**SPOTLIGHT WITH CLAIRE MARTIN, TELFORD AC**

*Claire Martin, first ran in the North Wales Cross Country League in 1990, winning her first race whilst still an intermediate Woman (Under 17) at Nantporth, Bangor in October 1991. Since then she has gone on to become the most successful athlete in history of North Wales Cross Country League, winning an incredible 40 race. Claire represented Great Britain at steeplechase and is one of the country’s leading Master Internationals winning the Masters Cross Country International more than any other Englishwoman.*

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**Claire Martin, Telford AC**

**1: How and when did you start running?**

I started running whilst at Brookside Middle School aged about 10/11, I was lucky enough to have had fantastic role models at the school in Paul Sanderson and Colin Mattock (both quality athletes in their own right), both were teachers at the school at the time.

Once every year the school would hold a running race around a big lake, split into year groups but a mixed race of girls and boys together. Every year I won the race outright. This is when Paul Sanderson (Telford AC Sec) introduced me to Telford Athletics Club, and as they say the rest is history, 35yrs and counting and a proud life member.

**2: My records show that you are the most prolific race winner in the history of the North Wales Cross county league and you won your first race at Nantporth Bangor in Oct 1991 as an intermediate athlete. What recollections of that do you have?**

I remember I would normally get travel sick on the long journey to Bangor as I would normally travel by coach or minibus. The race itself I only have very sketchy memories as was such a long time ago now. But with being one of the youngest in the race there was no pressure, so to win and beat many top quality athletes who had dominated over the years was a great feeling.

Athletes such as Ali Whitelaw who all the youngsters at the time looked up to were someone we all aspired to be like. It was always a friendly affair and was good to come up through the age groups with the likes of Emma Crowe and Issy Redfern. It's an honour to be the league's most decorated winner so far.

**3: What are your PB’s?**

1500m 4.25 5k 16.30

3000m 9.44 5mile 27.27

5000m 16.41 10k 33.57

1500m s/c 4.57 HM 76.11

2000m s/c 6.53 Marathon 2.50

**4: You’ve competed for Great Britain but what performances have given you the greatest satisfaction?**

I would have to say my first GB vest when I competed in the 3k steeplechase in the GB v USA v Russia international in Glasgow, not my performance as such as I didn't run to my capabilities as I let the nerves get to me, but the achievement of representing my country which is the pinnacle of any athletes achievements. And the sheer pride in my parents face when I told them of my selection.

Winning the world final of the JP Morgan Chase corporate challenge (representing Royal Mail Letters) in New York 3 times, and breaking the tape first coming down Park Avenue never gets boring.

Also having the opportunity to run at the famous Cinque Mulini XC in Milan is something I will never forget.

I was also very lucky to be given the opportunity by Ian and Teresa Wilson to compete in the Bahrain relays which gave me some great international experience and was a springboard to greater things, not just for myself but for most people who were lucky enough to experience this great event.

**5: And the greatest Disappointment?**

I am always disappointed if I have to miss races which I have trained hard for through injury. The British and Irish masters international in 2018 in Wales, my last year as a V40, I pulled my calf in the build up and so sadly had to decline selection. I can honestly say that running has brought me far more satisfaction than disappointments though.

**6: What was a typical week's training at your peak?**

I've always been a traditionally low mileage runner, which I feel is key to my longevity, I was very lucky during my younger days with regards to injury, other than a broken ankle in my teens. It's only now with age I'm getting a few wear and tear type injuries. My average weekly miles were around 45/50 at my peak years and max about 60 very occasionally.

I have been lucky enough to have had very good coaches over the years, the legend Bud Baldaro being one, and currently Jane Clarke. Though I've been around long enough now to know what training suits me and my body, it's good to have someone to bounce ideas off and to moan at if I've had a below par performance (sorry Jane haha!)

**7: Has your training changed now you are older?**

Yes it’s had to really, the introduction of more stretching and thinking outside the box more with alternative exercise like swimming and cycling etc. Also more regular massages.

Changes such as less intensity have happened as obviously harder to recover from

And I tend to run to a 10 day cycle more than a traditional week. At age 45 you've really got to listen to your body more.

**8: You have recently gone into Team Management. Tell us about your experiences and is this the start of the end of Claire Martin as an athlete?**

That's correct; I'm the Midland ladies team manager for road and cross country. I'm enjoying the role at the moment, and picking teams to compete in the inter area races. There’s a strong group of runners at the moment in the midlands when all are available to pick from.

I've definitely no plans to hang up the racing shoes just yet, I enjoy the buzz and competition of race days, and I still have targets in my mind that I still want to achieve.

**9: It’s nearly 30yrs since you won your first North Wales XC league. What do you put your running longevity down to? Any advice for other youngsters?**

As I mentioned before I’m a traditionally low mileage runner which has helped, I've trained sensibly over the years and not burnt myself out. I worked for Royal Mail from 2000-2009 so this helped with my fitness.

To any youngsters I’d say to enjoy what you are doing, train hard but sensibly, listen to your body and always strive to be the best that you can be. And make sure you have a trusted and supportive network around you.

**10: Comments on:**

**Running in North Wales/Shropshire**

The running scene in North Wales and Shropshire boasts some great talent at the minute, and the North Wales League is a stepping stone for future success. Over the years it’s had many athletes who have gone onto international honours.

**Telford Athletics Club**

I run for a fantastic supportive club in Telford AC and feel proud to be a one club athlete despite offers to join other clubs. It was a proud moment to be given life membership a couple of years ago. It has many supportive individuals within the club and is a club for all.

**Masters Running**

Masters running is getting stronger and stronger, as shown in many races when the winners are quite often masters runners (over the age of 35). Some of the times some of the older athletes run are quite phenomenal, and the rankings are of a very high standard. I know when I've won the masters international cross country in the past I've had to be at the top of my game as there’s no let up in standards.

*A big thank you to Claire Martin for doing this Spotlight. Claire is one of the nicest athletes around and despite all her successes has not changed since she started*