

# Profile

## Hope Heeley



*Hope training at her local club*

**Hope is six years old and a wheelchair user. Hope and her sister Darcie, were first introduced to wheelchair basketball through a sports day in Chesterfield. Darcie, being non-disabled, was initially shy about using a wheelchair and was encouraged and supported by her younger sister.**



The girls joined the Sheffield Steelers Wheelchair Basketball Club, where they both developed their basketball skills and gained confidence in their abilities. Hope has grown proud of using a wheelchair and is beginning to accept it as part of her life. Being involved in wheelchair basketball has helped the whole family become much more positive about wheelchairs and wheelchair sports. Hope has been given a basketball wheelchair through The Lord's Taverners sports wheelchair sponsorship scheme.

Hope's confidence has grown so much that she now joins in playground games instead of being left out, leading little basketball sessions and instructing her non-disabled school friends how to play wheelchair basketball (they now

all want sports wheelchairs instead of playing running basketball).

Playing at the Sheffield Steelers Club has had a great impact on Hope, as the other older and more experienced junior players do not make allowances for her disability, but treat her as an equal. This is helping develop her strength of character.

Hope and Darcie have represented their school at an 'Inclusive Zone Basketball' festival. Both have aspirations to play for the Steelers in The Lord's Taverners Junior League and represent Yorkshire at The Lord's Taverners Regional Junior Championships in the future. Their mum has also become a leader in wheelchair basketball, demonstrating how wheelchair basketball is truly a family sport.

Leading edge



## The Lord's Taverners gave me the opportunity to play my sport **Joe Bestwick**

### How has life changed since you won the Olympic medal in Beijing in 2008?

Long term I don't think a lot has changed. In the lead up to Beijing and immediately afterwards was pretty intense. People have always known that I've played basketball, but not many have seen me play or realised how seriously. I think Beijing definitely opened a few peoples eyes and made them realise it's not just a sport, it's a career.

### You've spent a lot of time in Germany, playing – what was life like over there?

Life in Germany is really good. Wheelchair Basketball is much more professional at a National League level. The team I play for (Köln 99ers) has a great setup, with access to a gym and basketball court whenever we want. The city is fantastic, open and very friendly.

### If you hadn't got into basketball, what else would you have done?

I was training to be a lawyer when I made the decision to really give basketball a go. Unfortunately the university I was at was not flexible when I needed time for training or to attend selection camps, so I had to choose. I decided playing for my county was more important.

### Your training schedule must be punishing – what do you do in your spare time?

I love music so spend as much time as possible going to see live bands.

### What's the best thing that has come out of your association with The Lord's Taverners?

Initially I think the opportunity to play at my level. I have no doubt that if The Lord's Taverners hadn't provided me with a new chair, I wouldn't have been selected for GB team. If

I didn't make it then, someone else would have and my chance would have gone. Recently though I have loved being able to attend The Lord's Taverners events and meet some of the people who work so hard for disability sports.

### Where did the inspiration for your awesome tattoo come from?

I've always been interested in tattoos and the cultures and artwork behind them. The tribal piece on my arm was something I designed myself. I also have a Celtic piece on my back as a tribute to the children who died in the Dunblane shootings, as it was the school my sister and I attended. I am definitely going to get more, but now I'm happy with just two!

### 2012 is obviously a key goal to work towards – what are your priorities for the next four years?

I want to spend as much time as I can learning about the game. The physical side of basketball is something that is obviously very important, as the game is getting faster. I need to focus on my fitness as much as possible.

### What advice would you give to a young wheelchair basketball athlete?

Firstly, join a club with a good mix of old and young players. It's unbelievable how much you can learn just from watching and training with guys who have been there and experienced the game for years. As Murray (the GB coach) keeps telling us, 95% of this game is played between the ears and it's possible to get at least some of that knowledge just from surrounding yourself with the right people. Secondly, enjoy it. You can't play the game your whole life so try to make the most of the chances and opportunities you're given, because there is no better feeling than winning a medal.

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  
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Giving young people, particularly those  
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