on the Games from Paul Husbands, Andy Howe, Pete Stewart and myself

Paul – Here you go!

I've just had 6 Christmas days in a week working as an Athlete Steward at the 2022 Commonwealth Games. Based at Perry Barr each day, my primary role was to take athletes from the call room onto the field of play and walk them around to their respective starting point. We entered the stadium at the 100m start so some of those walks were quite short!

I was very lucky to be part of the team to take out the very first event - the men's Long Jump qualifier who enjoyed an enormous round of applause from close to 30,000 spectators and then amazing support from the East stand for the duration of their qualifying comp.

On Weds evening I went out with the men's HJ final and was able to stay out with them for the duration of their comp. It meant I got a close up view of the high jumpers in action which was simply the best experience topped only by the fact that Eilish McColgan ran her 10,000m final at the same time.

From the TV you may have sensed the crowd noise level go up a notch as Eilish took the lead coming into the home straight on the final lap. The noise was off the scale - I've never heard noise like it in my life and given that we've not had huge crowds for a few years now it's likely that many of the younger athletes hadn't either.

What you may not know is that while Eilish was finishing her race in all of that noise, Joel (Khan) was trying to compose himself to make his final attempt at 2.22m. Thankfully Joel had just about enough time on his jump clock to allow Eilish to finish her race and for the noise to die down (a bit) before he successfully made that jump (which just reignited it again).

The support for the home nations athletes and especially Team England was just amazing - every single one of them got the loudest welcome in the stadium when they were announced - even the ones you may have never heard of.



The whole 6 days was an overwhelming, incredible experience and I would do it again at the drop of a hat.

Andy – Commonwealth Games 2022 Birmingham

After the wonderful experience of being a ‘Gamesmaker’ at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in London 2012, I have gradually evolved into a bit of a “serial volunteer” at major Sporting events, filling a variety of roles, all over the UK. Retirement in 2018 allowed me to further expand my “hobby”, but a combination of the Pandemic and surgery curtailed my volunteering.

However, in recent months I have got back into the swing of things, and it was only natural that when the Commonwealth Games were awarded to Birmingham that I would want to become involved. I was lucky to get through the interview process and was offered a role as part of the ‘Commonwealth Collective.’

During ‘Games Time’ I worked at the Alexander Stadium as part of the Venue Transport Team. It was our job to facilitate/help CG guests, officials and athletes on their arrival and departure from the stadium and to direct and assist the parking of official cars and buses. Our team shifts were split between the ‘Games Family Mall’, and the Athletes loading/unloading zone.

It was a dream position being able to greet and help not only present-day athletes and guests from across the Commonwealth, but also the many members of athletics “royalty” spanning the last 50 years of British athletics, the politicians and TV celebrities who attended.

At times we were extremely busy, not only with our main role but since the entrance to the GF Mall was crossed by one of the spectator routes to and from the stadium, it turned out that we also helped with way marking for members of the wonderful Birmingham public arriving and leaving the stadium.

I have lost count of the number of people who say they were knocked-out by the “Birmingham Buzz” – it was really surreal. We were blessed with amazing weather, and apart from one brief shower and a drop in temperature on a couple of evenings, we did not need to use the outer layers of our stand-out orange and grey uniform.

After completing seven shifts (including the six Athletics evening sessions) I came home to face life back in ‘the real world’, exhausted but with a warm, proud glow knowing that we had played our own small part in the success of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022. It was a privilege to work with such fantastic like-minded people and to meet and greet people who were so kind and generous in their thanks for the ‘Commonwealth Collective’ volunteers.

Pete - My CG2022 Experience

First things first. Let’s get this application filled in!

Job done, that took a while. I think I covered everything.

I enjoy athletics and I’d love to be in the central Birmingham area. Nothing too random please and don’t want to travel too far. Don’t mind leading a group of people I don’t know.

Now the waiting begins.....and continues.....nearly there, ‘we’ve been overwhelmed with applications, so it’s taken longer than we thought!’

Check Inbox daily/hourly! Is it coming?.....

Yay! ‘Well done. You’ve made it to interview!’ Time for a trip to the Birmingham library, for an intro, a chat and a measure-up for a uniform. Must be nearly past the finish line!

Intro was interesting, chat was really friendly, with slightly more in-depth questioning. Really emphasising my participation in athletics. Time for a picture....smile please.....next to the man with a tape measure.....breathe in! All done.

