

Sainsbury's

2015 SCHOOL GAMES



GUEST BLOG – VOLUNTEERING AT THE SAINSBURY'S 2015 SCHOOL GAMES

My name's Andrew Potter and I'm a Facilities & Training Manager from Plymouth – in a volleyball context, I've been a player for 22 years, and I'm a National Grade Referee; UKCC Level 2 coach; and founder of Plymouth Mayflower VC. I've attended four UK School Games previously as a referee.

I've just returned from the 2015 Sainsbury's School Games in Manchester. Having missed out last year because of the birth of my daughter, it was great to be invited back to be a part of the UKSG Family again albeit in a different role - Volleyball England were kind enough to offer me the opportunity to run the Go Spike Speed Cage as part of the Spectator Zone.



This year I needed a second volunteer to help run the Speed Cage, and so I chose to bring a relatively new member of our volleyball club but someone who was already very influential and well informed about the School Games Framework. Jeanette Green is the School Games Organiser for South Hams in West Devon, and has supported the club in creating two satellite volleyball clubs in the last two years.

Our working days were to be spent at Manchester City's Etihad Stadium. The Spectator Zone was an interactive area adjacent to quite a few of the other sporting venues such as Swimming, Athletics, Table Tennis and Wheelchair Basketball. The teamwork and bond between the SZ Team



was the thing I will remember most. Everyone was supporting and endorsing each other to all of the visitors who attended

Day One was our longest day and because of the volume of athletes in the area on that day it was also the busiest! The Speed Cage was one of the most popular attractions at the SZ - there was a continuous buzz around the cage from the moment it was setup until the end.

In terms of the athletes, it proved to me that being a good sportsperson is all about frame of mind. The athletes had a determination to succeed and better themselves after every spike. Kate, the Hammer Throw Gold medallist, had the joint highest girls spike for the weekend with a whopping 41.7mph (she tied with a Scottish Javelin athlete called Ellie who was seriously considering taking up volleyball when she got back to Ayrshire). The boys were hitting the high 50's but it wasn't the fastest spike of the day - that honour went to a High Jumper called Max, from Leeds. He casually walked up and after 3 attempts clocked 60.6mph! Max came back about 3 or 4 times in the day to see if anyone had got close to his record and would prove it wasn't a fluke by having a go at breaking it himself.

We had a lot of local schools in attendance on the Friday too, as well as a lot of School Games Organiser's with their representative volunteers. The enthusiasm was fantastic - Plymouth School Sports Partnership ended up with three schools local to myself - all wanting to start a volleyball programme when they returned home.



The following days were much quieter, as most of the athletes were in competitive action, however we did get to do a bit of celebrity spotting with Baroness Sue Campbell, Ali Oliver (Youth Sport Trust CEO) and Youth Sport Trust Ambassador Jason Gardener. Jason was very enthusiastic and showed his competitive side with his colleagues - his run up was something to behold, especially considering he had on some dapper brogues rather than his running spikes!

In summary, the event was probably one of the most positive experiences I have ever had at the School Games as it provided me with a broader sporting experience than just volleyball - having the chance to meet and talk to athletes, volunteers, officials and spectators from all of the sports on offer highlighted just how big a deal the Sainsbury's School Games are - and how important they are to prepare our future sport stars for greater things to come. I am now energised by the prospect of volleyball development in the two new Devon based schools I met. In addition to this, Jeanette is already planning a return to next year's Games - hopefully bringing her own volunteer group, and maybe some Young Officials from South Devon. One thing is for sure - we will definitely be back for the 2016 School Games.

