



Astudiaeth Achos  
Chwaraeon Anabledl Cymru  
**Stephen Morris**



Mae Stephen Morris yn Rhedwr Pellter Canol T20 Paralympaidd hynod lwyddiannus o Gymru. Cynrychiolodd Brydain Fawr yn y ras 1500m T20 yng Ngemau Paralympaidd Llundain 2012 a Gemau Paralympaidd Rio 2016. Gorffennodd yn y 6ed safle yn y ddwy ras ac aeth ymlaen i gystadlu ym Mhencampwriaethau Para Athletau'r Byd 2017 yn Llundain. Gorffennodd yn 5ed yn yr 800m, yn 4ydd yn y 1500m, ac yn 5ed yn y ras 5000m.

## Blynyddoedd Cynnar

Cafodd Stephen ddiagnosis o Awtistiaeth a Dyspracsia pan oedd yn dair oed:

*“Yn ddwy oed fe sylwodd fy rhieni i bod rhywbeth o'i le hefo fi. Roedden nhw'n fy anfon i at y Meddyg Teulu cryn dipyn gan nad oeddwn i'n gallu cyfathrebu.*

*I ddechrau, roedden nhw'n meddwl fy mod i'n fyddar.*

*Fe aethon nhw â fi i ysbyty'r Brifysgol lle gwnaethon nhw rai profion cyfathrebu, a phrofion clyw. Fe gefais i ddiagnosis o Awtistiaeth a dyspracsia ganddyn nhw yn 3 oed.”*



Ar ôl iddo gael diagnosis o Awtistiaeth a Dyspracsia, fe gefnogodd ei rieni Stephen i ddechrau mynychu ysgol Meadowbank, ysgol gynradd i blant ag anghenion dysgu ychwanegol. Mae ysgol Meadowbank yn darparu cymorth arbenigol i blant â Namau Iaith Penodol. Rhoddodd ysgol Meadowbank y cymorth yr oedd ei angen ar Stephen i ddarllen, ysgrifennu a siarad. Fe wnaethant ddarparu therapi lleferydd a darparu grŵp astudio penodol i ddiwallu ei anghenion dysgu.

Roedd Stephen yn mwynhau bod yn yr ysgol yma yn fawr ac roedd yn teimlo ei fod wedi gwneud cynnydd da. Ar ôl Meadowbank, fe aeth Stephen i Ysgol Uwchradd yr Eglwys Newydd lle cafodd hyd i'w angerdd dros chwaraeon. Aeth Stephen ymlaen wedyn i astudio ar gyfer BTEC mewn Chwaraeon, yn ogystal â llythrennedd, gwyddoniaeth a rhifydddeg, yng Ngholeg Caerdydd a'r Fro. Y rhan fwyaf defnyddiol o'i addysg oedd pan oedd yr athrawon yn gallu rhannu'r wybodaeth yn bwyntiau bwled iddo ymchwilio iddi a'i phrosesu yn ei amser ei hun.

Yn ystod cyfnod Stephen yn Ysgol Uwchradd yr Eglwys Newydd, sylwodd ei athro bod ganddo ddawn i redeg:

***“Fe wnaeth fy athro Addysg Gorfforol i draws gwlad gyda'r dosbarth. Yn fy nhraws gwlad cyntaf, roeddwn i jyst yn rhedeg er mwyn rhedeg, ac roedden ni i fod i wneud dwy lap, fe ofynnodd e i mi wneud pedair lap, oherwydd roeddwn i'n lapio pawb. Fe allai weld bod gen i dalent.”***

***“Dydw i ddim yn meddwl am y peth, mae'n dod yn naturiol i mi. Mae ymchwil wnes i ei ddarllen yn ddiweddar yn dweud bod rhedwyr Awtistig yn rhedwyr eithaf da. Mae gan bobl awtistig dalent naturiol i fod yn rhedwyr da. Ddim yn teimlo gormod o densiwn, ddim yn poeni am bethau. Athletwyr prif ffrwd, maen nhw'n gorfeddwl pethau. I mi, rydw i jyst yn mynd allan i'w wneud e.”***

