

Profile

Karl Hassell

Karl first got involved in wheelchair basketball about four and a half years ago after bumping into a wheelchair basketball coach from a local club in a supermarket.

Karl was going through a difficult time as he was struggling to come to terms with the physical aspects of his disability. He could not run around the playground with his peers or join in properly with football despite best efforts to involve him. At that time he also had limited wheelchair skills and was not confident at moving around at any speed.

Wheelchair basketball changed everything. Karl loved it from day one and the older junior and senior players welcomed him completely and immediately began to teach him how to use a wheelchair properly. Very quickly Karl began to benefit from increased self confidence as he had found a sports environment that he could fit into and excel at. Despite being very young, he began to play for the Jaguars' Junior Team. Karl will never forget the first time he attended The Lord's Taverners Regional Junior Championships. He had never seen so many wheelchairs in one place!

Since this time, Karl has become a very confident young man whose wheelchair skills have developed amazingly because he is with other chair users and is not different in any way. This has of course allowed him to develop further in the sport but also affects his daily life. He takes great pride in showing off the team's latest medals and trophies and telling school groups about where he has played at the weekend. He can move about independently and keep up with his peers. Karl changed from being a child with a fairly low self esteem to one who will chat happily to anyone who will listen, especially if it involves wheelchair basketball.

Karl now plays for Jaguars' Junior Team in The 'Lord's Taverners Junior League and games are played all over the country. He will this season begin playing in the Great Britain Wheelchair Basketball Association's Development Division and enhance his skills playing with adults. He lives for these weekends and will plan his entire

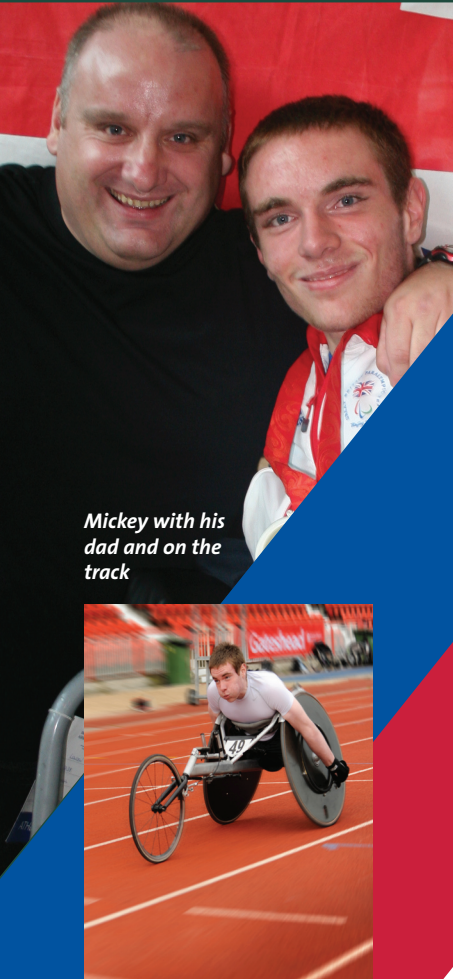


Karl Hassell with medal

health schedule and hospital visits around matches and training sessions, asking the surgeon to move surgery dates to accommodate his commitments.

Karl follows the sport avidly at home, aspiring to be part of the GB Team one day. The willingness of the GB team players to sign autographs, have their pictures taken and share their experiences with young players has resulted in Karl being even more determined to be the best he can at the sport.

Wheelchair basketball is a big part of Karl's life now. It has enabled Karl to develop into the person that he is now: happy, confident, self assured and most importantly accepting of his ability.



Mickey with his dad and on the track

It's a great honour to represent The Lord's Taverners

Mickey Bushell

What made you want to get into sport in the first place?

I was introduced into wheelchair racing through Saturday club at my school at the time (Holmer Lake). Debbie Brennan, Paralympian, was invited along one week and I was asked if I would like to try wheelchair racing out on the track. I loved it!

Winning a Paralympic silver medal is amazing. Can you possibly put that feeling into words?

Winning a medal was my goal but to actually achieve it was overwhelming. I can't actually put it into a sentence but the words that spring to mind are adrenaline, ecstatic, mind blowing! Full of pride.

How have people reacted to your success?

Everyone is brimming with pride and have just made so much fuss of me.

What was the atmosphere like in the Team GB camp during the Games?

The morale was really good but tense. We all knew the competition was fierce and we had a tough job ahead.

2012 is obviously a key year for you – what are your priorities for the next 4 years?

To train hard and get as much experience as possible racing top athletes and to learn as much as possible from my coach Fred Periac.

What changes have you seen in disability sport since you first started competing?

Funding and awareness of the sport has improved and media coverage is slowly getting better.

If you hadn't got into sport, what do you think you would have done?

That's a good question. I haven't really thought about what else I would do as I was assimilated into sport at the age of 11, but being a doctor sounds good.

When you're not training, what do you do in your spare time?

Spend time with my family. I love making my little brother and baby sister laugh.

Do you have any "must dos" in the next twenty years?

Take the world records for 100m, 200m, 400m. Get gold in 2012, achieve a degree in sports studies and bungee jump.

You're a Lord's Taverners Sports Ambassador. What does this mean to you?

It's a huge honour to represent such a great organisation which helps so many people just like me. It was the funding for a sports wheelchair from The Lord's Taverners that really helped me in the early days. Now being part of the team is really helping me develop as a national sportsman.

The Lord's Taverners is one of the UK's leading youth sports and disability charities and cricket's official recreational charity.

The Lord's Taverners believes that sport and recreation are essential for children and young people to help them build their self-esteem, health, well-being and future social, personal and educational potential.

Our mission is to give a 'sporting chance' to young people in need; those who through physical, mental, social, environmental or economic disadvantage, not of their own making, would otherwise miss out.

We achieve this by encouraging participation in youth cricket, particularly in disadvantaged areas – providing grants towards non-turf pitches, funding for youth cricket competitions and donating hundreds of cricket bags to clubs and school teams across the UK.

Also, supporting recreational and sporting activities for youngsters with special needs – donating specially adapted minibuses and sports wheelchairs giving young people vital transportation and access to sport, and providing grants for play and sports equipment.

This year The Lord's Taverners will help tens of thousands of young people of all abilities and backgrounds participate in cricket and other sporting and recreational activities.

Our strongest sporting relationships are with the cricketing family, but we also work with other sports including tennis, basketball and rugby.

The Lord's Taverners benefits hugely from the support of The Lady Taverners, Young Lord's Taverners, our regions and 5,000 members, many of them drawn from the world of sport and entertainment.

For more information
please call: 020 7821 2828
or email: contact@lordstaverners.org

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The Lady
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THE LORD'S TAVERNERS
Giving young people, particularly those
with special needs, a sporting chance.



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