



NASEEM AKHTAR BEM

RUNNING, CYCLING & FITNESS: SAHELI HUB, BALSALL HEATH

Naseem Akhtar has spent over 20 years inspiring and encouraging thousands of women in inner city Birmingham and has transformed their lives through physical activity.

Naseem is the project manager at Saheli Hub, a charity in Balsall Heath run by women for women, which aims to improve health and wellbeing and encourage participation in exercise and sport.

Naseem has always been passionate about breaking down barriers to exercise for women in her community. She's channelled this passion into creating opportunities for local women of all abilities to gain confidence to take part.

In 2019, Naseem was awarded a British Empire Medal for her work in encouraging thousands of women to lead healthier lifestyles.



DAVE

HEELEY OBE

CHARITY RUNNER: WEST BROMWICH

Black Country legend Dave Heeley OBE, or 'Blind Dave' as he is more commonly known, is a force to be reckoned with.

Having developed a passion for long-distance running, Dave has built an incredibly inspiring record of achievements and adventures.

One of his greatest achievements was in 2008 when he became the first blind man to run seven marathons on seven continents in just seven days, raising staggering amounts of money for charity.

His incredible feats of endurance have not only raised over £3 million for various charities, but Dave was also awarded an OBE in 2020 for services to charitable fundraising.

Still a local legend at heart, Dave has inspired hundreds of people, many in similar positions to him, to take up running and fitness, and he often gives up his time to help, encourage and support others on their own journeys.



SALMA BIBEM

GRASSROOTS CRICKET CHAMPION: BIRMINGHAM

Over the last 15 years, Salma has devoted her time to making grassroots sport, in particular cricket, a more inclusive place.

Salma was born in Pakistan and moved to the U.K. at the age of 4. Growing up, she faced cultural and family resistance to women playing sport – something that she was determined to tackle.

Drawing on her own experiences as a young girl who just wanted to play sport, Salma has encouraged over 1,000 local girls to get involved in grassroots sports

– and that just scratches the surface of Salma's admirable achievements.

And if that wasn't enough, when she's not championing grassroots sport, Salma is a full-time haemodialysis nurse at a Birmingham hospital, providing care for acute and chronic patients with kidney failure.

It's not surprising that in 2020, Salma was awarded a British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours for her services to cricket and diversity in sport.



JOAN HUNTER

NETBALL COACH: BIRMINGHAM

You won't find many people in the Birmingham netball community that haven't crossed paths with Joan Hunter.

Joan has been coaching netball in the city for over 35 years, training teams at Harborne, Sutton Comets and South Birmingham netball clubs to name a few. For the past decade, she has coached for the University of Birmingham netball club.

Her success in coaching is down to her approach of always putting the girls' priorities first. She is committed to ensuring the girls spend enough time focussing on their studies, as well as the

game. It's down to this personal touch that Joan has been described as being like a parent to netballers, both past and present.

Joan beams with pride when she talks about her players, having been influential in their improvement over the years, and coached netballers that have represented England.

Joan will continue to champion and represent grassroots sport in Birmingham and encourage women in sport to push boundaries for years to come.



KEVIN REDMOND

SOLIHULL MOORS FOOTBALL CLUB

Kevin coaches the Cerebral Palsy and Ability Counts team at Solihull Moors Football Club, a role he took on in 2017.

Having been involved in football coaching for the last 15 years, Kevin decided to focus his time on supporting disabled players to access the sport – a role he finds incredibly rewarding.

Ability Counts is a PAN-disability football team which welcomes players with physical, sensory, and neurological impairment or disability and sign communicators. Kev's sessions became so popular that they decided to split the teams based on age group so they could

really focus on improving the skills of the players.

Currently coaching the under-16 team, Kevin has players travel from far and wide to be involved. All sharing a common interest in the game, his players have formed great friendships with each other.

One of Kevin's proudest achievements has been coaching three players with Cerebral Palsy from a young age, watching them develop through the game, and now mentoring them as they train to become coaches themselves. He hopes these won't be the last either.



RANJIT SINGH

WOLVERHAMPTON WRESTLING CLUB

On paper, Ranjit is the head coach of Wolverhampton Wrestling Club, but his Hometown Hero status goes far beyond his day job...

The wrestling club is based at the Guru Nanak Satsang Gurdwara, and during the first lockdown in 2020, Ranjit transformed the club into a foodbank and distribution service. He also arranged 1,500 pieces of PPE to be manufactured and distributed to day care centres across the country and made bespoke equipment for key workers.

On top of his support for the Wolverhampton community, Ranjit is a well-respected wrestling coach. Extremely proud of how diverse the club is, Ranjit welcomes wrestlers from all levels, ages, genders, nationalities and religions through its doors and he has produced national champions.

Ranjit has also turned his attention to set up other programmes that focus on improving mental health and wellbeing, preventing crime and violence, and supporting education.

As a charitable man, Ranjit will always help someone, going above and beyond his duties as a wrestling coach.