

Interview with Philip Craven at home, 27 February 2013

Interviewer Jon Newman

Could you talk about what sport meant to you as a child and a teenager?

I played a lot of sport but I didn't do it highly competitively, I didn't like the training. I used to be on the school swimming team, probably would have been on the cricket team, definitely not the football team 'cos I didn't really have that foot-eye coordination and control - which I definitely had in my hands. At cricket I was very good at throwing the ball and catching the ball and also tennis; so those were the three sports really. But my dad always encouraged sport and ball sports and I played a lot of cricket with him in different parks - my dad was a florist so he didn't get a lot of time off, so every Sunday we'd go to a park if it wasn't raining and have a picnic but also put the wickets up and play cricket; so when I had my accident I'd got into fell walking and a little bit of rock climbing only when I was sixteen - and I had my accident when I was 16 in September - no I was just 16 so when I was 15 I'd got into that - and really enjoyed it and really toughened up my legs and then all of a sudden at the end of September 1966 I lost my legs, but on the second or third day lying in bed at the Southport spinal injuries unit I saw wheelchair basket ball being played on the tennis court outside my window and it was then only played seasonally, it was s played outdoors, and the season would probably come to an end in October-November and then kick off again in April. So something logged in my head, hey you can still play sport, 'cos of course I'd got the impression pretty quickly that I was going to use a wheelchair - maybe not for the rest of my life - but there were only wheelchairs moving round the place, but that didn't bother me and I saw wheelchair basket ball but didn't play it for about a year; I played table tennis, snooker, different things and then got into wheelchair basketball and swimming.

Was this something that was encouraged at Southport for rehabilitation?

That was the time (which has changed since) when there were physiotherapists and also remedial gymnasts. Remedial gymnasts tended to concentrate on the more physical activity, the less theoretical rehabilitation - and it was encouraged. But it wasn't overly encouraged but there was a sports club connected to the spinal unit and that met every Wednesday and every Sunday and I quickly found out that that's where the wheelchair basketball team was located, the table tennis team that played both at Stoke Mandeville but also in the local leagues, in Southport local leagues; and that's what drew me back to the club and I played sport immediately after leaving hospital; came back, got an invalid car, one of those terrible light blue things - I did a hundred thousand miles in those probably eight years, ten years, before I got a car (maybe longer than that). That was the transport mode to get to local events; and then I'd always be taken by another club member (Ron Dixon I remember, he had a 1600 Cortina that flew as far as I was concerned) and we used to shoot down to Stoke Mandeville for the Nationals and things.

Were you living close by when you came out of Southport?

No, in Farnworth near Bolton, so that was about 40 miles away from Southport

Was there a local club where you could play?

No there wasn't a local club at that time and Southport was the place. I enjoyed Southport. People will be surprised at this, but until I was competent in my wheelchair I didn't want to go outside my own home, where I'd been last time on my feet, seemingly now a wheelchair user and not very good at it. Once I'd got pretty good at it after a year or so that wasn't a problem, but it was very convenient for me to go to this town where nobody knew me maybe (it was a subconscious thing, but looking back, that was it). Then I went back every Wednesday, once I could drive, and every Sunday to play sport; so that was where I went out; I didn't go out locally in the Bolton area.

Was sport initially sociable and pleasurable and only later competitive?

No, I didn't realise, but I became highly competitive as soon as I started playing wheelchair basketball. But I loved the training (this is the difference with how I was at school when I was on my feet) I loved the training for wheelchair basketball just as much as I loved the playing.

How did the competition structure work?

Then there was already the Great Britain Wheelchair Basketball League, rather than as it became, an association, now it's British Wheelchair Basketball. There were two structures really; there was one which was the League which played (Wheelchair basketball then became an indoor sport in the very early 70s) and each of the teams connected to spinal units – 'cos that's where they were initially, started to play indoors. I remember we started playing in Southport but at Edgehill near Ormskirk, that was in about 71, and that's when the Southport club started to get its act together even more and realised this had to be an indoor sport. So we had the league, but also we had sports days in the summer at different spinal units; you'd have the national games at Stoke Mandeville which was located outside of the spinal unit, because that's where Sir Ludwig Guttmann had founded the stadium etc. But also you had these sports days at Lodgemoor, Sheffield, Pinderfields, Wakefield, Southport Hospital (I'm missing out a load there) but different places.