## Dechrau yn y Byd Athletau

Ar ôl dod o hyd i angerdd dros redeg, ymunodd Stephen â chlwb Gemau Olympaidd Arbennig, tra oedd yn Ysgol Uwchradd yr Eglwys Newydd. Rhoddodd yr hyfforddwr yn y clwb Gemau Olympaidd Arbennig yr her iddo ymuno â chlwb prif ffrwd hefyd. O'r fan honno, aeth Stephen ati i gymryd rhan mewn cystadlaethau prif ffrwd ac anabledd dysgu. Wedyn cafodd ei gyflwyno i Jane Coia ac Anthony Hughes, wnaeth ei helpu i ymwneud â Chwaraeon Anabledd Cymru a Phara Chwaraeon. Fe welodd Jane Coia Stephen ym Mhencampwriaethau Anabledd Dysgu y DU ym Manceinion, lle gwahoddodd ef i ddod i lawr i Brifysgol Metropolitan Caerdydd i hyfforddi. Ym Mhrifysgol Metropolitan Caerdydd, cyflwynwyd Stephen i lawer o bara athletwyr eraill, gan gynnwys Sbrintiwr â Nam ar y Golwg, James Ledger, am y tro cyntaf yn 2010.

Fe wnaeth y cyflwyniad hwn i Chwaraeon Anabledd Cymru a Phara Chwaraeon agor llawer mwy o gyfleoedd i Stephen, gan gynnwys mynd i wersylloedd hyfforddi, cael ei ddsbarthu fel athletwr T20, a chystadlu yn y Gemau Paralympaidd. Un gwersyll hyfforddi arwyddocaol i Stephen oedd mynd i ffwrdd i Bortiwgal. Roedd Stephen newydd gael ei ddsbarthu fel athletwr T20. Er ei fod yn poeni am fod dros y sgôr IQ o 75 a methu â bod yn gymwys i redeg fel athletwr T20, llwyddodd yn y prawf IQ ac felly cafodd ei ddsbarthu fel athletwr T20. Rhoddodd y system ddsbarthu gymhleth a dwys, lle gofynnir i'r athletwyr gwblhau posau, ymarferion darllen, gemau cof, ac ysgrifennu'n gyflym, IQ o 74 iddo.



## Ymuno â Theulu Chwaraeon Anabledd Cymru

Yn dilyn y dosbarthiad, llwyddodd Stephen i gystadlu yng Ngemau Paralympaidd Llundain 2012, a dyma'r tro cyntaf i athletwyr T20 gael eu cynnwys yn y Gemau Paralympaidd ers 2000. Yn dilyn twyllo gan y tîm pêl fasedged o Sbaen a enillodd aur Paralympaidd y Gemau yn 2000, nid oedd athletwyr anabledd dysgu yn gallu cystadlu yng ngemau Athen 2004 na Beijing 2008. Disgrifiodd Stephen hyn fel "sgandal fwyaf y byd chwaraeon Paralympaidd ar y pryd". Cyn y sgandal yma roedd llawer o ddigwyddiadau y gallai athletwyr ag anabledd dysgu gystadlu ynddynt, ond nawr dim ond tair camp sydd (nofio, athletau a thenis bwrdd).

