

1 EARLY DAYS

BEN: I come from Newmarket, I swam for pretty much 16 years and then a number of my friends who were also part of the swimming team made the switch from swimming into rowing. And it was actually the Sporting Giants Programme that forced me towards rowing. I went along to the ... was successful at the trails and then it happened to me as a natural progression from swimming into rowing as well. This was fairly recently, I'm now 24 and I actually only picked up rowing probably a year ... I started training in earnest last January, so still very early on in the rowing career really.

JOSH: Well I first experienced rowing when I was about 13 cos my Auntie Rose in Ross on Wye and I just jumped in one day with my Uncle. After that I never thought anything of it cos in Bury there's not the biggest of rivers that I can get into a boat so rugby was always my vice kind of thing so been playing since I was 5 and it was only until my family put me into Sporting Giants that I was selected for this rowing. And I was 17 when I trialed and I ... started training when I was 18 and I've been training for roughly about a year now. That's how I got into it.

2 TRAINING

BEN: Basically it means getting up at 6.00 in the morning, have some breakfast and so on, either head down here to be on the water at 7.30 – a bit of a warm up to start. It would either be here or in one of the gyms for around an hour and a half, two hour session then drive across to Cambridge to work. And then once I've finished there, I'll drive back across to a gym or either back here and do some more sessions then. But it's kind of a long day – I end up leaving the house at 6.00 in the morning and getting back in at 9.00 – 10.00 at night.

JOSH: Back injury. I've just been recently out for a few months with a two-prolapsed discs. I've had really good therapy and rehab – that's all been funded for me as well from the British Olympic Association, that's been amazing. What I did was just take time out in the boat, take some time with myself – just train and recover basically because I mean you can't row unless you've got a good core and strong back so, that's what I needed to fix, that's what I know I needed to fix so that's how I'm back rowing cos I've just been training, doing loads of core rehab and that. Full time coach, full time coaches basically like our mother... Look over our training, telling us what to do, telling us how to fix things. He's been really helpful with my back, I mean many times we've had to do like private sessions – because I'm obviously at a different training level to the other guys because I've got an injury so I've had to go right down back to when I first started rowing, practice skills in the boat and really try and get my back fixed, get this problem sorted - and he's really helpful in that, I mean whenever I've phoned him up to question something he was always there to answer it and stuff so – its good – it's a full time job. You're tracked into this programme where you're always going to be on the water because they want to make you progress as quick as possible. You're given a programme and you have to stick to it. It's a daily, a daily routine maybe two or three sessions a day with no rest days you'll be on the water 4 or 5 times a week, with the aerobic training, weights – it's all like a variety of different training methods that you put together to make yourself faster on the water. We're sculling at the moment – so we're heavyweight scullers – in sculling you sit in a boat with two oars – one in each hand – and the typical rowing you hear of is just with the one oar, which is what Steve Redgrave and Matthew Pinsett rowed with.

BEN: There's a lot of Colleges that are based in Cambridge itself and the river is quite

windy. Now when you're racing you're doing 2 kms completely straight so you're having to steer which is something you don't really want to be thinking about as you are going along, looking for other scullers and so on. But down here on the river behind us, we've got – we go round the corner – just over there and it basically turns into a 5km straight and quite often if we have people come say up from Reading, they will say how nice the water is up here. Because it's slightly recessed into the ground, it's ... we get a lot of protection from the wind and so on. So in terms of nice flat water, which is what we always like to see – it gives us some good training experiences.

3 SELECTION

JOSH: We've stepped into the sport with a full time coach, full time programme, we've had the best training we can possibly receive and we are shooting up in the ranks in less than a year and I think it's just that provision, helping young people to get just.. make the most of what they have, I mean it's just really good, I mean the structure of GB Rowing itself is all done through a process of trials and a selection process so you're only going to get the best anyway. When we go for our GB trials in October, for myself – the under 23s – we've got to have a time target, on the indoor rower of 6 mins 20 (for a 2km event) – I mean I'm well ahead of that already, I'm ... I should be able to break 6 mins at the moment which hopefully will be one of the best under 23 scores there so all I need to do is make up the time in the water. The time, there's no time target in the water – obviously conditions can completely vary, I mean like the race can be really slow with a heavy wind and rain and that or really quick with like low wind and just complete still water. So you can't be given a target on that they just compare all the times and maybe compare it to a – and pick an Olympic time, a percentage – you call it Gold Medal time percentage in which they get the world record for that event, compare your time against that and give you a percentage of what you've got so you can get anything from perhaps a low one like 70% all the way up to 90 or 100.