At what point did you move across into the International team?

Well, pretty quickly; I went to the National Games for the first time in 1967. That's where I remember the prize giving on the last day, outdoors; we didn't win the basketball but Southport had won some team event – and I never forgot Guttmann, Sir Ludwig, giving the medals but he announced also the team that had won; and I always remember him saying "Souseport". And I thought, "Yeah, you're not from round here, are you?" That was my first encounter with him really, which was very favourable of course, he was giving medals to my club side. So that was 67, 68; I went to the National Games with Southport and we got battered again 'cos we didn't have a very good team. We had a great player, Gerry Kinsella, and myself and Ron Dixon and one or two others. But then the team was selected after those games in June 1968 for the Tel Aviv Paralympics Games because, if you recall, Mexico City was not going to deliver the Paralympics. And I'm still not sure why that was the case; it was partly Sir Ludwig Guttmann who didn't think that that paraplegics and tetraplegics should perform at over 6000 feet of altitude, but also maybe that they could put it on. And I didn't get into that team for Tel Aviv – my best mate Gerry did - and then the following year I competed for the first time at the International Games; after the Nationals I got picked as a young hopeful for the international wheelchair Basketball team, competed at Stoke Mandeville in the July, went to France in September for an international event which was not the European Championships then, but a multi-sports European competition, in Kerpape in Lorient in Brittany where eventually I

went to work (but that wasn't going to be for another three years). What else did I do in 69? I competed in the Internationals and realised then what an incredible sport this was. I remember, The American team for me still stick in my mind (and of course the Israeli team was incredibly strong at this time as well: Baruch Hagai, probably the greatest player ever to play the game from Israel) but I remember Denver Branum. He was what would have been a 4 point player now; so he was a polio, he had one good leg and one not so good as Hagai had. I remember him going in for spin lay-ups and it seemed as if he sent the ball from his toes, off the backboard and, zap! straight in. And I thought that's what I'm going to do.

And so, I went to university after that, to Manchester University. They were stand-up basketball national champions; I don't think they had an English player in the team. I remember there was a Mexican, there was an incredibly tall Egyptian who still put incredible height on the shot; and I thought, that's what I've gotta do; cos of course we're sitting lower; he could probably see the ring horizontally this guy, near enough. I used to train 3 hours a day, 4 hours a day basket ball at university in Manchester. (I didn't like swimming training by the way, I hated swimming training, so I did about an hour of swimming training; I was naturally pretty good at breast stroke, but I hated the training, and I packed it in after the first games in Heidelberg in 72.) But that's where I really got good and really developed certain skills that had never been done before in Britain with a 1-point player as I was, paralysed from just below... really from the belly-button down – and I was doing spin-shots and all sorts and it was Denver Branum that had kicked me off on that.

What sort of support or coaching were you getting at Manchester?

Nothing, self-taught. Because there was no ... I did train with individual players from the stand-up team when they were shooting and I was watching them, but I couldn't train with them as a team – I'd have broken all their ankles. And there were no coaches in the game at that time that were any good – and that continued way into the mid-70s, and that's another thing we've got to discuss, about that, and that's why I got really frustrated with the setup in Britain. Because I'd been training for three years at university; I then went to play in France for two seasons in 72/3 and 73/4 and there were no coaches of any... they were no good, they didn't know the game of wheel chair basket ball; the ones that came in they didn't know basketball either. It was an absolute shambles; and it was the players that pulled the team forward

Can we talk about Guttman; you saw him for the first time at that medal ceremony. What were your encounters with him like after that?

