

My Olympic Experience – Diane Morgan

Do you remember the day it was announced that London would host the 2012 Olympic Games? The excitement I felt at that announcement is one I shall never forget.

Ever since my childhood I have been an avid fan of the Games and I have always dreamed of being an Olympian myself, but unfortunately never made the grade.

My other dream was that this country would hold the Games during my lifetime, never really daring to believe that as a nation we could ever win a bid, let alone host it successfully.

Lord Seb Coe and his bid team had the vision that we could provide the best Games ever. Their reaction when the bid was won, jumping up and down with excitement is certainly how I felt at the time.

The task was immense, different venues to be built; a whole army of staff to be recruited and trained; ticketing; transport etc. Team GB believed this nation could pull together and prove all the cynics wrong - not just in staging the Games but winning medals too.

ECT also had that same vision and wanted to be involved, and with our expertise and knowledge, it wasn't surprising that the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) wanted to work with us to provide the Accessible Shuttles Service. The proposal was for a partnership, with ECT being the lead partner. ECT felt that it was important to share its good fortune with other CTs across the sector. It would be a fantastic opportunity to push our services to the forefront of a high profile event. Show everyone the value of the work we do quietly in the background day after day.

As we know, ECT was appointed and we did invite all London CTs to join us. Not every CT was enthusiastic, but others willingly came on board. Each CT had their own reasons to take part, but for many it was quite simply the whole Olympic experience and a desire to be part of the greatest sporting event this country has seen in many years.

As for my role, I was appointed to audit the provision of the service delivery. Meetings took place and a plan of the audit trail was finalised. Pulling together the requirements of the ODA, ECT's own standards and legal compliance, I was confident that we would achieve the highest standards possible. The decision was to audit three areas: vehicles, drivers and maintenance processes. Now we were ready at the starting line. But this would be no Marathon - more like a 100 metre final - a Bolt to the finish line!

Twenty four different CTs, over five hundred drivers and one hundred and fifty vehicles would be used over both the Olympics and Paralympics. The audit was organised in a way to ensure every operator would deliver the same high standards no matter which venue: Scotland, Manchester, Coventry, Dorset, Slough or across London.

My remit was to check every vehicle, every driver licence and training record. Paperwork was also to be checked which included insurance, maintenance records and accident reporting. Appointments with all the involved operators were booked and visits commenced, knowing that this had to be completed in time prior to Games start. In fact, earlier, in case extra time was required by the operators. Whether an operator was using two vehicles or twenty two vehicles, it was important we were all at that same level.

It was very evident during my audit visits that every partner wanted to be part of the success. Each operator wanted to be part of the history of the London 2012 Olympics. Many welcomed the opportunity to have their operations checked independently and be able to prove that they were meeting the standard required to participate in the Accessible Shuttles service. I found it reassuring that all the CTs had the vision and commitment to provide that high class service. After all, this was to be the most accessible Games ever.

We must remember of course that during all this auditing and the actual Games Time, there were many people behind the scenes keeping all the normal operations of every CT running. They also had to work very hard to cover all the normal day to day running at each CT, and they also deserve credit for their part in a very successful London 2012.

Once the Games had started, my own role moved to one of Area Manager, delivering part of the Accessible Shuttles network. The ultimate reward for me was the smiles on our passenger faces when they returned from their events. They had a dream of going to the Olympics and having the Olympic experience, and they came from all over the world!

It was also surprising to me how many people who had booked tickets months earlier, had just become disabled (including those on a temporary basis), but were still determined to attend. Our service helped everyone, no matter their mobility or disability to achieve their dream.

The Shuttles service provided a Gold Medal performance to be proud of. We were a friendly and highly professional group of operators across the country, an achievement we can all be proud of, and for me an experience I will never forget. London 2012 was different to anything else I had done previously - exciting, demanding but a highly rewarding experience.

We crossed the finish line in **FIRST** place - a **GOLD** medal performance, something for us all to be very proud of.

We dared to dream and embrace a vision. But away from that particular dream, what we all do on a daily basis is make a difference to people's lives. That is why I come to work every day. So when things get busy and maybe a little difficult - have a smile at what we achieved during that glorious summer of 2012, be proud of it and nothing else will seem as difficult!

A LEGACY TO REMEMBER...