

I just wanted to start by offering a huge thanks to you all, and the wider club, for the way in which you have celebrated my Dad over the last few months. 2023 has been a difficult year for us as a family but it was heart-warming to read some of the tributes that were paid in the weeks after he passed away, not to mention the number of people and representatives of the club who came to his funeral. You never fully appreciate the esteem in which someone is held until they are no longer there, but my Dad was certainly held in the highest.

Dad joined the Harriers with me and Gareth in 1993 and the club became such an important part of his life. Initially, it was training on a Tuesday and Thursday, 7:00pm until 8:00pm, with road running in the Winter and cross-country or athletics in the Summer. Dad would help with the javelin in the latter, and although he had no formal training in the discipline, he 'threw' himself into it - as he did with most things he enjoyed. Competition came through various races across the region and the McDonald's Athletics' League. This is where his love of officiating really began.

His first roles were helping out, but as he progressed up the levels, first at local events, the Northerns, and finally National and International meetings. Dad took each event as seriously as the next and they were mapped out in his diary across the year. Whether part of this was to avoid going shopping with Mum and suffering her programmes on television, only he knows. Knowing him as I did, I suspect there was a significant element of this!

I moved away in the early 2000s but our weekly phone calls would include updates of where he had been and which notable athletes he had stood next to. He once said he saw Linford Christie driving quite quickly through a car park, but my personal highlight was him watching Steve Cram give his daughter an apple.

Dad was there on Super Saturday in the Olympic Stadium in 2012, I have the picture to prove it, but undoubtedly his biggest moment came in the Summer of 2022 when he was Chief Timekeeper at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. He was chuffed to bits, although he did not necessarily say as much. We were all very proud of him and spent many an hour trying to look for him during the coverage in the stadium.

The Tinker Cup was very close to his heart and as Gareth has eluded to, Dad would have been delighted to know that this year's event is being run in his memory. All of us are very touched by the gesture and are very grateful to you for it. He would have dealt with the honour in his typically humble manner. I, of course, would have wound him up and asked if he had worn a crown and regal cape for the event.

Sadly, my Mum and brother cannot be here today due to a previously arranged event, but I am pleased to represent our family. I think Dad would be too and I know that he will be watching from wherever he is, stopwatch in hand, applauding all the way, and wishing you all the very best and a successful race.

I wish you lots of luck and a very Merry Christmas.