***"Fe fyddwn i wedi dal ati fel athletwr elitaidd pe baen nhw wedi cynnig triathlon (ar gyfer athletwyr anabledd dysgu). Dydyn nhw ddim yn cynnig triathlon, sy'n drueni."***

Mwynhaodd Stephen ei brofiad yn cystadlu a bod yn rhan o dîm Athletau Prydain yn fawr:

***"Roedd yn wych, gan eu bod nhw'n trin Para-athletwyr yn gyfartal, dyna rydw i'n ei hoffi amdano. Mae Athletau Prydain yn wych ar gyfer Para Chwaraeon, fel hysbyseb, gwisgo'r un cit, a'r un lefelau cyllido. Rydyn ni'n cael ein trin yn gyfartal. Dyna beth roeddwn i'n ei hoffi am y Para Chwaraeon."***

Er iddo fwynhau ei amser gydag Athletau Prydain yn fawr, tîm y Gemau Olympaidd Arbennig roddodd y sylfaen iddo ar gyfer ei yrfa athletau:

***"Fe roddodd y Gemau Olympaidd Arbennig sylfaen i mi symud ymlaen i'r Para-athletau. Mae'n debyg mai dyma'r lle gorau i ddechrau."***

***“Mae’n rhoi hyder i chi, rydych chi’n teimlo’n rhan o dîm, ac rydych chi’n cael bod yn fwy annibynnol oherwydd rydych chi’n cael mynd i ffwrdd i wahanol gystadlaethau. Mae’n rhoi cyfle i chi roi cynnig ar chwaraeon a dangos i eraill beth allwn ni ei wneud. Mae’n amgylchedd cyfeillgar”***

Yn ystod ei yrfa, cafodd Stephen gefnogaeth gan Chwaraeon Cymru, a oedd yn hynod werthfawr iddo. Yn ystod y gefnogaeth yma gan Chwaraeon Cymru y dysgodd Stephen ei holl wybodaeth yn y gampfa

***“Fe ddysgais i gryn dipyn gyda Chwaraeon Cymru, y cryfder a’r cyflyru, maeth, sut i ofalu amdanoch chi’ch hun. Fe ddysgais i dipyn ganddyn nhw, yn enwedig yr hyfforddwyr cryfder a chyflyru. Fyddwn i ddim wedi dysgu’r wybodaeth gampfa sydd gen i heddiw i fod yn hyfforddwr personol. Fe ddysgais i lawer gan Matt Archer a Matt Craythorne. Fe wnaeth hynny fy helpu i i fod yn hyfforddwr personol gwell ar gyfer y dyfodol.”***

## Effaith Chwaraeon

Yn gyffredinol mae chwaraeon ac athletau wedi cael effaith gadarnhaol aruthrol ar Stephen a’i fywyd. Disgrifiodd Stephen sut mae chwaraeon wedi newid ei fywyd, a heb chwaraeon, ni fyddai wedi cyflawni’r hyn sydd ganddo na chael gyrfa fel hyfforddwr personol. Roedd chwaraeon hefyd wedi caniatáu i Stephen dyfu fel person, datblygu ei hyder, bod yn fwy annibynnol, dysgu sut i ofalu amdano’i hun, bod yn rhan o gymuned, ac mae’r gymuned yma wedi dod â’r gorau allan ohono.

***“Mae wedi rhoi cyfleoedd i mi siarad amdanaf fy hun, siarad yn gyhoeddus ar ran y Gymdeithas Awtistiaeth Genedlaethol, rydw i wedi codi cryn dipyn o arian i’r Gymdeithas Awtistiaeth Genedlaethol o Farathon Llundain.”***

***“Mae'r gymuned redeg yn wych, oherwydd y bobl rydw i wedi cwrdd â nhw ac sydd wedi codi'r holl arian ar gyfer fy elusen i. Does dim ots os mai chi yw'r cyflymaf neu'r arafaf. Yr undod sy'n bwysig. Mae pawb yn hoffi rhedeg a sgwrsio. Yn y parkrun yma, maen nhw'n cyfarfod i gael te, coffi a chacen wedyn. Mae'n gymuned hyfryd. Rydw i'n dal i redeg. Rydw i'n hoffi'r teimlad wrth redeg.”***

