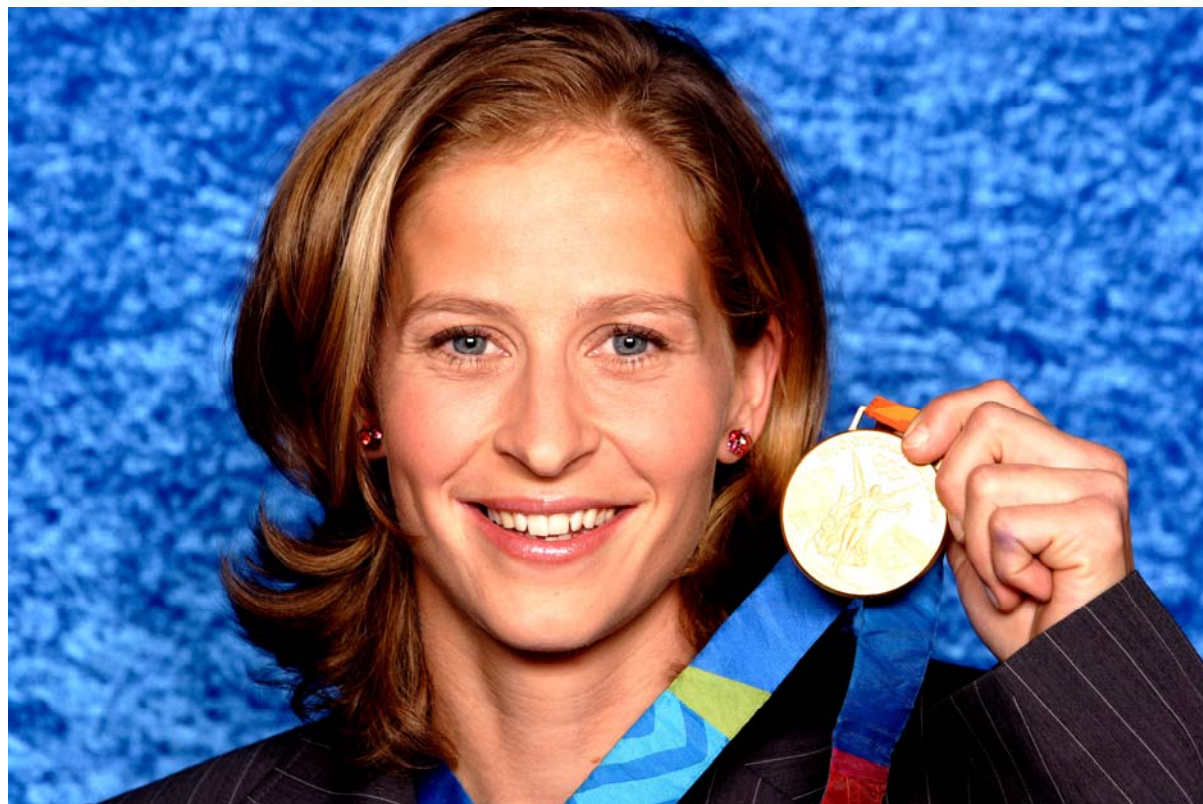


EuroHockey

Siobhan Madeley, EHF Marketing Manager speaks to Marion Rodewald, ex-German Captain, Gold Olympian and newly elected to the EOC Athletes Commission....



Siobhan: Marion, firstly, congratulations on being elected onto the Athletes Commission of the European Olympic Committee in Moscow.

Siobhan: You had a very successful career as a player, do you have any memories that really stand out as "best moments"?

Marion: "I have many memories of course, but if I was to pick one, it would be the Gold Medal at the Athens Olympic Games. We had some up and down results in the pool games, so to be honest the gold medal was a surprise. We worked hard for that medal. In fact I am still in contact with all of that team! Overall my memories are of being privileged to travel the world and to make friends all over the world, apart of course from the honour of playing in your National team."

Siobhan: I assume as a player you sacrificed many things for your hockey in terms of time and career.. can you tell us about that?

Marion: "It never felt like a sacrifice! Yes of course we have to train a lot, and of course I could not be at every party!!! But my friends knew that I would not be there for everything, so we stay in contact by email and telephone. My husband knew how it would be when he met me, so he knew that we would not have a lot of time together. But we really try when I am at home to be there for each other. So, honestly it is my normal life, so not at all a sacrifice."

Siobhan: We understand that you retired last year from playing for the National team - was that a difficult decision?

