

From Athlete to Coach

4598 Sarah Venn adjudicating at a Youth Development League meeting

1890 Sarah Venn

2827 Sarah Venn competing in 1995 (Photo from the Green (Gazette) dated 20/11/95)

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Sarah Venn started competing in Athletics at High School as a sprinter, and joined Blackpool & Fylde AC. 1995 proved to be a big season, as she qualified to represent Lancashire at the English Schools Championships in the 100 metres, where she was 15th out of 27. Sarah was asked to compete in the Welsh Championships, where she was 5th in the 100 metre and 7th in the 200 metres, whilst at the McDonald's League Final held at Alexandra Stadium in Birmingham she competed for Blackpool & Fylde AC in the 100, 200, 300 and 4x100m Relay. Venn's favourite event was the annual trip to Blackburn for the Lancashire Schools Relays Night: "No pressure, just fun, that's how I remember it". She also won the Gazette/BAe High Flyer award of £100 in 1995.

Twenty years later in 2015, Sarah renewed her links with Athletics, when her children, Bradley and Chloè decided to try Athletics. Bradley took to sprinting, emulating his mother by competing at the English Schools Championships, while Chloè, after trying several disciplines, found a love for Pole Vault.

"It was great to be back at the Club again; my coaches were still there, coaching, and now they also coached Bradley and Chloè in their sprints. Their coach, Garry Roylance's group was getting big, so I was asked to help out. I asked my two first, if it was OK, and thankfully they said yes. I soon realised how much I missed the sport!"

Sarah began to get the requisite qualifications, and was able to help athletes on her own, under the supervision of Garry Roylance. After 18 months, Venn completed her level one qualification, while another 12 months she had completed her level two coaching, as well as level one field one Judging qualifications. Sadly work commitments meant that Garry had to end his coaching commitments, and BWFAC gave permission for Sarah to take on the group full time.

Venn said, "I've been a coach for 18 months now. I'm more nervous watching as a coach, than I ever I was as a competing athlete. We are going through tough times at the moment with this virus, so Athletics has changed a bit for us. We connect online once a week to do a training session. We still have a giggle, just as we would on the track. I still set them a weekly training schedule, but it's up to them to complete it. We have no idea when or if we will get an athletics season this year, but we are eager to get back to it".

"Athletics is not just physical and 'running fast' involves technically ability. But also, more recently there is the introduction of ways to stay mentally healthy. The athletes often ask me 'how did I cope when I competed?' I hope my answers guide them through their own athletics career. Staying positive is really important, now, more than ever at the moment."

Throughout my Athletics career," Sarah continued, "I have met lifelong friends. And thanks to social media, we have reconnected over time. Through Athletics new friendships have been made. It is brilliant to watch the next generation of athletes and officials starting to move through the ranks. Athletics has been a positive part of my life. I couldn't be more proud of my athletes, and can't wait to be back at the athletic track".





