



## Get Set Hangout 9: Getting kitted out with Alfie Hewett and Amy Roberts

**CHRIS:** Hello and welcome to another of our GetSet hangouts. Today, we're talking about the clothes that athletes wear and the technology that they use, as we discuss the subject. Our Google Hangouts give the Get Set community a chance to speak some brilliant athletes from team GP and Paralympics GB and other special guests to help us find out more about the world of sports. School from all around the country having sending their questions for our two special guests today.

Our first guest is double Paralympic silver medallist Alfie Hewett. A Wheelchair Tennis player extraordinaire, Alfie first picked up a tennis racket aged seven, and hasn't looked back since! Alfie had great success in Rio, winning two silvers, first in the doubles, then the single tournament, where he and his doubles partner Gordon Reid battled it out in the final. A double Paralympic medallist at just 18, Alfie is definitely one to keep watching!

Hi Alfie, great to have you with us!

**ALFIE:** Hi.

**CHRIS:** Great to have you, it's nice to see you. Our second guest is Event Manager of the British Paralympic Association, Amy Roberts. Amy has worked in sporting events since the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, taking on roles in the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, the Rugby World cup, and – since 2015 – ParalympicsGB. In the run up to Rio, Amy's role saw her lead on kit selection. An essential part of an athletes' performance, kit is designed not only to look good, but also help secure great sporting victories. With her Rio expertise, Amy is well placed to help us explore the different ways that kit can support athletes in their efforts to always improve.

Hi Amy, thank you for joining us!

**AMY:** Hi, thanks for having me.

**CHRIS:** Right. Now let's get started. We asked our GetSet schools to send any questions that they might have for today's guests. Let's start off with a question from Whitchurch Combined School in Ellisville; and their question is this: do you have a special chair to play in?

**ALFIE:** Hello Whitchurch Combined School, yes I do have a special chair to play in. so I have my normal day chair which is what I use for like going to the court or going to places; and then I have my sports chair which is different from my normal chair. So



most of you have probably seen what a normal wheelchair looks like, but if you think about a sports chair (you might have seen a sports chair on TV), these are different because the wheels are more at an angle so that we can have better movement around the core, which lets us turn quicker. It's really beneficial to obviously the tennis balls that are heading to us. But we also have a third wheel at the back, similar to maybe basketball chairs that you might have seen, that allows us to keep our balance in our chairs and for us to not fall back.

**CHRIS:** Thanks Alfie. Our next question is from Lani, St Saviour CE Primary School and it's for Amy. It goes like this; does all athlete's kit have to be very tight fitting?

**AMY:** That's a really interesting question. I suppose because Paralympics sports is so different and vary so much, the kit itself has to vary quite a lot as well. So some sports do need really tight-fitting clothes; so if you're maybe a runner, you want it nicely fitted so that the athlete is aerodynamic as possible and their muscles are supported when they're running. And then you want to make sure you don't restrict an athlete when they're performing, so if you take for example a wheelchair basketball team they have quite loose shirts with no sleeves to make sure their arms aren't restricted when they are passing the ball. So it really depends on the sport on whether it should be tight or not.

**CHRIS:** Thanks Amy. We move on to question 3; it also comes from Zack who is from St Saviour CE Primary School in Bolton. This question is for both Amy and Alfie, and I think we will ask Amy to answer first. It is this; how was the kit designed for the conditions in Brazil different to the kit worn by GB athletes at home?

**AMY:** With kits we're always looking to make sure they're suited for the athletes in the environment they're competing in. so for Rio, the kits for this cycle was 10% lighter and also we had a really exciting climate shield technology which means that all the heat is drawn away from the body to make sure our athletes didn't get too hot when they were in Rio. Also because we were in Brazil, we gave our athletes kits for when they're just lounging around their leisurewear. So we made sure we got everyone those shorts and flip flops, no woolly hats needed.

**CHRIS:** Brilliant. And Alfie, do you have some insight on that question as well?

**ALFIE:** Well like Amy said, there was a lot of things that they did to make the kit lighter and made the kit a lot easier to play in for us to playing tennis, we were sometimes playing when the weather was 30+ degrees, so as you can imagine that's really hot conditions. It's different to the UK in September! So there was a lot of things that really helped us athletes to feel chilled and cool on the court, but as Amy said, once we were off the court we also had comfy comfortable gears that made us feel like we were at



home. It was a lot similar actually to the UK, there wasn't too much different but in terms of the weather we found really that was kind of the main difference.

