



## Get Set Hangout Road to Rio 5

**CHRIS:** Hello and welcome to this Get Set hangout, it's the fifth hangout in our series and today we're going to be talking all about sport science. Between now and the summer of 2016 when the Olympic and Paralympic games take place in Rio, we'll be meeting lots of athletes and their amazing support teams involved in team GB and Paralympics Gb on the road to Rio. We'll be giving schools in our Get Set community the chance to ask questions to these incredibly talented individuals. Schools from across the UK have sent the Get Set team some excellent questions to Get Set participants.

Our first participant is John Francis. John is a performance analyst for the British wheelchair basketball men's and women's performance sports, and as part of his role John is in charge of analysing training and match performance in order to provide the coaches and athletes with feedback to help them learn and improve for future performances. So hello John, how are you today?

**JOHN:** I'm fine today, thank you Chris.

**CHRIS:** Great. Our second participant is Mark [spelling]. Mark is a multi-talented athlete who has competed in wheelchair rugby, wheelchair rowing and wheelchair basketball. Recently, Mark assisted the GB men's wheelchair basketball team to gold at the European championships in 2015, and a qualification place for the Rio 2016 Paralympics game. Congratulations Mark and great to have you with you.

**MARK:** Thank you very much.

**CHRIS:** Fantastic. So asked schools to think about sports science and what they would like to ask our participants. Let's start with Claire Mount School from the Wirral, and they submitted this question for John: how can young people be encouraged to take part in wheelchair basketball and what needs to happen so that everyone in school can experience the game?

**JOHN:** Following from London 2012 there's been a great influx of media attention in wheelchair basketball, and as such the funding has increased also. So basically in British wheelchair basketball we have a team of development officers as well as a team, so they're in charge of developing the sport in the wider community, in schools and in the university setting. So the wheelchair basketball development team is set up in an initiative called 'inclusive basketball', where there's four players on call and two able-bodied players and two players in wheelchairs, to get them involved and increase the opportunities in schools. Also they have developed an online resource, which is available on [www.pushingtheboundariesinpe.co.uk](http://www.pushingtheboundariesinpe.co.uk), and is available for secondary school teachers and has an eight week program for them to adopt into their learning and lessons.



From that and the use of our development team, there's lots of opportunities in the community, at school and also at clubs. This year alone there have been 692 games of wheelchair basketball played in the UK alone.

**CHRIS:** Thank you John. Our next question also comes from Claire Mount School, and this is for you Mark. How often do you do strength and conditioning training as opposed to other forms of training like speed work?

**MARK:** For me it really varies. So depending on the time of the year and where we are in our preparation cycle, we'll really vary the amount of strength and conditioning workouts on the basis of all the work that we do. For example after the Europeans last year, I took a few days off and then went to focus on my strength and conditioning, making sure that I was burning off fat and increasing my strength. So there probably the majority of my sessions were focused around that side of things. Now as we're moving to Rio, I am starting to get more and more into my training sessions in the wheelchair, and now I'm probably doing two to three strength sessions in the gym per weeks, and then probably later four conditioning sessions in which I'll also have strength as well [inaudible].

So it really varies now, my training is going to start again and I will get a lot more focused into my basic work like training underneath the basket, focusing on my chair skills – so that really starts to take prevalence now rather than the conditioning where I can go on a maintenance program where we can focus on the fine-tuning in preparation for Rio.

**CHRIS:** Thank you Mark. For our next question we're coming back to you for this John. It's from New Hall School in and their question goes like this; we have lots of students who have to deal with injuries in their sports, and we'd like to know how professional athletes recover from injuries and how they're supported by support teams.

**JOHN:** That's a great question. Our focus in British wheelchair basketball isn't actually in injuries, it's in injury prevention. We have a system in place where we screen the athletes on a regular basis, so that's around every two to three months, just to see where they're at physically, and if they have had any injuries, what stage of recovery they're actually coming in. so we have a team of physios and a team of sport therapists as well which is linked with the England Institute of Sports. Each athlete is given regular physio treatment when they do receive injuries.

They also have a strength and conditioning program, which is set out for each individual, as Mark said in the previous question. It's all individualized and tailored depending on the actual period of the training program which we're currently in. so now it's 194 days to the games, we're now into a phase where actually we're developing more methods in looking at how teams and oppositions are actually playing. So how can we integrate all analyses and information and support the athletes in order to prepare them for their games before the



actual Paralympics. So we've got pre-match tournaments and preparation tournaments coming up, so we're preparing those athletes best for those games.

**CHRIS:** Thank you John. We're coming back to you Mark, this is a question from Uckfield Community College in Uckfield. Their question is; do you use any mental rehearsal preparation before you compete and which techniques work best for you?

**MARK:** For me obviously in terms of mental preparation, something like an athletic running race is really easy to prepare and to be able to plan and redirect that to this is you versus yourself. At a team sport, I think that becomes a bit more difficult because you're having to adjust and react to opposition. So in terms of the whole focus around the game and all those specific ins and outs, it really isn't as easy to necessarily adjust for the whole team. So it's very much around, when I'm not training focusing on the skill movement that I'm doing and visualising opposition in front on me, focusing on that feeling and victualing the feel of the ball as it leaves my hand when I'm taking a shot.