Nid yn unig y mae rhedeg wedi helpu Stephen i gael gyrfa lwyddiannus, mae hefyd wedi ei helpu i reoli ei Awtistiaeth

***“Mae'n gwneud i mi ymlacio mwy. Mae'r llwybrau rhedeg yn braf ac yn dawel gyda fy Awtistiaeth i. Mae'n braf ac yn heddychlon heb fy meddyliau i. Does neb yn tarfu arnoch chi. Dim ond chi a'r parc sydd yna.”***

Fe gafodd Stephen wybod hefyd bod ei Awtistiaeth a chael ei fagu mewn tafarn wedi ei helpu i reoli'r sŵn a bod o flaen torfeydd enfawr mewn digwyddiadau fel Gemau Paralympaidd Llundain 2012 a Rio 2016.

***“Cymryd arnoch eich bod chi'n rhedeg ar eich pen eich hun ydi'r gyfrinach. Dim ond edrych ar y trac. Cau popeth arall allan. Roeddwn i'n arfer ymarfer hynny wrth hyfforddi, a dydych chi ddim yn sylwi ar y dorf. Pan rydych chi'n dechrau rhedeg mae'r dorf yn mynd yn ddu. Fe wnaeth tyfu i fyny mewn tafarn fy helpu i ddatblygu'r sgil yma. Mae (sŵn) fel fy nghysur i.”***

Ochr yn ochr â Jane Coia, mae tad Stephen, Anthony Hughes, wedi bod yn berson dylanwadol yn ei yrfa athletau hefyd:

***“Mae fy nhad i wedi dysgu llawer i mi. Oni bai amdano fo, 'fyddwn i ddim yn cymryd rhan mewn athletau na hyfforddiant personol. Fe ddysgodd i mi ddal ati gyda phethau ac os ydych chi'n methu, rydych chi'n methu, ond o leiaf dydych chi heb roi'r gorau iddi.”***

***“O leiaf fe wnaethoch chi roi cynnig arni. Gyda fy lefel 3, os oeddwn i wedi methu, o leiaf wnes i ddim rhoi'r gorau iddi. Fe gefais i fy nghymhwyster hyfforddwr personol diolch i fy nhad. Roedd yr un peth yn wir ym Marathon Llundain, ar yr 22ain milltir roeddwn i eisiau rhoi'r gorau iddi, ond fe ddywedodd e, “dal ati, dal ati.” Wnes i ddim rhoi'r gorau iddi. Rydw i'n dod â hynny i mewn i fy ngwaith i nawr fel hyfforddwr personol.”***

## Ymddeol

Yn 2022, ymddeolodd Stephen o athletau cystadleuol ar ôl dioddef nifer o anafiadau a heb fwynhau athletau cystadleuol yn yr un ffordd ag yr oedd wedi arfer.

***“Ddwy flynedd yn ôl, doeddwn i ddim eisiau ymddeol, ond roedd yn anodd i mi. Doeddwn i ddim yn mwynhau. Roeddwn i'n meddwl bod hyn yn fy ngwneud i'n drist. Roeddwn i'n crïo fy hun i gysgu bob pythefnos ac roeddwn i'n meddwl, dydi hyn ddim yn dda i fy iechyd meddwl i. Roeddwn i'n meddwl bod rhaid i mi roi'r gorau iddi er mwyn fy iechyd meddwl i fod yn onest. Fe fyddwn i'n rasio ac yna'n cael anaf. Fe fyddwn i weithiau'n cael anaf cyn i mi rasio. Yn ystod yr ychydig flynyddoedd diwethaf doeddwn i ddim yn gallu gwneud yr hyn roeddwn i'n arfer ei wneud. Mae'n rhaid i chi gyrraedd amseroedd a thargedau, cymaint o bwysau. Rydw i nawr yn sgwatio mwy na'r oeddwn i'n arfer ei wneud. Rydw i'n hapusach ac yn ôl yn fi fy hun unwaith eto”***

