



JOAN

MAKES THE GAME

JOAN CORCORAN

B Award Umpire, Coach AND
County Netball Association Secretary
for South Durham and Cleveland.

Tell us about your work as a volunteer...

After retiring from my permanent job five years ago, I fell in to doing more volunteering with my netball club and wider.

I've been volunteering as an umpire for ten years and am now a B award umpire and volunteer coach for the adult teams but I sometimes coach the juniors.

The coaching role came about two and a half years ago when the club I play for asked me to do my coaching award.

I was a gymnastics and trampolining coach but that was 25 years ago!

How long have you been volunteering?

I started my umpiring ten years ago and all the other roles I am now involved in started afterwards.

After taking voluntary redundancy I was offered more and more umpiring at colleges and schools and it escalated from there – people just kept calling me up!

I started out as a player, playing from school ago and went all the way through until I took a break at the age of 18.

My older sisters and I all played on the same team so I went back to play again and then took around five years out to have children.

These days I very rarely take to court after tearing my ACL – I told myself I'd take it easy when I went back but when you're competitive you just can't stop yourself!

It's another benefit of volunteering – being able to keep fit via umpiring and involved with my coaching and secretary role even when you can no longer play.

Why did you start volunteering and why do you continue to?

I started out because to enter the league we needed an umpire and at the time my club only had one.

I wanted to help share the umpiring responsibilities within the club so offered to go on the course.

It all started from there!

I continue because I love it! But as you get older you still think you can do what you did when you were younger – volunteering keeps me a part of my club.

I think I also need to have the people I've seen regularly for the last 25 years in my life – everyone's busy outside of netball so that brings you back together once a week.

How has volunteering benefitted you?

If you're running around umpiring it keeps you fit, it really does keep me healthy and it also gives me something to do and keeps me busy.

The secretary bit keeps my mind ticking over – it exercises a different part of my body! You'll be amused to know I'm actually typing up committee minutes as we speak!



What would you say to someone thinking about volunteering for a role in netball?

If you've never been part of netball or part of a club it might be difficult to get in cold – but please don't be put off!

If you've always been part of a club then volunteering is the perfect way to keep involved and it keeps the passion for the sport going in a different capacity.

It can be daunting for teenagers to sit on a committee – so we put two younger people into one role and buddy them up together.

We tend to make it so there's one a little bit younger than the other so when one goes off to university the other can slot into the role.

It's difficult to get young volunteers in but also important to encourage the youth.

It's really rewarding in lots of different ways – it depends on your perspective and lifestyle.

It's just me and husband at home now and we have our separate things that we like to do. It's great because we come back together to talk about what we've been doing.

We're both retired but we love to keep fit and it's the perfect opportunity to keep active.

If I want to umpire at regional it's an incentive to keep fit over the summer and go for a run and a cycle!

I think if I didn't have netball there'd be a big gap in my life

When I retired I didn't plan on doing so much in the way of netball but I've found something I love and I've done more and more.

I thought I'd do more consultancy when I retired but I didn't do that, I just fell into netball because it's so rewarding.

How has volunteering helped you in your professional career?

It takes you away from the really stressful environment – if you know you've got a match to get to, can't stay late at work, you have to go!

When you get away from work and that stressful environment and do that thing you want to do then go back to work, that stressful problem seems simpler!

Or if you speak to someone at netball about the problem they sometimes come up with the solution for you!

It's an outlet, it's somewhere to get away.

Tell us about your best volunteering experience...

We recently had our club awards night which was just incredible.

Over the last 12 months I've been coaching a back to netball section of the club and for that the club gave me a recognition award.

The whoop I got when I was given the award from all the girls was amazing - it sent shivers down my spine.

To know all of these people are behind you feels really great!