

Special Olympics

Quarterly Report

Quarterly period
October to December 2024



Isle of Man

Community involvement, engagement and donation



October – **David Unsworth** (brother of **Thomas**) took part in the Thriller at the Villa Boxing event, and through his sponsorship raised a knockout amount of money. Thanks so much for your support, David!

October – A donation was received from Andreas Root Show. Many thanks for supporting our movement, we're very grateful!



December – It was a pleasure to have the Rolling Tones entertain us for an evening at Centre 21 and bring some Christmas cheer!



December also saw the Southern Young Farmers being very generous in choosing our movement as one of their recipients of their Mhellihauction. We are extremely grateful for their support! Many thanks to Julie Watterson, our social media and PR representative on the committee for helping to facilitate this opportunity.

Tournament and Competition



5th-6th October – The football squad took part in the Special Olympics Champions League Tournament in Brussels. Football coach Pete Corkhill spoke about his immense pride in the team.

“The Special Champions League event in Belgium was a roaring success which saw a group of 8 athletes travel with two coaches for three nights. They pitted their wits against some of Europe’s finest teams including Italy, Belgium, Juventus, Denmark, Arsenal, Huesca and Bayer Leverkusen.

After some incredible performances, notably against Juventus and Arsenal, the lads ended up finishing 4th. The part that brought me the most pride as coach was watching each person develop as the tournament went on and how they conducted themselves whilst they were away. Each athlete was a credit to the Isle of Man and a beautiful representation of what we stand for as a movement and organisation. They were welcoming, friendly, full of humour, good fun and wit”



Tournament and Competition (cont'd)

The badminton squad took part in a tournament in Derby in October (please note a full report will be added in due course!)



The Winter Olympic Games in Turin is taking place between the 8th and 15th March next year. Four athletes have been selected to participate in the event of Snow Shoeing – **Dylan Butler, Robert Molesworth, Kanyeba** and **Rebecca Maller** (with **Natasha Keig** as reserve). Training sessions have commenced, and Athletics Coach Tony reported that;

“Snow shoeing has been taking place on Peel and Douglas beach. The snow shoeing on soft sand in Peel demands massive effort and is really strenuous, but the athletes have given everything and should be proud of the 17 training sessions they have taken part in”.

We look forward to reporting on the Games in our next quarterly report. Good luck to our athletes!



Fund raising activities.

There were several brilliant fund-raising events over this quarter.

October – a bucket collection took place at a concert at the Villa Marina. Thank you to the athletes and coaches who attended, and for all the concert goers who donated, they make such a difference!

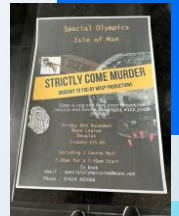


October – our annual 12hr Sports Marathon took place, which was a great event attended by many of our athletes, volunteers, family members and coaches.

Many thanks to additional helpers on the day for helping with all aspects of the catering, additional help with some of the sports and athlete support during the very long but fun day!



November – a murder mystery evening took place at The Legion – Strictly Come Murder. Such a brilliant event, thanks to all those who made it happen



December brought us one of our regular Bingo evenings, always well received and attended by both athletes and families!



Awareness Raising

After the Champions League tournament in Brussels, athletes **Oli Kavanagh** and **Cameron Siddall**, and Coach Pete Corkhill, gave a truly fantastic interview to Manx Radio, talking about the experience they had, the positive impact it had on the whole squad, and how wonderfully they represented the Isle of Man **Champions League Manx Radio Interview.**

Keep Fit coach **Andy Hodkin** gave an in-person presentation to Lloyds Bank, which also was delivered virtually to the Channel Islands and all the Lloyds branches across the UK (a total of 1,100 branches!). The presentation spoke about the positive impact that Isle of Man Special Olympics has for both its athletes and their families.



Athlete engagement and success stories



Our Isle of Man athletes were really pleased to welcome two visitors from the Gibraltar Special Olympic organisation. **Sam** and **Giovanni**. They came to the island to visit old friends and took part in both the Keep Fit and Football training sessions during their visit. This a lovely example of the power of our movement – enabling athletes from around the world to make and sustain friendships and inspire each other.

Congratulations went to **Liam McCusker** on gaining employment at Marks & Spencer, gaining a position working in their cafe. Liam is a born natural charmer, so will no doubt excel in his customer-relation skills. Good luck, Liam!

Liam is not the only athlete employed at **M&S. Angela Maiden**, who is a member of our swimming cohort, recently received a special award for working there for 25 years! Angela is a true inspiration to us all; one of the kindest, most supportive and optimistic members of our Special Olympic family. What an amazing achievement – Congratulations Angela!



