

Citation for the awarding of Life Membership of Athletics Canterbury to John McTaggart

Annual General Meeting - 26th July 2017

It is my pleasure on behalf of the Executive to read this Citation for Life Membership for one of our amazingly generous, hardworking and long serving Canterbury administrators and officials.

To be honest, my first comment when asked to do this by the Executive was, surely this person is already a Life Member. Apparently not, so let's not wait any longer.

You probably know him as Mr Athletics or more precisely Mr Track and Field, a title that many of you in this room probably also hold, but this Mr Athletics is none other than our Mr John McTaggart.

Jock, as he prefers people to call him these days with there being too many other John's in the sport, has been involved in Athletics as an administrator and official for more than forty years.

In May 2010 John received the Athletics Canterbury Merit Award for Exceptional Service to Athletics and in July 2011 he received a prestigious Merit Award from Athletics New Zealand.

His administration and officiating involvement has seen him hold positions at School, Club, Children's, Secondary Schools, Provincial and New Zealand level.

John is a Life Member of the Kaiapoi Athletic Club and the Canterbury Children's Athletic Association.

He is a long serving member of the Track & Field Committee.

During the summer, he can be found at Rawhiti or Timaru on Saturday mornings officiating at Children's inter club meetings and then staying on after lunch to officiate at senior events.

From my observations, his specialties these days seem to be Meeting Manger and Referee, both positions of great responsibility that require a vast knowledge of the sports rules and the ability to communicate well with other officials. John does both very well with his own special style we all love. Like myself, I am sure many of you have learnt a lot about the running of our sport from John as he guides meetings through the day. Behind the scenes, among other things, he's a builder and repairer of equipment, and looks after the two-way radios and sound system on a weekly basis. There would hardly be a meeting programme that hasn't had his input at some stage of its development.

John was a teacher at Kaiapoi High School until his retirement some five years ago, and it is obvious when you email him that Kaiapoi High School still hold him in great esteem as they still allow him to have his j.mctaggart@kaiapoi.school.nz email address. I assume he would have singlehandedly orchestrated their Athletic Champs each year and I wouldn't be at all surprised if he was still going back each year to help them run their Champs.

Known by Canterbury Secondary Schools as “Mr Secondary Schools Athletics” John has been the Meeting Manager for the Christchurch Secondary Schools Track & Field Championships for many years now. He is actively involved in both the South Island and New Zealand Secondary Schools Athletics Associations. At New Zealand level, he represents the schools from the top half of the South Island on the Executive, flying to Auckland quarterly for a one-day meeting, his latte treat as he calls the trip. He is often the one who re-designs a meetings programme, usually to suit the differing attributes of that track or other constraints the event places on the programme. If he’s sent you a copy to proof for him, you’ll notice it’s usually version 4, 5 or 6, such is the effort he puts in to making each event a quality experience for all athletes and officials.

In officiating circles John is known as a “walking rule book” because of his knowledge of the rules and the well-thumbed IAAF rule book that resides in the back pocket of his shorts is testament to that. He regularly officiates at New Zealand Track & Field Championships wherever they are held as well as at New Zealand Secondary Schools Track & Field Championships. His trusty burgundy Mitsubishi has travelled many times over to all tracks in the South Island.

John isn’t just a serious official, he is also capable of having a good laugh. I’m reminded of a story he told me a few years ago about when the Track and Field Committee decided it would be good to have some music playing during afternoon meetings. As nobody else volunteered to provide the music, he whipped out one of his favorite Scottish tapes and played that all day. From memory, I think he said somebody else provided the music the next week.

I’m well aware that behind a good man is often an even better woman and I would like to acknowledge Shirley’s support of John’s activities over so many years.

In conclusion, the sport of Athletics in Canterbury, and in particular, the Track and Field section, is very lucky to have Jock McTaggart playing such a large part in it. Jock, please accept Life Membership of Athletics Canterbury from all us at Athletics Canterbury, as a token of our appreciation for all you do for the sport.

John Gamblin
Life Member