There was this very intense period from 69 to 72 when I was training all the time and playing internationally, I was never out of the team; and once really we got to the 1970 International Games – and the Commonwealth Games followed on from that in Edinburgh – I was on the first five of the International team I would say from 71 onwards. And I remember we won the European Championships in 71 (that was the second time they had taken place; we'd sent a scratch team to the first European Championships in Bruges in 1970 and ended up third, way behind; Belgium beat France in the final; and they'd picked two players from 4 clubs – we only had eight players in the team) but in 71 we went with the top team and we won in Kerpape in Brittany the European Championship. That in May 71 and we came back to the National Games in the June and Guttman, Sir Ludwig, gave us a champagne cocktail for winning the European Championships, which was pretty good. I know I went swimming in the 50 metre breaststroke only about thirty minutes after

that and dead-headed with the reigning Paralympic champion who was another Brit, and I thought well, this champagne doesn't half fire me up for swimming. Maybe if I'd been tested for drugs then I'd have been positive. So that was another encounter with Sir Ludwig.

So there was no negativity. The coach we had (Ralph Hill-Jones, who was from the Halton RAF base near Stoke Mandeville) - actually he wasn't bad, because the sport of wheelchair basket ball and the players were at a stage where we were reasonably good and he did a reasonably good job... So moving forward the first time I really crossed swords with Sir Ludwig was in 1976 (And that was when I'd had two seasons playing in France, I'd started work back in England for the National Coal Board which became British Coal. I had four job-offers and I chose NCB because I thought they'd give me more time off to play wheelchair basketball - and that's in fact what did happen - and I was able to continue with my sport) And then we came to the National Games of 1976, prior to Toronto and the Paralympics, and I'd stopped swimming then because of the... really, because again didn't like the training, I hated it. It was partly my reasoning that I wasn't going to get any better, but also the classification system really went haywire and Polios came into our class, and Polios have small legs that floated on the surface and Paraplegics normally have bigger more muscled legs which act as an anchor - and so there was no way I could compete with the times that the Polios were doing. However, I went to see the swimming events one night after we'd finished basketball at the 1976 Nationals when Cliff Last who was the team manager for the British team going out to Toronto started to talk to me about the improvements and developments that were taking place within the British team and he said "Oh we've made major steps forward because now we're going to consult with the athletes with regard to who the support staff should be - if anybody needed medical attention or anything like this - so I said "Oh, that's all well and good". But he said "Of course, I'm gonna select the coaches." And "Well", I said, "That might be fine in practice (and my wife will confirm that as the pool emptied of spectators and competitors my voice got louder and louder) And I said "That might be fine and good in principle, but I see the swimming coach is back for 76" (I can't remember his name, he was Liverpool Policeman) And I said this guy was found in Heidelberg, to be out shopping in Heidelberg when some of the finals were on and he should have been sacked, and he's not been, and I said the basketball coach, Howard Beale, he, when at the training sessions knows that little about the sport of basket ball, never mind wheelchair basket ball, he reads out of a text book on coaching and puts it up on the blackboard. The guy knows nothing about the sport." By then my voice was that loud I think I nearly blew him into the pool, Cliff Last, and so then thought nothing more of it.

Then the following morning I was summoned into what I would term the "Star chamber", which was Guttman's office with him behind his desk, Joan Scruton off to his right, to my left, the basket ball coach on my left, then the swimming coach and then Cliff Last. So Guttman must have said something like. "We hear that you were arguing with the team manager last night." And I said, "Oh, well yeah, that is true." He said, "What's this all about?" And so then I repeated what I'd said. And I got through the basketball coach, through the swimming coach and before I got to Cliff Last to tell him what I thought about him, Guttman intervened and said "As the President of this and the boss of that this is your last chance and if you say anything like this again you will not be going on the plane to Toronto." So, I decided there to cut my losses because I wanted to go to the Paralympics and I was picked on the team. When we got on the plane - and Gerry Kinsella had had a similar bust-up with Cliff Last which I did not know about at the National Games that same week about the same issues, and we had not colluded together on this, we did do after and I'll tell you what

