

Rugby Star Ali McGrandles Named Chieftain Of Stirling Highland Games

Former Scotland rugby player Ali McGrandles has been named Chieftain of this year's Stirling Highland Games.

Stirling-born Ali was a pioneer of women's rugby in Scotland beginning her career at Stirling County aged just eight and going on to notch up 50 international caps.

Ali, who played in the 1994, 1998 and 2002 Rugby World Cups, is thrilled to be taking on the role of Chieftain at the Highland Games on Saturday August 20.

It will be the first in-person event since 2019 and the packed schedule includes traditional and adaptive heavyweight competitions, a Tug of War, highland dancing and a food and drink experience.

Ali said: *"I was absolutely over the moon to hear the Committee had selected me for Chieftain, it is such an accolade and a wonderful opportunity to go back to where everything started for me.*

"As someone who was born and brought up in Stirling and still has strong links to the area, to have the chance to be Chieftain and host the Games is just thrilling and I am proud and honoured to be given the role.

"And as a PE teacher and someone who has been involved in sport from an early age, it's fantastic to be overseeing all the sporting activities which will be going on."

Ali excelled in sport as a youngster playing both rugby and hockey.

She went on to play rugby at university and was selected for Scotland's first ever women's international match against Ireland in 1993.

Ali had a long career in international women's rugby before retiring in 2002 and is still involved in the sport coaching a rugby team at the London school where she works as an assistant headteacher.

She also has a long association with the Highland Games community attending various events as a child and helping behind the scenes at Stirling Highland Games in more recent years.

The honorary role of Games Chieftain is chosen by the Stirling Highland Games committee from a list of famous sons and daughters of the city who stand out in their respective discipline.

Cat Cripps, the Chieftains Gathering Convenor, said: *"Every year the committee looks at the talents and achievements of the sons and daughters of Stirling and how they have excelled in their field."*

"Ali has a fantastic pedigree in her sport and we are delighted to announce she will be the 2022 Stirling Highland Games Chieftain."

"She will be a brilliant host on the day which will be extra special this year as we all look forward to returning to the live event."

Last year, organisers showcased a series of online events to keep the spirit of Stirling Highland Games alive.

Now fans from across the world are ready to return to the Games field, at Stirling Sports Village, in person.

The Games runs from 10.30am until 5pm and tickets can be bought in advance now or on the day.

Spectators can enjoy a full day of events including watching heavyweight competitors take part in hammer throwing, shot put and tossing the caber plus track and field athletics.

They can also see the gruelling Bruce Challenge, unique to the Stirling Games, which sees strongmen carrying two boulders weighing over 164kg as far as they can and an adaptive heavyweight competition featuring the Wounded Highlanders.

Meanwhile, the unique food and drink experience will highlight award-winning Scottish produce and there will be on-site heritage tours.

The 2022 Highland Games is sponsored and grant-funded by a variety of organisations including Active Stirling, EventScotland, Forth Valley Chamber of Commerce, Specsavers Stirling and the Highland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association.

For more details on the Games and to book tickets, visit www.stirlinghighlandgames.com