

## *Mike Holmes*

It all started back in 1961, when Mike's sports master volunteered the "biggest job in the school" (Mike's words) to throw the discus for the school. Being the original bad loser and unable to avoid the situation, he practiced a bit and went on to win his first competition, throwing about 30m with a 1kg discus. Enjoying the win, he subsequently trained and achieved 53m to briefly rank first in the UK in his age group. At school Mike was an all-rounder, captaining his school at athletics and basketball and was vice-captain at rugby and hockey. His one disappointment was missing out on the English Schools Championships due to injury. Around that time, he first took an interest in statistics, listing the athletics records for his school. Good for the rest of us, as it led on to Mike performing the same service for the Harriers for some 40 years!



Mike first trained with the club in 1965, at the Liverpool University Sports ground at Mather Avenue (known as "Wyncote"), while studying at the university. The powerfully-built student competed for the English Universities against the Scottish in athletics and was double English Universities Weightlifting Champion.

He eventually joined the club in 1969, having completed a Masters Degree at Newcastle University; returning to Liverpool to start his career with the City Council, initially managing the City's sewerage system and latterly overseeing the City's construction contracts – all over a 33 year span.

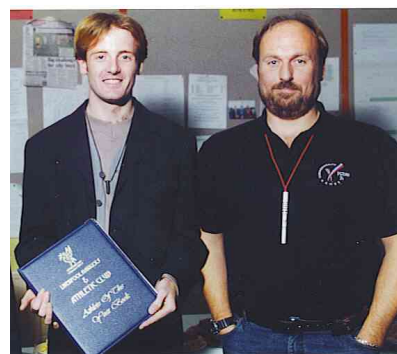
Mike won fourteen county titles and as a Northern Champion, represented the North over a 14 year span. In so doing, he realised personal bests of :

Hammer 50.92m, Shot 15.00m, Discus 43.76m

Arguably, his most impressive achievement was making 50 consecutive appearances in the British League (the first athlete in the UK to do so), beginning with the Club's first league fixture, in May 1970. He went on to make a record number of 100 appearances for the club in the British League and to amass 1,500 points; Brian Camp and Rob Laing are the only other Club athletes to reach over a thousand league points.

From the mid 1980's, Mike was a successful National Coach, demonstrating a highly effective mixture of experience, technical knowledge and laid-back style as GB team coach at many World & European U20 Championships, including a World Cup and an indoor World Championships. He was the England jumps coach at the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Canada and attended the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games.

Although Mike's coaching involvement with the national teams covered a number of events at Great Britain Junior level, his most important appointment was as GB National Senior High Jump coach for six years. Mike's prowess in coaching the event is shown by the fact that he was the first UK coach to have two athletes over 2.30 metres. Also, he was the only one to have athletes holding the Men's and Women's UK records at the same time (Steve Smith leaping 2.38 metres and Debbie Marti 1.95metres). The highly successful Smith/Holmes relationship was born at Kirkby Stadium in the late eighties, when the young ginger-haired Steve was discovered by Mike at the high jump pit. Steve went on to win medals at all the major Games and was the club's first Olympic medallist, taking bronze at the 1996 Atlanta Games. Mike was not only his coach but also adviser and mentor over an 11 year period.



The IAAF invited Mike to coach in Zimbabwe and he was also invited to coach in Iceland, Finland and Holland. But, back at his Wavertree base, he continued to work with high profile athletes; the likes of Olympic finalist Martyn Bernard and the Harriers' prodigious record breaker, World Youth Champion, Katarina Thompson.

His participation off the field goes back to 1972, when he was first elected onto the club committee, having introduced the position of Club Statistician, compiling club records, annual and all-time rankings. In the early 1980s he was elected a Club Vice President, and in November 2001 was particularly honoured to be elected as a Life Member. When not coaching, he remained busy, installing fixtures and fittings and co-ordinating clubhouse improvements (e.g. the club kitchen). When Tom O'Mahoney stepped down, Mike produced the club magazine for three years.

In November 2009, Mike succeeded Harold Benson as Club President, which Mike considers to be his greatest honour in 50 years in athletics.

Mike is married to the former Liverpool Harrier and North of England Triple Jump champion, Lisa.