Other than that it's that feeling and that visualisation of 'I know I will need to be ready at this stage', and then the process is going to be leading to actually playing in that field. But yes, it's a little bit different than facing forward, or visualising the whole game in one day.

**CHRIS:** Thank you Mark. Colmore Junior School in have a question for John; how do you help to prepare a team before a game?

**JOHN:** Okay so my specific role, a lot of my work is done before the actual game starts or even before we actually get to the venue. Two or three months out before the event we actually start looking that the opposition, trying to acquire as much strategy of previous matches where they played where that be friendly games or previous international tournaments. For instance if we're looking at a game against Spain coming up, we'll potentially get some footage of the Spanish League system out there as well as Spanish matches from the recent European championships ever since. So my role for that is breaking down that footage and looking and identifying any significant trends and patterns and then feeding that information back to the coaches and the athletes themselves in order to help them to gain an understanding of what they're potentially going to be facing. So we look at where shots have been taken from from the opposition, and then from that we can create a defensive plan and strategy in order to stop them scoring from those certain areas.

So that's my pregame kind of involvement, and then during the game we looking at trying to provide as much information as possible during the game, and that's coming in through live information, live statistical data to the coaches so that they can make informed decisions based on what's actually happening during the game.



**CHRIS:** Terrific, thank you John. Now we have a question from Southcraig Campus in South Ayrshire, it's for yourself Mark. Is there any food or drink that you're not allowed to have as part of your training that you really miss?

**MARK:** For me first when I had a weekly trainer I enjoyed my food, but we have a nutritionist on-board now. It's being about fine-tuning and improving what I ate before, so before maybe I would have more carbohydrates in my diet, and now I focus more around protein intake. And actually, the changes that have been made probably mean I'm not eating more, but it's more of the right thing and it's really making a difference. In terms of do I miss anything, not really because I'm actually really enjoying the new food that I'm having. And if there's an occasion where I do want to maybe have a little treat of a cake or anything like that, I know that if I have it in when I'm training hard enough it really won't make a significant difference, but just making sure I don't do that on a regular basis.

**CHRIS:** Thanks so much. So we've just got time to squeeze in a couple of extra questions from the Get Set team. We're going to stay with you Mark, the question is; what is your personal career aspiration after winning gold as part of the GB wheelchair basketball team?

**MARK:** For me obviously my real focus is gold, and what happens after Rio I'm yet to decide. I have a family and a fulltime job, so all those considerations need to be taken into account in terms of how long my playing career will continue. I'd like to play forever but I need to think of my family and my work situation. So I think once we've got the performance hopefully we want, I will then have a review of where I'm at and what I want to do and make a decision from there.

**CHRIS:** Thank you. Our final question is a question for both of you and we'll start with you John. How have advances in technology helped to improve performances?

**JOHN:** It's a huge advancement from the Asian cycle through to the London cycle to now. So we've been working with various different companies and our chair sponsor which is RDK, to develop a new bespoke sitting system to make the athletes feel one with themselves and the chair and hopefully make better ongoing improvements. That's just for instance one small part of what we're trying to do with the technology. For instance with our strength and conditioning we're using more bespoke equipment in the gyms, which are designed specifically to the athlete's needs in order to help make sure that the work they're doing in the gym is actually more beneficial to them.

Technology Myo [unclear: 14:09] is a bit big, or as part of my role is a bit thing. Recently we just bought some new software which allows other athletes and coaches to view all the work which I do, and I'm also exploring the options of kind of creating live links with i-Pads to help with the on call decision making during the games.



**CHRIS:** Thank you for that John. We'll come back to you Mark and ask the same question; how have advances in technology helped to improve your performance?

**MARK:** Yeah without technology we'd be nowhere near as advanced as we are and we would definitely not have a chance of a medal. I mean, the work that John puts in in helping us prepare with all of the video analyses is just really fantastic and really enables us to understand our position. And then as John said, when we're of course doing our strength and conditioning work or when we're just in the gym on our own, having that technology there to help and assist us, I have a whole range of different things that I use from the technological point of view to help me make those fine changes and to build bits and pieces.

As well as that, the wheelchairs as a huge element of the technological advancement. I remember back years ago when I was 12 years old and the chairs didn't even have anti-tip bars on the back, so they were pretty much like a regular wheelchair. Now with the advances they have made and the support of the FDK, I'm just waiting for a new chair myself which will give me a totally different seat in the division I've had before, to lighten up my core and enable me to use the strength I've got from my stomach muscles to really give a better push and turn quicker and be more active. I think that will really take me to the next level and really help me make a significant difference to the team at Rio.

**CHRIS:** Thank you for that Mark. I'm afraid that's just about all we've got time for today, so I just want to say a really big thank you to all of our schools for submitting their fantastic questions, and of course to our participants John Francis and Mark [spelling]. We'll be posting this hangout on our website at [www.getset.co.uk](http://www.getset.co.uk), where you can also find our 'road to Rio' app where we're challenging teams of young people to get active and travel the distance from London to Rio. If you'd like to be involved in our next hangout, email us at [getset@getset.co.uk](mailto:getset@getset.co.uk). Thank you very much everybody and goodbye!

**MARK:** Thank you!

**JOHN:** Thank you!