happened after that - and so we arrive for the plane, it was a DC8 I remember it now and we weren't allowed to sit with the basket ball players, Gerry and myself, we were put with the armourer for the fencing team. And I said "Oh, forget this Gerry, we'd better have a couple of beers and just get to the other end." And when we got to the other end the coach was that incompetent he didn't even organise training sessions, so we went to see the caretaker of the gym where training could take place, and we arranged it for the team, the two of us, so it was that bad. Anyway, we had quite a number of pow-wows and secret meetings in Toronto and said ('cos we didn't do very well either - and that was partly because of the stinking classification system that was in wheelchair basketball at the time) and we had pow-wows about we're gonna go back to Britain and sort all this out and through the Great Britain League or association (I can't remember which) and when we got back, after all the players said, yeah this needs to change, then I never got an invitation to go to training for the 1977 season, neither did Gerry! The chairman of our club which, was Dr Krishnan - Mr Krishnan who was the consultant at the spinal unit in Southport - wrote to Guttmann who wrote back a three-page letter explaining why we were banned for life until we learned how to play with other players in the team and to be more reasonable. And so I didn't play in 1977. Gerry never played again, 'cos he said "Until I get an apology from Sir Ludwig Guttmann I am never playing for Great Britain again". And he was one of the greatest players ever.

So then the two of us in 1977 formulated our offensive against the whole Stoke Mandeville system; and they had an organisation called the English Paraplegic Sports Society, The EPSS, whose chairman was a guy called Geoff Ayscough of the Lodgemoor Club; and this organisation was run like a trades union, and because Lodgemoor had supposedly 250 members, they had more members than all the other clubs put together, and so they could carry any vote any time. Anyway, we found out that he tried to get one of his club members, a guy called Mick Skelton, he was a great snooker player, and there'd been some problem within the club and Mick was banned from playing for Lodgemoor, but he then used his position as the chairman of the EPSS (of which Guttmann was the President) to get him [Skelton] banned from competing for any other sports club ('cos he could have gone from Sheffield to Wakefield or this and that) and when we found this out we tore into him and put a motion down ('cos I was then chairman or secretary of Southport Club) and we verbally assaulted the chairman and he was forced to resign because he'd totally misused his powers. And became chairmen there and then, on that day and at that meeting, that's how things started to develop over time. Ever since that time until his death, I never enjoyed being anywhere near Sir Ludwig - and I never was in fact, I did come back and compete... Oh, and the minutes of that EPSS [meeting], it was that organisation that banned me and Gerry, and then Great Britain went from being European champions in 1974 and the best European team in the World championship in 75 (we got the bronze medal) to being 9th in Europe in 1977 and one or two people then started to think, well we had to do something about this. And both of us were invited back, Gerry would not come; I did go back and play in 1978 and it was such a strange feeling to be going back into the team (I was made very welcome by the way, by the coach who was then more of basketball person, Glyn Taylor) and I was made to feel very welcome, still, very strange going back... But in the minutes of the EPSS it said that I'd asked to come back, and I hadn't, I'd been invited to come back by them, but they couldn't put it even in the minutes of that organisation (which I had been chairman of but I don't think I was anymore, I'd decided to pack that in and do other things after a year maybe) and that really got me mad when I saw the minutes and how they'd been written to show that it was me that had asked...it wasn't, I was invited to come back. And it took (from that time in 78 I continued to play until the

Seoul games in 88)- but Great Britain never came back to being any good in Europe until (after I'd retired,) in 91 in the European Championships in Ferrol in Spain where we got the bronze medal. That was the first time we'd had a medal since 75.

Can we talk about your role in the changes that were made to the classification system?

The thing was that when I first started to play internationally (I think I'm right here – you'd have to check the history on this) that there was a system of 1, 2 and 3-point players will 11 points on court, so that of course meant you couldn't have five 3-point players, who were people who had pretty good leg movement, which gives far better balance in the wheelchair sat down than it does if you've no muscles below your chest. But what was happening with that system (I think the system was brought in 68, 69, something like that) it was a medical control. I remember I was playing with the French, for the French club who were national champions two years running, national cup winners two years running, and the captain of the French team played in this club and I knew him very well, Michel Le Doze, and in the 75 International Games in Stoke Mandeville he was re-classified from a 3 to a 2 -which should never have been done. Another player was reclassified in the French team from a 3 to a 2 and one who should have been a 2 was re-classified as a 1. So if you then have got probably two real 3s as the system allows for and two 2s who are 3s and a 1 whose a 2, you've got 14 points on court (I think the maths works out) and so you've got a massive physical advantage over any other team; and that's how it was with several teams at the time. And that's one of the reasons why Great Britain (only one of the reasons) why Great Britain did not perform as well in the late-70s and early-80s.