Doedd ymddeol o athletau cystadleuol ddim yn benderfyniad hawdd i Stephen ond mae bellach wedi gallu mynd ymlaen i wneud gwaith siarad cyhoeddus, gwaith hyfforddiant personol, cael amser iddo'i hun, a gwyllo ei hoff dîm pêl droed, Dinas Caerdydd. Ers ymddeol o athletau, mae Stephen wedi parhau i ymwneud â rhedeg ac yn ddiweddar rhedodd Farathon Llundain i godi arian i'r Gymdeithas Awtistiaeth Genedlaethol.



***“Roedd y siwrnai allan o chwaraeon yn anodd. Roedd yn eithaf tawel. Fe ddois i i arfer â'r drefn o wneud cryfder a chyflyru a mynd i redeg. Roeddwn i ar goll am ychydig. Fe wnes i feddwl i mi fy hun beth oedd fy her nesaf i. Fe wnes i benderfynu gwneud marathon i roi ffocws newydd i mi. Roedd Marathon Llundain yn wahanol iawn. Ar y diwrnod doedd dim pwysau. Dim ond mynd allan i redeg a mwynhau'r amgylchedd. Roedd y gerddoriaeth yn uchel, ac roeddwn i'n meddwl waw! Fe wnaeth fy Awtistiaeth i fy nharo i oherwydd doeddwn i ddim yn disgwyl y byddai cerddoriaeth yn ffrwydro am yr 13 milltir a'r bobl yn gweiddi i fy nghefnogi i. Roedd pobl yn gweiddi, 'dal ati, fe alli di wneud hyn, rwyt ti bron yna'. Roedd yn ras anhygoel i'w rhedeg.”***

Ar ôl ymddeol aeth Stephen i Goleg Caerdydd a'r Fro lle llwyddodd i ennill ei Gymwysterau Hyfforddiant Personol Lefel 2 a 3. Mae Stephen bellach yn gweithio fel hyfforddwr personol ac mae wedi cael swydd yng Nghanolfan Hamdden Penarth

***“Rydw i'n hoffi fy ngwaith fel hyfforddwr personol. Mae'r amgylchedd bob amser yn gadarnhaol. Wedi dysgu o chwaraeon, siarad â chwsmeriaid, sgwrsio, cymhelliant, deall, os ydyn nhw'n cael anhawster gyda rhywbeth, fe fydda' i'n helpu, gan fy mod i wedi cael anhawster yn y gorffennol. Rydw i'n gallu rhannu fy ngwybodaeth am y gampfa gyda nhw. Fel pan wnaeth y ddau Matt fy helpu i, rydw i'n eu helpu nhw.”***





# A Disability Sport Wales Case Study

# Stephen Morris



Stephen Morris is a highly successful Welsh Paralympic T20 Middle Distance Runner. He represented Great Britain in the T20 1500m race at the London 2012 Paralympics and the 2016 Rio Paralympics. He finished 6th place in both races and went on to compete in the 2017 World Para Athletics Championships in London. He finished 5th in the 800m, 4th in the 1500m, and 5th in the 5000m race.

## Early Years

Stephen was diagnosed with Autism and Dyspraxia when he was three years old:

*“At two years old my parents noticed that there was something wrong with me. They kept sending me to the GP quite a lot as I couldn’t communicate.*

*At first, they thought I was deaf.*

*They went to the Heath hospital where they did some communication tests, and hearing tests. They diagnosed me with Autism and dyspraxia at the age of 3.”*



After being diagnosed with Autism and Dyspraxia, Stephen's parents supported him to begin attending Meadowbank school, a primary school for children with additional learning needs.

Meadowbank school provides specialist support for children with Specific Language Impairments. Meadowbank school gave Stephen the support he needed to read, write, and speak. They provided speech therapy and provided a specific study group to meet his learning needs. Stephen really enjoyed being at school here and felt that he progressed well.

