

Sarah-Jane O'Brien's Commonwealth Games Experience

Just under a year ago I travelled to Birmingham for my interview and earlier this year I found out I had been picked to volunteer at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham this summer. I was given a role in the athlete services team at the badminton and I was based at the NEC Arena. I had also bought tickets to see events around my shifts and make the most of my time in Birmingham.

As an athlete services volunteer, my main role was checking athletes had arrived at the warm up area and ensuring they were ready to go out to their matches on time. I would be allocated a warm up court and had a list of the matches to be played so I had to keep watch of the scores of current matches on a screen and then give the next players updates on how long they had until they had to go on court. Timing was very important as we liaised with the broadcast team to ensure it all looked seamless on television and spectators were not waiting for the next match too long. I worked with a lovely group of people who had a mixed knowledge of badminton. It was a sport I had not volunteered at before so it was really interesting to see the players and get an insight into the moments before and after matches.



BADMINTON												SAT 30 JUL 10:40	
Court 1: XT119 Mixed Team Group A						Court 2: XT114 Mixed Team Group D							
1	WONG T / A KUMAR	20	21	21	27	1	LINDSEY TWY F.	20	21	21	20		
2	ADHARAJ SETHURAMAN	18	21	18	27	2	RAHIBED A. / ABDUL K.A	20	21	21	22		
3	CHOWREKHAN GURU	20	21	21	27	3	WANG BING	20	21	21	22		
4	BRATT M.S.E.	18	21	21	27	4	WANG BING	20	21	21	22		
5	HO JINHYE	18	21	21	27	5	LI BINGJIA	20	21	21	22		
6	SPINARDA MARY	18	21	21	27	6	ABDUL K.F.	20	21	21	22		
7	TV JIAN / FIONA F.Y.	18	21	21	27	7	CHEN HONG / TANJUN N.	20	21	21	22		
8	ALI MUSA / BRITTA M.	18	21	21	27	8	RAHIBED A. / JAHMED Z.	20	21	21	22		
9	PY JONGIL / EA KUMYU	18	21	21	27	9	TAN K. / HONGBECN	20	21	21	22		
10	WONGWAT M. / PRONGRUE	18	21	21	27	10	ABDUL K.F. / ABDUL K.A.	20	21	21	22		
Court 3: XT115 Mixed Team Group A						Court 4: XT116 Mixed Team Group D							
1	RAHIBED A. / JAHMED Z.	20	21	21	27	1	CHEN HONG / TANJUN N.	20	21	21	22		
2	CHOWREKHAN GURU	18	21	21	27	2	WANG BING	20	21	21	22		
3	WONG T / A KUMAR	20	21	21	27	3	LI BINGJIA	20	21	21	22		
4	ADHARAJ SETHURAMAN	18	21	21	27	4	ABDUL K.F.	20	21	21	22		
5	HO JINHYE	18	21	21	27	5	CHEN HONG / TANJUN N.	20	21	21	22		
6	SPINARDA MARY	18	21	21	27	6	RAHIBED A. / JAHMED Z.	20	21	21	22		
Court 5: XT117 Mixed Team Group A						Court 6: XT118 Mixed Team Group D							
1	WONG T / A KUMAR	20	21	21	27	1	CHEN HONG / TANJUN N.	20	21	21	22		
2	ADHARAJ SETHURAMAN	18	21	21	27	2	WANG BING	20	21	21	22		
3	CHOWREKHAN GURU	20	21	21	27	3	LI BINGJIA	20	21	21	22		
4	BRATT M.S.E.	18	21	21	27	4	ABDUL K.F.	20	21	21	22		
5	HO JINHYE	18	21	21	27	5	CHEN HONG / TANJUN N.	20	21	21	22		
6	SPINARDA MARY	18	21	21	27	6	RAHIBED A. / JAHMED Z.	20	21	21	22		
NEXT MATCHES													
Court 1	XT117	Group B	14:00	ENG	VS	SGP	Court 2	XT116	Group D	14:00	MAS	VS	RSA
Court 3	XT119	Group D	14:00	JAM	VS	ZAM	Court 4	XT120	Group B	14:00	MRI	VS	BAR

The warm up courts where I spent most of my time and a photo of the screen we had to watch for scores to know when the next match players would be needed.



Team Athlete Services



The sports equipment team spent 2 hours making this out of used shuttles!



On the final day we were allowed to take photos on the show court





This is Team Scotland during the team competition. They went onto court in these hats when they were introduced to the crowd for fun and as volunteers we got to lead them out.



A lot of rackets needed re-stringing during the tournament. I learnt it takes 20 minutes to restring one racket and this machine was previously used during the London Olympics!



I was volunteering on the final day of the badminton so got to carry one of the players bags off court. I had Team England's Sean Vandy who was playing in the men's doubles final and even made it onto TV! Unfortunately they lost to India but still went away with a silver medal.

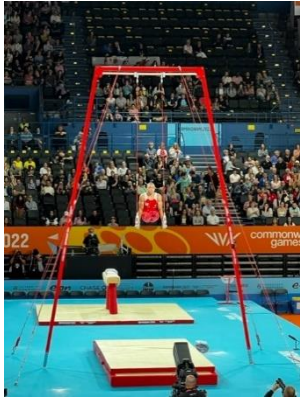


Prince Edward visited the NEC several times and was at the badminton on the final day. I passed him as I went to have my lunch and he even said hello to me!

I bought tickets to many events and both the opening and closing ceremonies so here are some of my highlights...