So, I came back to play for Great Britain and in 1982...Well during that time a doctor of Sports Science from Germany called Horst Strohkendl came up with a new system which he'd devised based on discussions with players in Germany, brilliant system, that system still by and large, well no it is still the system that's used today in 2013. But he couldn't get it accepted by the authorities at Stoke Mandeville. Don't forget that Sir Ludwig Guttmann was still president of all he surveyed. The reason why Horst could not get his system adopted was that he was only a doctor of Sports Science, and that did not cut the mustard with the medical doctors at Stoke Mandeville. So, we'd been talking about the totally unfair system at Stoke Mandeville for years (I'm talking about maybe from 74) at each International Games, it was the only thing that was discussed, "This is unfair!" And more and more players who were true 1-point players were going out of the game because they couldn't compete with the 2s who were becoming 1s. And the only way a real 2 could compete when 3s were coming in to be 2s, was if a 2 could become a 1.

Are you suggesting that the classification system was becoming corrupt?

No, I'm not saying corrupt, but totally wrong - corrupt means that it's done intentionally, and I don't believe that. But I don't believe that the medical doctors who conducted the classification with some of the physiotherapists had any contact with the sport that they were classifying – and what's happened since then, of course, is that some sports are very different physically to others if you compare swimming to wheelchair basketball you've got to have a different system. So the new system was there, but they would not accept that the old system was a bad system and needed change. So we were talking about it and talking about it. We come to the 1982 European Championships in Sweden;.... I had breakfast with the man who was then chairing the basketball section of the International Stoke Mandeville Games Federation (what a mouthful that is) Stan

Labanovich, a great guy, and American, who really had wheelchair basketball in his DNA. As a student he was at the University of Illinois and his great mentor, the guy who really founded wheelchair basketball in the States, was Tim Nugent. We had breakfast talking about these 3s, 2s and 1s. The Americans at the International Games the previous year had a player called Dave Efferson who was one of their great players. They said, and I believe this, that it was an administrative error, and instead of entering him as a 3 pointer for wheelchair basketball, they put him down as a class 3 for athletics which made him a 1 pointer [for wheelchair basket ball]. So he wasn't even going from a 3 to a 2; he'd gone to a 1. At a previous International Games I had been out with him and Gerry and Dave Kylie, the great American player; We'd been to the pub; and this guy [Dave Efferson] didn't know how to get his chair up a kerb - because he never used his chair except when he was on court playing wheelchair basket ball. [33.54] So, I'm going through this at breakfast with Stan, there's only the two of us and it nearly comes to blows because I'd used an American player as an example. I wasn't saying he was a cheat but he'd been put in the wrong class. I said "This can't go on". So, we left the breakfast table really not liking each other as I understood it but that night the basketball section of the ISMGF met in Sweden. To Stan's great credit he set up a Classification Committee with Horst Strohkendl as its chair and invited me to be a member. From that moment on it was decided in 82 that at the World Championships in Canada in 83 the new system would be brought in with or without the approval of the authorities at Stoke Mandeville – We were going to do it and this guy Stan Labanovich was determined to do it; Horst Strohkendl, it was his system and I were determined to get it through; so we reclassified everybody at the World Championships in 83 in Halifax Nova Scotia for its implementation to be put in at the Paralympic Games in 1984 – which then were going to be at the University of Illinois, but ended up being at Stoke Mandeville. All hell was let loose, "What's all this going on?" Strohkendl couldn't get it in, but I was the one that forced it through with the agreement of Stan Labanovich. So, do you want to go on to 84?

Can you just quickly explain the new system?

