

## Women in Sport Week Celebration!

### Katie Maher, World Aquatics Swimming Official

I started out my Officiating career, like many other parents - when my son started swimming and attended our first local club gala. I was sitting in the gallery when I was asked to help out. I was thinking "what do I know about swimming!"

I was asked to be a time keeper, taught how to use a stop watch and sent to my lane. After this, I was encouraged to complete the Level 1 and 2 Swimming Officials courses, this covered time keeping and turn judge duties. At the time it was an in person course, lasting around 3hrs, nowadays it can be done online, which is even handier!

After qualification I was able to officiate at regional galas to gain experience. I enjoyed being on deck and helping out, so from there I went on to become a qualified Stroke Judge. To do this you were required be assessed at two regional and two national galas, after passing all the tasks at each assessment, you were signed off as a National Judge.

By this stage I had absolutely caught the officiating bug! I went on to become a National Starter and then it was time to make the decision of going forward to become a National Referee - why not!

Again I was assessed at both regional and national galas, I was delighted to pass and become a National Referee. From there I was put forward onto the Pre FINA Referee List and after 2 years on the list, I became a World Aquatics (previously known as FINA) Referee.

It is a great honour to represent Ireland at International meets. All officials operating at international competitions are World Aquatics Referees, it is a pleasure to work among them. I continue to officiate at local, regional, national and international competitions.

Swimming is one of my favourite sports, I would encourage anyone to become an official, especially parents, I always say to timekeepers and turn judges

**"you have the best seat in the house, what's not to love!"**