Won't be long now.....maybe it will! Are my emails coming through?
It's here, 'Congratulations. You made it through. We'd love you to join us. We would like you to lead a team of volunteers at the Rugby 7's training ground in Warwick! Hey, 1 out of 3 isn't bad! Take to or leave it. Not sure about this, but I really want to be a part of the Games experience, so.....Go for it! Yes please, look forward to seeing you soon.

Uniform should be on its way. Will it fit? Right on schedule, the gift box arrived. Looks great and yay, it all fits. Actually getting a bit more excited about it now and can't wait to get started.

Rosters are next. Can I, can't I? Log in, sign up and hope you can get there.

Next up..training days. Slightly daunting, but hey, we're all in it together. Let's get back up to Birmingham to learn some stuff and do a bit of 'bonding'. Actually quite enjoyable and a fun experience. Next stop, venue training. Good show round and starting to feel real now. Looking forward to my first shift.

It's here. Uniform on and get on over to Warwick. Plenty of time. Accreditation not yet arrived, but managed to get in for shift and got straight into duties, whilst meeting the rest of the team. A fantastic bunch of volunteers, on both shifts, a great mix of backgrounds, ages and interests. It was great to be up close with all of the teams, for the entire week, getting to see them slightly more relaxed, before they got their 'game faces' fully on. A very busy week all told, but such a memorable experience. All too soon, the final shift arrives, but wait.....'Let's have a game of Tag Rugby!' was the cry. What a laugh, although the 10 mins each way, of frenetic running around nearly saw me off. I really need to get some fitness back. We're finally done. Collected our thank you gifts, bid our farewells, hugs n handshakes and the feeling of, 'What am I going to do tomorrow?'



The final stage was upon us. Party time in Digbeth. Jump on the train. Will I be the only one in uniform. No, there are a few more. Let's have a chat. Get off the train and join the flow of orange, winding their way, out of the station, growing in numbers as they head to their final swan song. A great evening had by all, in the heat of the afternoon sun. Good food, great atmosphere and a fantastic final gathering.

All in all, a thoroughly enjoyable experience and so glad that I said 'Yes'.

Until the next time.....

Carole – I was there!

After a long build up to the Games, already described by Pete, I went to Birmingham for my first shift as an Athlete Steward. Unfortunately, I had the email by mistake and didn't need to be there that first Monday. I wasn't disappointed though because it gave me the opportunity to recce the journey to Sandwell and Dudley station, find the car park and get the train through to the newly refurbished Perry Barr Station and the walk to Alexander Stadium and repeat the journey in reverse. Also while I was there I was attached to the equipment team and watched

the hurdles team practising putting the hurdles on and off the track, I made up take off markers, took some training implements up to the warm up track, met some lovely people and had a lesson in measuring and weighing javelins – costing between £1500 and £3000.

Tuesday arrived and I checked in for my first actual shift at 1630hrs. Amazingly I got through Security quickly and managed to find my way to the Workforce Check in and got my first gifts – masks, hand sanitiser and wipes, a pin badge and my meal voucher. I was a bit worried I wouldn't find my way to the Call Room where I would be based during the Athletics but surprisingly I made it, nearly. I spent 20 minutes on the wrong side of the area with the Athlete Services volunteers and met Chris Crosswell and the 2 lady walkers from Halesowen, Jo and Linda, who I know quite well from the Midland Vets.

Our 2 Leaders were great, friendly, knowledgeable and well organised. They made sure we all had a fair share of the work and tried to make sure we did something we really wanted to do. I walked Eilish McColgan out to the 10000m, then managed to view the whole race from the back of the Stadium, creeping in at the back. The atmosphere was electric, especially for the last 200m. I remained out in the field with the athletes for the Women's Pole Vault, where I had a front seat a few paces from the runway, I could almost have touched the bar. Sadly I saw Holly ending up in the gap on her second warm up jump, and then withdrawing. I was out in the field for over 2 hours but the Men's 10000m was going on so I saw that unwinding. I walked Adam Gemili and the other athletes out to a 200m heat. When it was time for the Men's Pole Vault Final, I was carrying the banner and had 12 very tall men behind me. Ewan Thomas walked passed us, took a double take and came back. He asked me what my opening height was going to be but couldn't get to grips with my imperial measurements.

I met some great people, had the most wonderful experience and learned so much about what happens behind the scenes that I didn't know even though I have been round athletics for nearly 40 years, it even made up for not being entirely happy with the uniform.

So what's next? The World Championships will be held in Glasgow in 2024. The Olympics in Paris in 2024, though I imagine good French would be essential. The European Championships in Rome in 2024, though again I imagine good Italian would be essential. I shall be looking out for other likely events. Watch this space!