Yes, the new system is quite different. There were four classes, four 'points', and there was a clear differentiation between leg movement that was permissible and different amounts for the 3s and 4s, and no leg movement for 2s and 1s and so you had this massive differentiation which was required. And then the difference between a 1 and a 2 was that you didn't have any stomach muscles or lower back muscles if you were a 1 - and you did have if you were a 2 – and the difference between the 3s and the 4s was all based on how the sport was practised, a 3 basically can rebound with two hands but only above the head, but a 4 that has good movement in at least one leg, can rebound strongly (You see I'm leaning back against the back of my chair; a 3 or a 4 probably wouldn't have much of a back of a chair 'cos they didn't need it) but a 4 can rebound strongly to one side.

And then, after its implementation in 84 (I can't remember which year, Horst would be able to tell you) then half points were brought in, purely for border line situations: so now we have 1, 1½, 2, 2½, 3, 3½ - and a 4½ which is a class which is someone whose just lost a foot for example, and they can rebound strongly with two hands to both sides of the chair. So that was the new system coming in: very well accepted by the people who needed it which were the players, many of whom had disappeared under the old system, but not liked at all by the players who then started to realise if they hadn't done before that they were in the wrong class in the old system. And we had one guy (I won't say what nationality he was) he was reclassified in 83 when he was playing for his country in

the World Championships under the old system, said, “Well if I’m now a 4 (and he was obviously a 2 in the old system) “Then I’ve got nothing else to do, only to walk the dog” (which he shouldn’t have been able to do as a 2) “Or go fishing”. We didn’t worry about that; people had to get used to it. We had another country (close to the one I’ve just not mentioned) who said, “Well, let’s bring this in gradually and start with 17 points on court”. We said no as 17 points would become the norm grossly disadvantaging 1 and 2 point players. In the new system we had a point’s limit of 13 points – which was brought in in 84). Every country at the meeting at Stoke Mandeville in 84 of the basketball nations voted for it, and then when the Israeli team realised how it would affect their performance they then, at the end of the pool matches, protested to the Stoke Mandeville higher authorities who held another meeting and they overruled the decision of the Basketball Section, (and we were already half way through the Paralympic games competition!). I knew from that moment that we could not have this happening again, that we couldn’t have some more senior body (of course Sir Ludwig Guttmann wasn’t alive then, but still the people that had succeeded him were very much of the same attitude, “We are in charge and you have to follow” – and we weren’t going to have any more of that!

So in 84 I was voted on to be the chairman of the Classification Committee of the basketball section, so I was that for four years We had all sorts of bust ups with Stoke Mandeville at that time. Of course, the sport was developing. If the International Stoke Mandeville Games didn’t happen, we still had the World Championships, the European Championships, and other regional championships that were going to start. If Stoke Mandeville ceased to exist and if it stopped our sport moving forward, then that would be how it would have to be. And in 87 at the International Games the medical doctors insisted that the basketball players still had to have a medical examination so they had a classification in the old system because the overall general medical way of classifying was still happening in all the other sports – and the America women’s team refused (which of course cause a right rumpus) and said “Look, we’re basket ball players; we have our new system from 84; we don’t need this sort of system and we’re not competing in any other sports”. So, at the end of the day Stoke Mandeville had to pull back and that was the end basically of their domination for no apparently good reason of what was good for sport – in my view. And then at 88 in my last games I was approached not by Britain but by France and Spain to stand against Stan Labanovich to become chairman of the basketball section, which I did, but I invited Stan to come back on or to be still a member of the board; and in 89 founded the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation. And so that’s how that all started.

Why do you think the push against overtly medical classification systems came from the sport of basketball rather than from any other?