BEN: Fortunately one of the things that I've got in terms of physiology is a reasonable aerobic system much in the same way as Josh, the second 2km race or 2 km work that I did was sub 6 minutes which is kind of in the right place that it needs to be. I mean successful Olympic champions are basically around the ... under 5 minutes and 50 seconds so to be under 6 minutes already is quite a kind of boost mentally. Obviously as Josh was saying, you can think of the indoor work as a degree for a job interview, it will get you to the trials but then what you've got to do is prove yourself on the water itself.

JOSH: But as soon as you're chucked into the GB circuit you can be thrown into any boat whether it's an 8 or even a double or a single. It's probably more likely to be a rowing boat with just the one oar cos ... there's probably more places in an eight or – we could even be put in a quad or something – like a developing boat cos at the moment there's boats like the flagship GB which is like the 4 with the pair. We'll probably be thrown into like a more developing boat where people are going to be rising up the ranks to try and get that boat to as high a standard as the ones they've already got like the four and the pair.

4 THE GAMES

* Currently in Training *

5 FUNDING

JOSH: Well for a start the World Class Start Scheme that we're on – the National Programme has been like amazing, it's given us a boat to row in all the time, they give us our train fares up to our camps cos we have a camp every month which is just basically a testing camp to see what level we are at and how we progressed. Not only that, accommodation, food ... it's really, really good

BEN: We've had one or two competitions where – the testing camps that Joshua has been talking about – we have those up at Nottingham so we travel up there every now and then. We also have some of the events down at Dawney which is the lake that's going to be used in 2012 itself so you know it kind of gives us an opportunity to get on there and accustomed to the place. But also just recently we went across to Ghent in Belgium which was one of those competitions that gets you used to going away somewhere, gets you out of the comfort zone of being around stuff that you're used to so you know you are in a completely foreign location, hotels and so on. Just gets you used to those kind of experiences which would be required should you make the team. Basically in terms of sponsorship the company I work for – ARM – have been so helpful all the way through the process really. When I first started off they bought me some blades and a speed coach which kind of got me rolling and more recently they've also given me some sponsorship towards a single sculling boat that I've bought in order to get my technique and everything right and that set me back about £4000. And then there's the kind of things that you can't really assess directly in terms of flexibility of working hours and stuff. When I'm out here in the morning you know if you get a bit of traffic after an hour and a half's session then getting across to work on time is not the easiest thing to do but they are very supportive of that fact and have helped me all the way through.

JOSH: I've got really good help as well. I've got a couple of private sponsors – a man – a business man from London originally from my home town in Bury read one of the newspapers that I was article'd in about how I got into Sporting Giants and decided to sponsor me – his name is Charles Kingsley Evans and he gives me basically a monthly allowance which I use purely for petrol and rowing needs. Also a man who owns – Mike Robinson who owns Robinson Young based in Bury St Edmunds – also sponsors me in the same way where he just gives me the monthly grant which I can spend on rowing fees and the petrol cos I've got to travel from Bury to Cambridge and Ely – racks up quite a petrol bill at the end of the week, so all of that is really, really helpful. I mean I wouldn't be able to do it without the money cos it is expensive and I'd have to get a job if I didn't have that – meaning less time to dedication to training and I know some people who do too much in the way of college, they have full time work, and they actually have to go and do 4 hours of training – they just get really tired. Also a local garage in Bury – Tollgate Tyres – also they help, they service my car when it needs it free of charge which is also another bonus that I don't have to spend out for which I can use for getting to training in my car.

BEN: And then in terms of the kit side of things we've got another company – Shearwater insurance – that provide us with a range of kit so when we go off to competitions and so forth, we look like a unit as such rather than all turning up in random pieces of clothing.

6 LONDON 2012

BEN: I think it's just something fantastic to aim for, I mean one of the things that they mentioned – the kind of seed that was ingrained in me at the start of all this was that no one in the current generation has won Gold in their home nation from an English point of view so

coming along, you know we've been down to the Lake, we now know what it looks like and as you are rowing along you can imagine crowds sitting on either side. I think the kind of atmosphere there will be second to none. A lot of the competition which I've been going on to recently I'm starting to get an appreciation for the names of certain people that you are going up against so that you can get an idea. Obviously the first race you go to you sit on the start line and you don't know what anyone is going to do next to you. It's not until you're a kilometre into the race that you start to realise that somebody is strong or not so strong. I guess in terms of competition numbers there are something like 1500 domestic rowers that are trying to get to 2012 and obviously there are only a small number of positions available.

JOSH: The scale of it is going to be enormous I don't think people realise how big London 2012 is going to be and we are going to try and make ... it's going to really spur everyone on, its increasing the rate of sports participation all over the place, not just rowing but everywhere but obviously with that there's going to be more competition and we're going to train harder than ever to get there. Get into the GB circuit, get into the boat they want us to race in, then we really just go for it I mean to also row in your home country as well in front of all those people like Ben said is just going to be amazing I think.