Opening Ceremony – Team England and the fireworks!









Here are photos of all the sports I got to see, including Team Scotland's George Miller who at 75 was the oldest ever gold medal winner at the Lawn Bowls! 😊



One of my favourite memories was meeting the Cook Islands team at the Lawn Bowls. I travelled to Leamington Spa for the day, and even though their women's trio lost to England they still looked happy to be there and even put on a performance of song and dance to the spectators which I will never forget.



Here I am with Perry the mascot 😊



Pin badge collecting is huge at Olympics and Commonwealth Games and the athletes are all given pins to trade with each other and the volunteers. I did pretty well with my collection. One of my favourites is the Team Scotland pin which is made out of wood and the Barbados pin which was given to me by their badminton team when I walked them onto court and encouraged them to come up with a dance for the crowd during the team event!



This flower display first appeared at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May this year and won a gold medal. I had also volunteered there so I was really please to see it again in Birmingham.

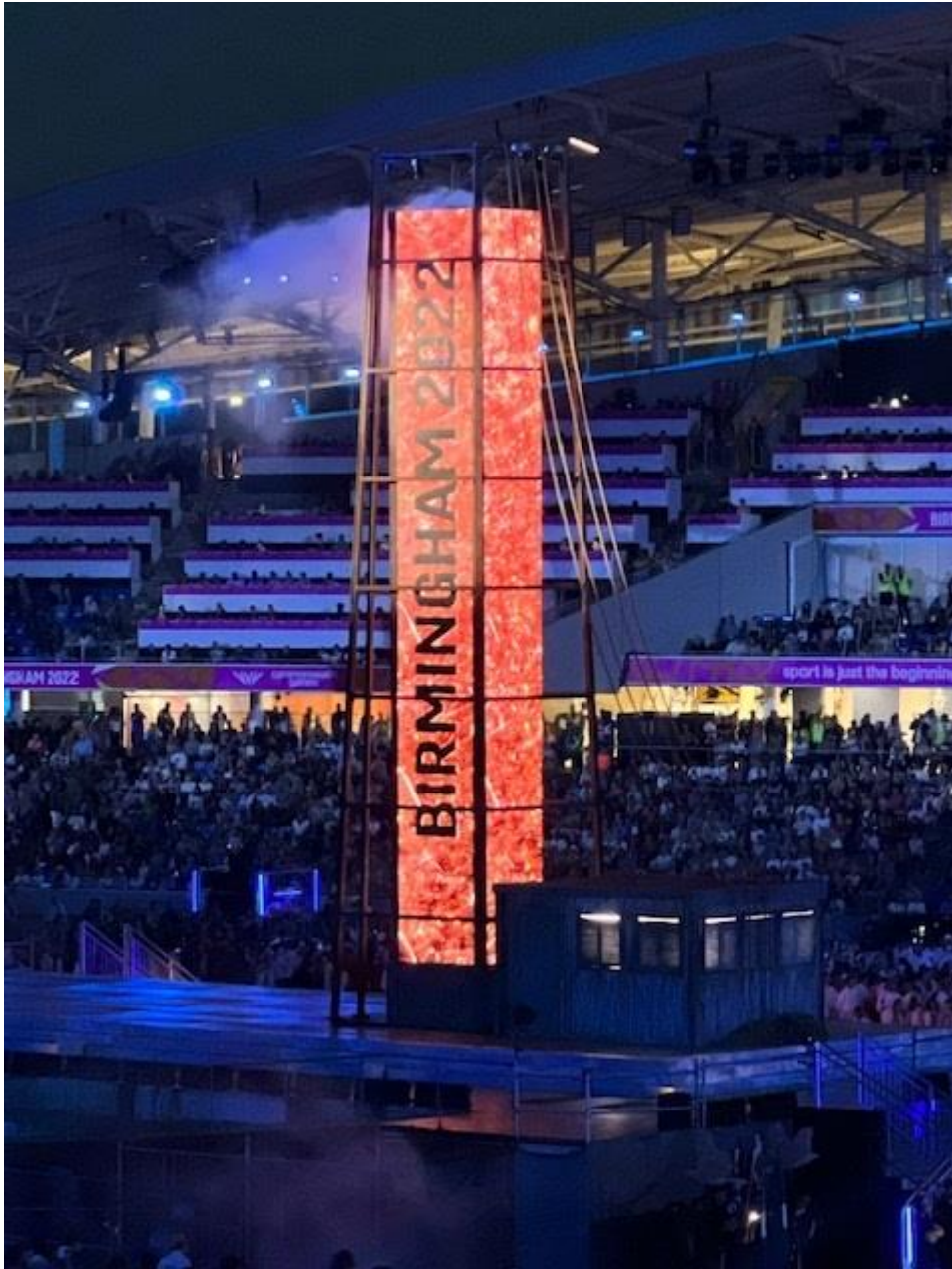




The Bull from the Opening Ceremony became the talking point of the games. It took 2 hours under a police escort for it to be moved from the Alexandra Stadium to Centenary Square. Once there it drew in big crowds and was even lit up at night. The countdown clock to the games was right in the heart of Birmingham in front of the colourful library. The statue at the Bullring shopping centre also got into the spirit of the games and was suitably dressed for the duration.



The Queen's baton was on display for free and I was really pleased to get to hold it and see it up close.



I took this photo at the Closing Ceremony. Birmingham was a great host city for these games and I look forward to the next ones in Australia in 2026 😊