Athlete engagement and success stories (cont'd)



Several athletes took part in the local Park Runs during this quarter (an event they have been taking part in since 2019) which was a great opportunity for community involvement. This is a fantastic example of how our movement strives to be part of the national conversation in terms of sport and community. They have been really welcomed by the Park Run community over the years, and great relationships are being formed. A special thanks goes to the coaches who have attended these park runs with athletes, as they really did encourage some of the athletes to persevere and finish the course. Compliments also to the wonderful organisers and helpers who really did give our athletes the encouragement and respect they deserved.

Several athletes and coaches also took part in this year's Ramsey Triathlon - With coach Tony swimming in the lake, athlete **Chris** following on with the cycling and **Lawrence Dyer** completing with the running. Congratulations to all involved, and to the other athletes such as **Paul Clucas** who supported the event by doing laps of Mooragh Lake. Great work, everyone!



Athlete engagement and success stories (cont'd)

Part of our ethos at Isle of Man Special Olympics is enabling our athletes to be all that they can be. Two shining examples of this are **Lawrence Dyer** and **Duncan Watterson**, who are not only athletes but also coaches, in both the keep fit and athletics sessions. We strive for our athletes to not only be recipients of our movement, but contributors, and Lawrence and Duncan are great examples of this. And incidentally between them they are three-time winners of the Isle of Man Sports Awards Disability Sportsperson of the Year! Incredible stuff!



And the endeavour to support our athletes to contribute does not remain solely within our movement. A recent example in this quarter is one of our amazing athletes – **Ethan Butler**.

Ethan is a committed sportsperson and athlete in our movement who during this quarter took up a voluntary role supporting younger athletes in a new scheme developed by the Isle of Man Football Association. Comets is a recreational, pan-disability football programme for disabled boys and girls aged between 5 and 11. Pan-disability is the largest format of disability football, which sees players with a broad range of disabilities and health conditions play together. Comets offers a new, flexible and inclusive way of playing, one that's all about playfulness, friendships and having fun. More than anything, Comets is football that breaks the old rules and replaces them with a brand new one: **Just be You!**

Along with our Football Coach Pete Corkhill (in his other role as Disability Sports Ambassador for the Isle of Man FA set up our local Comets Group) Ethan is a now constant volunteer coach at every Comets session. This is such a brilliant example of a sportsperson with a disability giving back to the community. Ethan, we couldn't be prouder of you!

Athlete engagement and success stories (cont'd)



We were absolutely delighted to receive a visit from Kiera Byland. Our swimming coach **Barry Dulsón** had this to say about her visit – “Kiera is a very successful Special Olympics athlete from the Northwest of England and has been elected to an elite group called the Athlete Leadership Program, who create a link between athletes into the upper Special Olympics Staff and Games Organisers to create two-way dialogue between the different levels. Kiera came to visit us in September for a couple of weeks and attended keep fit, cycling and her beloved swimming sessions. She joined in with our standard swim training and demonstrated her Butterfly stroke to our group. Kiera and her parents were very complimentary about our set up and our athletes, stating we have some athletes more than capable of joining the program as ambassadors”.

**This is something we shall definitely be looking into in 2025!
Thanks so much for your visit, Kiera!**



A very special mention in this quarter goes to **Thomas Unsworth**, a regular member of the Keep Fit and Swimming training sessions. We have witnessed his confidence levels grow and develop over this quarter, and he's taking inspiration from his fellow athletes, such as the occasion when spurred on by the Park Run athletes, he went the following week to the Park Run and participated himself. Thomas's increase in confidence has worked in his favour. His swimming coach Barry added – “Thomas applied for a volunteer job in the Family Library and started on just an hour a week and was accepted. He was asked to increase to 2 hours per week. He loves the work and is doing really well, the young kids from Song and Sign love the “GIANT” that helps them. He's 6 foot 5 and still growing...”

Thomas, you are amazing and are rapidly becoming an inspiration yourself!

Athlete engagement and success stories (cont'd)



A great example of inspiration and impact this quarter is one of our younger athletes, footballer **Cameron Siddall**.

Cameron is a skilled and an exciting emerging talent in our Special Olympics family. Having only commenced football training this year, he was a deserving selected member of the squad for the Champions League Tournament in Belgium. The youngest competitor in the whole tournament, Cameron not only excelled in the competition (scoring his debut goal in his Special Olympics career and swiftly adding a second in the same game), but off the pitch as well.

It was an honour and a joy to see him grow both emotionally and independently as the trip progressed.

Cameron epitomised what our movement is about, with the Special Olympics motto being – ‘Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me brave in the attempt’. Cameron was beyond brave in his inaugural tournament, and quickly became an integral part of the squad, bringing great humour to the trip, displaying some sublime football skills, and showing maturity beyond his years. It was a great honour for the coaches to see not only how well he adapted to such a new experience, but how he became one of the shining stars of it.