**CHRIS:** Thanks Alfie. One final part of that question, Zach wants to know, Alfie are you a Norwich fan like me?

**ALFIE:** Yes sir, I am a Norwich fan. I hope you come down to the games, we're not doing too well at the moment but we can pick up!

**CHRIS:** Okay. We're going to go to question four which is from Calthorpe Park School, and it is this; what do you do to wear your opponent out?

**ALFIE:** What do I do to wear my opponent down? Well, tactically-wise, I would try and hit as many balls in the court as I can, obviously that's the main aim in tennis! Some players are a lot easier to read than others, so if I have someone who I know is impatient on the court or very tough conditions, then I will just try to make him play down the court and I will not use powerful shots because that increases the likelihood of making an error. So hitting it behind them, hitting it at them, trying to get them to push as much around the court – cool stuff like that is how I wear my opponent down.

**CHRIS:** terrific, thanks Alfie. We're going to go to you Amy with a question from Luke from Trumacar Primary School in Heysham. The question is like this; is Paralympic kit different to the kit Olympic athletes wear?

**AMY:** Some of the kit is the same. So obviously both of the teams we represent Great Britain. So if Luke was watching the summer games in Brazil, you would have noticed both the Olympians and Paralympians had a lot of things that looked similar on. But we do have one big difference, and that is our logo that we have on our Paralympic kit. So we have our Paralympic GB lion on the kit and also the *agitos* as well, which is really important because it represents our Paralympic values and hopefully it gives people some inspiration and determination when they see us wearing the kit; and that's probably the main difference. We're all one team supporting Great Britain, but yeah, we have a different logo on.

**CHRIS:** Thanks Amy, now back to you Alfie. Question number six is from Whitchurch Combined School, and the question is this: how hard is it to keep turning your chair and hitting the ball at the same time?

**ALFIE:** That's a really good question actually, one that you think would be very easy to answer but it's actually very complicated! Obviously being in the chair for 10 years now, I've managed to learn how to be agile in my chair. I had to take wheelchair classes, and I also got into wheelchair basketball which helped me massively in my coordination, how I turn the chair. So I started tennis at the age of seven and there's a lot of training and movement drills I've had to do to make sure I can turn the chair at the same time,



and obviously the tennis skills come along with it. So it's very much looking to separate between skills and do movement and then tennis, and then as you progress as a player you learn then to combine the two; and in the last three to four years I've managed to do that. I can say now I'm really happy with how I've progressed, right now I feel like those two things are well for me.

**CHRIS:** Excellent. We'll go to question seven from Ethan and Loveon in Whitley Academy Coventry. And the question is this; what are the three things you would advise someone with an impairment to encourage them?

**AMY:** Hi Whitney Academy, that's really a nice question as well. I would say, obviously working for the British Paralympics Association, we work with a lot of athletes and staff who have impairments, and to me it's been a huge inspiration. My biggest piece of advice would probably be: don't let nay barriers get in your way. Watching the games this summer obviously is just incredible to see how well everyone was and our British athletes especially. An important take away from that is probably just be the best you can be, and that might be not being a Paralympian – it might be being the best at what you enjoy doing in your spare time, whatever hobby you do. And then most importantly just enjoy yourself, because if you enjoy it that's the most important thing.

**CHRIS:** Great answer, thank you. Same question to you Alfie, what would your three pieces of advice be?

**ALFIE:** Very similar to what Amy said, I think the main thing in sports is that you enjoy whatever you play; whether it is low level or high level. You have to enjoy the sport and I think what I found in my career is that I really enjoy playing tennis and basketball, and as you enjoy you want to learn and that's the only way you're going to move forward and progress. But it's not always about developing and becoming the best athlete in the world, it's just making sure that you're happy with yourself and that you're enjoying what you're doing. So I think that's the main piece of advice I would give to someone. But someone who is looking to really achieve something at a high level, then it's to accept that there's always going to be tough times ahead, it's never a direct route. Just before Rio I was actually struggling a lot with my confidence in the single's game, and I had a good match for about three or four minutes and then I went surreal. A perfect example is you're in the storm and you just take it the way it comes. So enjoy the good times but expect the bad times as well and just get through it.

**CHRIS:** Thank you very much. I'm going to keep you there because we've got a couple of extra questions that we're going to squeeze in. question eight is for both of you, from Maham in St Saviour CE Primary School in Bolton. And the question is; who designed the Paralympics GB kit and if you could change one thing about it what would it be?