After Meadowbank, Stephen attended Whitchurch High School where he found his passion for sport. Stephen then went on to study for a BTEC in Sport, as well as literacy, science, and arithmetic, at Cardiff and Vale College. The most helpful part of his education was when the teachers were able to break the information down in to bullet points for him to research and process in his own time.

During Stephen's time at Whitchurch High School, his teacher identified that he had a talent for running:

***"My PE teacher did a cross country with the class. My first cross country I was running just for the sake of it, and we were supposed to do two laps, he asked me to do four laps, because I was lapping everyone. He could see my talent.***

***I just don't think about it, it comes naturally. There is some research that I read recently that Autistic runners are quite good runners. Autistic people have got a natural talent to be good runners. Not oversteering, not worrying about things. Mainstream athletes, they over think things. For me I just go out and do it."***

## Starting in Athletics

After finding a passion for running, Stephen joined a Special Olympics club, whilst he was at Whitchurch High School. The coach at the Special Olympics club gave him the challenge to join a mainstream club too. From there, Stephen entered mainstream and learning disability competitions. He then got introduced to Jane Coia and Anthony Hughes, who helped him to get involved with Disability Sport Wales and Para Sport. Jane Coia spotted Stephen at the Learning Disability UK Championships in Manchester, where she invited him to come down to Cardiff Metropolitan University to train. At Cardiff Metropolitan University, Stephen was introduced to many other Para athletes, including Visually Impaired Sprinter, James Ledger, for the first time in 2010.

This introduction into Disability Sport Wales and Para Sport opened up many more opportunities for Stephen, including going off on training camps, being classified as a T20 athlete, and competing in the Paralympics. One significant training camp for Stephen was going away to Portugal. Stephen had just been classified as a T20 athlete, although he was worried about being over the 75 IQ score and not be eligible for running as a T20 athlete, he did pass the IQ test and was therefore classified as a T20 athlete. The complex and intense classification system, where the athletes are asked to complete puzzles, reading exercises, memory games, and write at speed, gave him an IQ of 74.



## Joining the Disability Sport Wales Family

From the classification, Stephen was able to compete in the London 2012 Paralympics, where it was the first time that T20 athletes had been included in the Paralympics since 2000. Following the cheating of the Spanish Paralympic gold-winning basketball team in 2000, Learning disability athletes were unable to compete in the Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008 games. Stephen described it as “the biggest scandal in Paralympic sport at the time”. Before, this scandal there were lots of events that learning disability athletes could compete in, but now it is only three sports (swimming, athletics, and table tennis).

***“I would have carried on as an elite athlete if they had put triathlon on (for learning disability athletes). They don’t do triathlon, which is a shame.”***

Stephen really enjoyed his experience competing and being a part of the British Athletics team:

***“It was really great, as they treat Para-athletes equally, that is what I like about it. British Athletics is great for Para Sports, like advertisement, wearing the same kit, and same funding levels. We are treated like equals. That is what I liked about the Para Sports.”***

Although he really enjoyed his time with British Athletics, it was the Special Olympics team who provided him with the foundation for his athletics career:

***“The Special Olympics gave me a foundation to progress to the Para-athletics. It is probably the best place to start. It gives you confidence, team bonding, and to be more independent because you get to go away to different competitions. It gives you a chance to have a go at sport and show others what we can do. It is a friendly environment.”***

During his career, Stephen was provided with support from Sport Wales, which he found incredibly valuable. It was during this support from Sport Wales that Stephen gained all his gym knowledge:

***“I learnt quite a lot with Sport Wales, the S&C (strength and conditioning), nutrition, how to look after yourself. I learnt quite a lot from them without them, especially the S&C coaches. I wouldn’t have the gym knowledge that I have today for being a PT (personal trainer).*”**

***I learnt a lot from Matt Archer and Matt Craythorne. It helped me to be a better PT for the future.”***

## Impact of Sport

Overall sport and athletics has had a huge positive impact on Stephen and his life. Stephen described how sport has changed his life, and without it he would not have achieved what he has or have a career as a PT (personal trainer). Sport also allowed Stephen to grow as a person, develop his confidence, be more independent, learn how to look after himself, be part of a community, and this community has brought out the best in him.

