

Sport: Former champion Jacqueline Schneider supports athletes at the World Athletics Championships



© DR - Jacqueline Schneider (right) prepares to pray with two athletes

As the 2023 World Athletics Championships come to a close in Budapest on Sunday August 27, Jacqueline Schneider will be completing her mission. The former top-level diver is offering her services as chaplain to all athletes who wish to attend.

[Evangeliques.info](https://www.evangeliques.info) August 27, 2023

From August 19 to August 27, from start to finish of the 2023 World Athletics Championships in Budapest, Hungary, Jacqueline Schneider and her team members will have offered their assistance as experienced sports chaplain. They offer their prayers, a place of welcome in a chapel and Bible studies. Fourteen times Swiss diving champion, finalist at the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 and fourth at the World Swimming Championships in Perth (Australia) in 1998, the 51-year-old Zurich native, like her husband Jörg Walcher with whom she created the [Beyond Gold](https://www.beyondgold.com) website, has been dedicated to this mission for twenty years.

Easing the pressure

"Many of the athletes are open, and of all faiths. They like to be prayed for, and they enjoy Bible studies. I've seen more and more of them being receptive to the words of Jesus, and that's great!" she enthusiastically explains to Evangeliques.info. While most of those who come to the chapel on their own are Christians, "others believe in something greater or in a God, but they don't know Jesus Christ. They don't know exactly who this God is." Nevertheless, both are under intense pressure.

Chaplains also offer one-to-one prayer. Often, it's when athletes are facing an individual competition that they wish to be accompanied in this way, to release the tension they feel. Jacqueline Schneider is also called upon afterwards, when some of the athletes want to thank God for what they have just experienced. "We're there for them all, to encourage them and help them where they are with their beliefs. We let them know that there is a God from heaven who cares for their lives, and share with them what we believe as Christians."

A spontaneous interest in prayer

The chaplain recounts her astonishment when, one morning, on arriving during breakfast, English-speaking athletes asked her directly to pray. "It was like an adventure for them, and they really appreciated it. I didn't have to look for someone who needed spiritual support, or be in a position that would look like someone saying, "I've got something to sell, I'm here!" It was like being in a movie." Indeed, Jacqueline Schneider went on to have many other opportunities to support these grateful athletes.

She also relates that when she was a top-level sportswoman herself, she did believe there was a God. "The one in the Bible, but I didn't read the Bible so I didn't know this God," she smiles. It was because of the pressure on her that she ended up literally crying out to God before the 1998 World Championship, so scared was she. Narrowly missing out on the silver medal and with a persistent sense of emptiness, the overworked diver nevertheless continued to develop her relationship with a God who had become real to her, and soon found her happiness in Him.

This time, her husband Jörg Walcher is accompanying the Budapest athletes from Switzerland. On the other hand, he was in Courchevel from February 6 to 19 for the Alpine Skiing World Championships. Next stop: the Olympic Games in Paris in 2024.