Marion: "It's not quite true that I have retired. After 11 years in the team, I was very tired, so I spoke with the management and decided to take a break. I am still thinking about whether I will come back or not, not completely sure yet that I want to retire. As you would say in English – I am leaving the door a little bit open.. I am keeping up with my training and of course playing for my club in the Bundesliga. I am doing this with the full support of the team management"

Siobhan: So concentrating on you playing for your club, you must be pleased to see that the EHF is developing a new Tournament for women, which is on the way to EHL for women?

Marion: "Yes for us women players it has been difficult to see the men progress in the EHL and a little strange that there is not the same opportunity for women. However, I understand that this is a commercial decision, which is a shame, but a reality. I am delighted with the idea of a new top-level event for women in Europe and I am working hard to get my club into that tournament next year as we missed qualification this time! The best thing would be to play at an international level, but in a different way, you know with your club not your national team."

Siobhan: Having given so much of your time to hockey, why would you now wish to spend your free time serving on the Athletes Commission?

Marion: "I have been a member of the German Athletes Commission since 2005. I am interested in not just having a "small" view of my own sport, but an overall view of other sports. It is important as an athlete to defend the rights of the players. I also like to give-back something, I was captain of the German team for a long time and I am delighted to be the voice of athletes in Germany. My election to the European Athletes Commission is something that came along as I have the criteria, (you must have played in the previous Olympics), but when it was proposed to me I was delighted to be asked and I suppose it was not a big surprise. I am really an international person, my mother is French (living in Cork, in Ireland), I speak 4 languages so have had international experiences the whole of my life!"

Siobhan: Tell us a little about the European Athletes Commission?

Marion: "The Commission is made up of 10 athletes from Summer and Winter Games, it's a 4 year team and we meet one or two times a year in addition to any working groups / sub-committees that we are members of. After the AENOC General Assembly in January 2010, we will be asked to sit on various sub-committees in addition to the Athletes Commission. I would really like to work on the Olympics Village or the Youth Olympics or perhaps working with the EU. But we will not know our functions until end January."

Siobhan: Do you see your role on the European Athletes Commission similar to the German Commission?

Marion: "I think it will be more difficult for me as the athletes on the Commission don't know me! But yes, the role is similar, to defend the rights of the athletes. For example, we are working hard to lobby the IOC to make the Anti-doping manual simpler to use; it is not an easy document! So when we as athletes see something we believe should be changed and we think it can be changed then we do it!"

Siobhan: How do you envisage using the Commission for the betterment of hockey?

Marion: "I'm a hockey player, so I will be thinking like a hockey player and my experiences, but honestly, the problems of the athletes tend to be similar no matter what is the sport! Our main goal is to have a better Olympic games, which is good for all."

Q: Do you have any issues or suggestions that you believe European Hockey should be considering in terms of player welfare etc... or would you say that you have had a good experience as a hockey player?

Marion: "I have had a great time, with no bad experiences at EHF events. I know it's not a matter for the EHF, but I hope that "hockey" is working hard to have 18 players at the games

and not 16. We all found this difficult in Beijing as we are very used to a panel of 18 and when you have 2 less, you are more nervous about injuries etc..."

Siobhan: Do you think that players should be become more involved in the "running" of hockey and if so how do you see that developing?

Marion: "The important thing is that if you have something that you believe in, something you really want to do – then get in contact with your club or your Federation and just do it! Don't complain about things and how they are, if you have an idea, then go, get the support you need. Then you will see how it is from the other side and maybe you will understand more how things are the way they are, as maybe something is not possible? It is really important that players volunteer for things, to make sure that changes that they want are developed, you don't always have to accept things as they are."

Siobhan: Do you see yourself heading in a sports political career and if so what would be your ambitions?

Marion: " Ha! I am taking small steps.. I didn't image being in this position now, but I am working hard at the job now that I have it. Its fun and interesting and something I really believe in, but I'm not interested in a political role. This position has come along and I'm delighted, but I didn't lobby for it, it has come in a natural and normal way. I'm not interested in "the blah blah"... I want to do something and not just for the sake of it. However I think it is really important for athletes to play a role in the Federation. The athletes have so much knowledge and they see the impact of changes. In Europe we see a lot of changes as we are now competing against professional players, especially in Asia. I am really interested in developing best practice for dual-career options for players. So they can keep up with the level of intensity needed, but at the same time develop a career for their future."

Siobhan: Thank you for taking the time to speak to the EuroHockey e-zine subscribers and we all wish you the very best for all the many decisions that you will be making over the coming months.