

Margaret Cheetham (Senior)

Virtually all Club members know Margaret, because she is the ever-present helper running much of the admin on training nights. But there is more to this lady and her family than just that!

When Bob and Margaret Cheetham's three year old daughter ran down the road, a neighbour said "She'll be a runner when she grows up". Those words were to become more than true. Margaret Junior became an international athlete, travelling the world, representing England and Great Britain in the sprints and long jump, while Mum and Dad were also to play their part in Liverpool Harriers.

Bob's sporting ability was evident while still at school. He played for Lancashire Schools at cricket and was a classy footballer. He had successful trials for Everton, but his father refused to sign the forms, partly because football was not the lucrative career it is today. On leaving school he worked on Edge Lane, at a firm that was believed to be owned by former Club icon B. Howard Baker.

When due for National Service, the single-minded youngster decided to become a regular soldier and joined the Nottingham Regiment 17/21 Lancers, of which he was proud and where once again he showed his sporting ability. His favourite sports were cricket and football, but he became the regiment's 100 yards champion and also competed at hockey, boxing and basketball: an accomplished all-rounder.

In 1956 he married his girlfriend, Margaret, at Christ the King RC Church on Queens Drive. They settled in the Northway area of Wavertree, where his wife was brought up and they had five children, two boys and three girls. All the children played sport at school, but it was the youngest, Margaret Junior, who excelled from the age of ten and changed the life of this close-knit family.

Two primary school teachers spotted Margaret's talent and advised the parents to take their daughter to Liverpool Harriers. While many parents were prepared to watch from the side lines, this youngster's ex army sprinter Dad became her coach, while Mum at first played a supporting role and later became one of the Girls' League Team Managers.

The "daughter dad duo" was a success from the start and "Babs" as the family affectionately called her was soon winning - not just locally, but at National School, County, Northern and National level. Her mum studiously kept records of her career, with every detail neatly logged, including events, times, and conditions. She even recorded details of the venues such as seating and refreshments, so that, on any repeat visit, the family would be prepared, if necessary, with brollies and the daughter's favourite yogurts. It was a well-organised family operation.

They travelled to events all over the country, which puts a strain on any family's finances, but Bob and Margaret were determined to give their talented youngster every chance to reach the top, and they were rewarded. On Sunday 3rd June 1983, she became the Club's youngest international when she competed at Under 17 level for Great Britain against Russia at Birmingham in the Long Jump, which she won. Subsequently she represented her country at Under 20 level and eventually at Senior level, always with her father as her coach. As her mother said, regarding the parents' huge commitments in terms of time and financial support, "You can always put down a new carpet, but you can't always have a daughter appearing for Great Britain in athletics, can you? It was like winning the pools".



Both Bob and Margaret became heavily involved in Liverpool Harriers, with Bob coaching a group and officiating at meetings and Margaret being Team Manager of the Women's UK League Team for 20 years. Their massive contribution to the Club was recognised when they were both made Vice Presidents. Bob sadly died in 2003, but Margaret is still a key part of the "back room" volunteers, handling day-to-day admin, keeping the Clubhouse respectable, and running the shop. It was fitting that her work was recognised by Liverpool City Council early in 2011, when she was awarded the Jim Cochrane Trophy for "Volunteer Of The Year"

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