Cameron, you have a very bright Special Olympics career ahead of you, and it is our complete honour to have you on board. We look forward to your future brilliance! You are an inspiration to us all.

Athlete engagement and success stories (cont'd)



In the same tournament, **Connor Rees** must also be celebrated! And here's why.

During the tournament, the Isle of Man played their final game against Arsenal, a wonderful team of guys all of whom with Downs Syndrome, which is a connection they share with Connor. This team really were amazing – joyful, determined and gracious in both triumph and defeat.

We feel that Connor recognised their indomitable spirit and took great pride in the way they represented his community. Football Coach Pete Corkhill made a wonderful decision in specially selecting Connor as Captain for this game (with huge thanks to Ben Mowle, our tournament Caption, for handing over the armband with great pride and humility himself). We think this was a big moment for Connor.

If you want to see what this meant to him, click on the link below – https://fb.watch/xS_30TNoDi/



Athlete engagement and success stories (cont'd)

At our annual AGM, several athletes received awards in their respective sports.

Lawrence Dyer won the 2025 Badminton Award.

Lawrence, you have been an idol – not only to our badminton players but to our whole organisation, and for such a long time! A veteran of our squad, and yet still achieving greatness in your determination to keep improving and developing. You are truly an inspiration to us all, and to the Isle of Man as a whole. Congratulations!



Oli Kavanagh won the Football Player of the Year award, as voted by the footballers themselves. Congratulations Oli, you are such an inspiration to your teammates. Passionate, dedicated and talented. We have seen you grow into your adulthood over the last few years, and learn how to represent yourself as a kind, compassionate and caring young man. You have a fierce competitive spirit, which every week during our training sessions you have honed and finessed into a focused passion, centred on the game itself, and your growing support for others. You've been brilliant, and your teammates have shown you that by voting for you for this award. Well done, Oli!



Athlete engagement and success stories (cont'd)

Ben Mowle won the award for Special Commitment to the Special Olympics, as awarded annually by Nicola Wooldridge.

Ben has been an amazing advocate and athlete within our organization and has not only represented the Isle of Man but excelled in several overseas tournaments, in several different sports, as a multiple medal winning competitor.

More than that, Ben has been a constant motivator and positive example in supporting his fellow athletes, and as such we are delighted and honoured that he is going to be our athlete's representative at committee level next year. Congratulations Ben!



Owen Langton won a special award for the year, a Coaches Recognition Award for his enthusiasm, passion and commitment to supporting his fellow athletes at the annual trip to Gibraltar's National Games in June. Owen went above and beyond not only in his own sport (Football) but demonstrated an unrivalled passion and support for his fellow athletes in the other sporting categories. His vocal support for the Bocce team was a spectacle to behold! Owen, you are an example to all other athletes in what it means to embrace the Olympic spirit of togetherness. Congratulations!



Athlete engagement and success stories (cont'd)

Other awards for athletes who couldn't attend on the evening, but gained awards, include **James Heselton** for swimming, and **Laura Oram** for Bowling. James Heselton was awarded the Swimming trophy for his consistent dedication and hard work. He is developing into a fantastic swimmer giving the more experienced and faster swimmers a proper run for their money! He was improving at such a rate he has breaking his Personal Best times at every session we got the stopwatch out.



Family engagement



Isle of Man



In September, Family Leadership Coordinator **Andy Hodkin** launched the Family Leader Programme. The aim of the programme is to celebrate the huge support that families and carers give to the organisation. It will also aim to recruit Family Leaders to provide the support that the movement relies upon.

Several monthly sessions happened during this quarter, including an Introductory Launch, a training session on social media & internet Use, and a celebration evening for athletes and families following the Champions League Football Tournament.

Our families provide support which is inestimable. Without it, our movement could not continue. Our intention over the coming year is to celebrate and include our families as much as we can. Through Family Leader recruitment, involvement with awareness raising, and fundraising efforts. Look out in the next quarterly report for a full update.



Conclusion



This quarter was another example of the amazing impact our movement has on our athletes, coaches, volunteers and families.

The success of two tournaments, the introduction of the Family Leader Programme, the fundraising efforts of the organisation itself but also individual members, and the awards, achievements and accolades gained by our athletes.

Most importantly the day-to-day, week-by-week achievements and progress of all our athletes. The highlighted accomplishments of our named athletes in this quarterly report are but the tip of the iceberg.

Each week, our athletes grow not only in their sporting prowess, but also in their confidence, their development and their inclusion in our Isle as a whole. Our movement has sporting achievement at its heart, but it is so much more than that. Standing alongside sporting achievement is personal growth, camaraderie, team spirit and above all, Joy.

Joy in participation, competition and togetherness.

And no better way to round off the year than with our annual Christmas Party!