**AMY:** Our kit was designed by Adidas and also Stella McCartney. So the Great Britain kit was really exciting and had some lovely design features that Stella added onto it, as well as being hugely technical from Adidas. So it was really great to have them both on-board with us. And we're always looking to try and develop, with technology and science, to make sure the kits are the best for the athletes. So I'm not quite sure what the one thing I would change would be, but I'm sure there will be some changes. So in four years' time there will be a few changes and our athletes will show them off then.

**CHRIS:** How about you Alfie?

**ALFIE:** To be honest, if there's anything I would change it would be to get rid of the warm weather clothes because there was no need for any of that Rio. That was probably one of the best things about the kit they provided; was that it covered all aspects of the climate – so warm weather, rainy weather, mild weather and obviously hot weather. So now that we're back in UK I'm actually wearing a lot of the kit that was provided that I didn't manage to wear in Rio. So no, I really find the kit quite comfortable all the time really.

**CHRIS:** Thank you. Question nine is for both of you, so we will go to Alfie and then Amy. What was your dream job when you were a child?

**ALFIE:** Before I was diagnosed with my hip condition I was a goalkeeper actually, so my aspiration was to be a professional football player in Norwich City obviously because I'm a Norwich City fan. So I would have loved to go on that route, that was my dream job as a child.

**CHRIS:** Fantastic, how about you Amy?

**AMY:** Well I didn't really have a dream job I suppose, I was always really passionate in history. I loved History, so that's what I chose to study in the university. And then managing to get my degree I was lucky enough then to use that and have transferable skills that I could track. So I went to the school industry, so I've been really lucky to work in the school industry since then. Also I've made history, who would have thought!

**CHRIS:** Terrific, thank you! Question ten is for Alfie, it's from Whitchurch Combined School in Ellisville. It's this; do you like to play other sports and what are they?

**ALFIE:** Currently I don't play any other sport. As a child I got into archery, wheelchair basketball and tennis. They were my three sports that I played, and I kind of stayed with them for a few years and I managed to carry through wheelchair basketball to a couple of years ago now. It wasn't until tennis started to get quite intensive training and competitions that I felt like I couldn't carry on with basketball. It's also quite physical as well, so I get a lot used to it. Unfortunately I didn't have to stop that, but I'm looking to



get back into playing wheelchair basketball and hopefully do both at the same time. So there were other sports that I played.

**CHRIS:** Fantastic. This is our final question, it's a question for both of you. It's from Shijany from Trumacar Primary School. The question is this: what was the best day of your life?

A: That's an interesting question. I would say this has been an incredible year for sport and to be part of it has been a privilege. Obviously there's lots of work that goes on behind the scenes, we don't just send off to Rio. So it's been years of working and planning, but for me the real highlight this year was on the first day when all the athletes started coming through our kitting process. So we give all the athletes their kits and it's the start of their Rio journey; and just to see how exciting it was and all those months and months of planning and getting the kits sorted and everything else, I felt really privileged to be there with all the athletes and I was just really excited to start my Rio journey as well. So for me that was probably the best day anyway.

**CHRIS:** Terrific, thanks Amy. How about you Alfie?

**ALFIE:** That's a very tough question actually. This has been a really good year for me, and these past two years have been good. But I think my standout day of my life has got to be probably my semi-finals match against the number two at the time. I went to the semi-finals which is something I didn't know get I'll get that far. Then I won that semi-final against the final; my double spot that day was going to be just the best day. My emotions were clear and cool and pretty similar cool as well. There's a lot of memories, but that's got to be up there.

**CHRIS:** Thanks Alfie. Well, I'm afraid that's about all the time we have for today. I want to say a really big thank you to all our schools for submitting their fantastic questions, and also to our participants Alfie Hewett and Amy Roberts. If you're watching this hangout on a website at [www.getset.co.uk](http://www.getset.co.uk), you can find out how you can relive the Olympic and Paralympic values by taking part in our values awards. These awards reward and recognise young people for understanding and enacting the values, and you can start today by testing your knowledge with our interactive values quiz. You can also still take part in our road to Rio challenge and get active by virtually travelling the distance from London to Rio. If you'd like to be in our next hangout, email us at [getset@getset.co.uk](mailto:getset@getset.co.uk). And all that remains is for me to give a huge thank you to everybody, and goodbye! See you next time!