

## 1 EARLY DAYS

I first started in wheelchair basketball at the age of 9, 10 years old. And then I met Dame Tanni Grey - Thompson down at the athletics track in Bury St. Edmunds and I decided wheelchair racing was the sport for me. It was mainly like the attraction of the speed, being the only boy I was interested in the speed I got to Tanni about the racing chair and I was just amazed at how light they were then and now they are even lighter, so its really spectacular.

As a junior in Gateshead I won the junior Great North run, I think it was about 3 times in a row and it's a fantastic race and as a junior I also won the London mini marathon twice overall as well. But I remember the London mini marathon when they used to be racing along, and the police were telling us we were on the wrong side of the road. The start had gone wrong but it's a fantastic thing to do you know, compete in the London marathon fully and the Great North run which is the next major race, which I am looking forward to.

The first Para Olympics was done - by Ludwig Guttman who was in Stoke Manderville and he decided the spinal injuries and people who had injuries from car crashes needed something to do so he created the Para Olympics and that still basically the home for the GB squad. We go there for training weekends and it's a fantastic place and that's where the Para Olympic torch is going pretty soon.

## 2 TRAINING

A typical training session is starting about 9 o'clock in the morning and getting out on the road I tend to do 2 to 3 kilometres warm up and today's session is 600 metre sprints with full recovery which tends to be 5 minutes recovery. Which is a hard session when you are doing 6 of them and then you do a cool down and you have to do stretches before and after because your muscles need stretching to be nice and warm.

I train 6 days a week in my chair which varies between an hour and a half and two hours most of the time. And I train once a week on the track, 3 times in the gym, no sorry twice in the gym, and twice swimming so it's a fair bit. But you have got to put in the hours to become a Para Olympian or Olympian. And that's what I enjoy, I enjoy the long hard slogs out on the road, its great fun and with Dame Tanni Grey - Thompson coaching me, she helps with tactics, she has got so much knowledge, she's been to so many Para Olympic that its just fantastic to see.

With Tanni its over e-mails and phone calls because she is up north, but I've only really got Tayna and Ian her husband who coached me. So which is really good and really helpful, Ian's more the technical and Tanya is more hands on with the training programme and just basically things like that.

Over the years it hasn't changed that much, but just the quantity and the amount I am doing now myself has gone up more, so we're doing more volume and more distances in the races, whereas before you used to have the divide between the sprinters and the middle distances.

Even the sprinters we're doing endurance basis already so you are working on your



We have trips when we go abroad which are a little bit funded by UK athletics, certain trips mainly to Switzerland and America. The other ones I have to pay for, that's is why I work mainly but the Council sponsor me so they are really helpful there which is great to be able to have that help and support. When we go away on trips the transportation is normally funded so normally when we go to the races its already there and if not you just get taxis.

The main problem is making sure your chair is secure, so you tend to box it up in what we call a coffin so it's a big box basically and the racing chair goes in it, or as I haven't got a box at the moment I'm wrapping it up with foam and just making sure its really secure because if it get damaged then you are not going to race. So it's a lot of money to be travelling with, but most airlines are really good with them and really safe.

## **6** LONDON 2012

2012 has come along at the right point for me, I'm going to be 27 then so I'll be the right age to hopefully bring back some golds for Suffolk, is the main aim and I'm just really looking forward to it. Its such a privilege to have it in my era and its going to be amazing, its not going to be Beijing on the opening ceremony, but I'm sure we will beat them on the atmosphere. It's a typical British atmosphere of where we will support everyone.

There'll be a lot more media coverage, and press around so its going to be really stressful but its what we are in the sport for, we are in it to race so everything else doesn't make a difference, but its just going to be a massive expectation on us being at home.