***“It has given me opportunities to talk about myself, to do public speaking for the National Autistic Society, I have raised quite a lot of money for the National Autistic Society from the London Marathon.*”**

***The running community is great, because of the people that I have met and raised all that money for my charity. It doesn’t matter if you are the fastest or the slowest. It is the togetherness.”***

***“Everyone likes to run and to chat. At the parkrun here, they meet to have tea, coffee, and cake afterwards. It is just a lovely community. I still run. I like the running vibe.”***

Not only has running helped Stephen to have a successful career, it also helped him to manage his Autism.

***“It makes me more relaxed. The running trails it is nice and quiet with my Autism. It is nice and peaceful without my thoughts. No one disturbs you. It is just you and the park.”***

Stephen also found that his Autism and growing up living in a pub helped him to manage the noise and being in front of huge crowds at events like the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Paralympic Games.

***“Pretend you are running on your own. Just look at the track. Zone it out. I used to practice that in training, and you do not notice the crowd. When you start running the crowd just goes black. Growing up in a pub helped me to develop that skill. It (noise) is like my comfort.”***

Along with Jane Coia, Anthony Hughes, Stephen’s Dad has also been an influential person in his athletics career.

***“My dad has taught me a lot. If it wasn’t for him, I wouldn’t be in athletics or a PT. He taught me to stick at things and if you fail, you fail, at least you never quit. At least you tried. With my level 3, if I failed at least I didn’t quit. I got my PT qualification thanks to my dad. It was the same at the London Marathon, at the 22nd mile I wanted to quit, but he said “keep going, keep going.” I didn’t quit. I now bring that into my work now as a PT.”***



## Retirement

In 2022, Stephen retired from competitive athletics after suffering a number of injuries and no longer enjoying competitive athletics in the same way as he had used to.

***“Two years ago, I didn’t want to retire, but it was hard for me. I didn’t enjoy it. I thought this is making me sad. I was crying myself to sleep every two weeks and I thought this is not good for my mental health. I thought I have to give it up for my mental health to be honest. I would race and then get injured. I would sometimes I would get injured before I raced. The last few years I couldn’t do what I used to do. You have to hit times and targets, so much pressure. I am now squatting more than what I used to. I am more happier and back to my old self again.”***

It was not an easy decision for Stephen to retire from competitive athletics, but he has now been able to go on to do public speaking, PT (personal training) work, have time for himself, and watch his favourite football team, Cardiff City. Since retiring from athletics, Stephen has continued to be involved with running and recently ran the London Marathon to raise money for the National Autistic Society.

***“Journey out of sport was hard. It was quite quiet. I got used to the routine of doing S&C and going for a run. I was quite lost for a bit. I thought to myself what is my next challenge. I decided to do a marathon to give me a new focus. The London Marathon was quite different. On the day there was no pressure. It was go out for a run and enjoy the environment. The music was loud, and I said wow! My Autism hits me because I didn’t expect there to be music blasting for the 13 miles and the people cheering me on. People said ‘come on, you can do this. You are nearly there’. It was just amazing to run it.”***

After retiring Stephen attended Cardiff and Vale College where he successfully gained his Level 2 and 3 Personal Training Qualifications. Stephen now works as a PT and has secured a position at Penarth Leisure Centre.

***“I like my work as a PT. The environment is always positive. Learnt from sport, talking to customers, chatting, motivation, understanding, if they are struggling with something I will help them out, as I have struggled in the past. I can share with them my gym knowledge. Like when the two Matt’s helped me, I am helping them.”***