I think if you talk to my best friend, Armand Thiboutot of the USA he would say it was endemic within the sport of wheelchair basketball - that that sport was always run by the players, it was never run by anybody else; and that came out of the US in 45, 46. And when the National Wheelchair Basketball Association was founded in 1949 by Tim Nugent that was his philosophy (and then of course Stan Labanovich’s philosophy - Stan’s no longer with us but Tim still is, he must be nearly 90 now). So we did what was good for the sport as we viewed it. I have to say that since the 2012 Paralympic Games in London I have grown to have great respect for Sir Ludwig Guttmann. I learnt just what he did and how he had to fight to get rehabilitation into the British medical system, and that we weren’t allowed to die after three or four months if you had a spinal injury. It’s amazing

what he did for so many people. Maybe it was because of his age, or maybe he didn't understand or agree with me about where wheelchair sport and then Paralympic sport, was moving to. It had to become more competent (I hate that word 'professional') but more competent – and we had to do it. And so, why did it come from wheelchair basketball? Well, we were a bolshie lot anyway and we didn't like being told... If we knew as a group that we were right and these other people knew nothing... And I mean once we'd sorted classification out in International Wheelchair Basketball we then had to sort out the refereeing, because it seemed to me as a player we had all the cast-offs from the stand-up game, all the refs who may have been good but they were like middle-aged (my god, me talking now about middle-age!) but when I was 20-odd they seemed bloody ancient and they weren't fit at all; we had one guy we called him the Michelin Man and he really looked like the Michelin Man and he couldn't get around the court, he couldn't run as fast as we could push the chairs.... And so we had to sort that out; and we did and we've got some very good refereeing now and it all comes from that period of the late80s and early 90s.

Just one other thing from the time of when the player classification system came into being in 1984, Horst Strohkendl's system – note how it was called, it wasn't even functional, it was about the players, it was to be understood well by the players and by everyone else; and it's a pretty simple system. But in 87, again at the International Games, I was approached by the vice president of the International Stoke Mandeville Games Federation a man called Arie [?] Fink, a medical doctor, a really nice man, to see if we could come back together in some way, to have an agreement on where wheelchair basketball and the classification systems, which were still very much medical in the other sports, could still have some connection. I remember it was a very important meeting and we were ready for it and really we just said there's no possibility... we said "We've got a good system, we know we've got a good system, the players are happy with the system, it's working well and that's what we're going to do in wheelchair basket ball". I don't know if I said at the time, "What you do with the other sports, that's very much up to you", but that was it and from then on that player classification system in wheelchair basketball has evolved a little bit – I've mentioned the half-points and different things – but it's very much still used today as it was when it came in in 84.

Can we talk about your memories of the various Paralympics that you were involved in and how the games changed?

I think the key change at Stoke Mandeville – you'll have to check in the dates here, but it seems to me that it must have been 1968 the stadium was built for the first time. (I remember there was very funny moment there when British Steel I think I had provided the cladding for the outside of the building, maybe the girders or whatever, and they wanted an advert in the Sunday Times colour supplement and we all were invited down, the basket ball players from Southport, from Pinderfields, from Wakefield and one or two others to have a photograph taken of us with this steel in the background, the cladding. And remember, I always laugh because we got two pounds for doing this each and Bob Mundy who was a player for Southport, he had a toupee, Bob, and the only thing on the whole photograph of Bob was his toupee but he still got two quid)

But anyway...And then I went to the International Games which were indoors at 69 in Stoke Mandeville, that was when I saw the first international sport and it was big for me it was the first time I'd played, I think I got sent off for five fouls in my first international match against Spain and realised pretty quickly that even though we reformed refereeing later on, refereeing at the

international level was a lot tougher and that you had to be a lot more careful than when you were playing for your club side. Then in 70 we had wonderful indoor facilities at the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh and then we went on to Heidelberg, 'cos it wasn't in Munich in 72, it was in Heidelberg, but still the facilities as I remember them were for me tremendous. Cos of course I'm developing now – I'm only 22 there and I remember in 72 seeing Ed Owen, the great American player, the TV came down just to film him shooting baskets and it seemed to me that like in 15 minutes I don't know if he missed more than 2 or 3... And so all this was developing already in my mind I was seeing the potential of the sport of wheelchair basketball. But really that was 72, then we went through 76, Toronto, which was a bit of a side event in comparison to what was going on in Montreal. And similarly of course nothing happened in the Soviet Union in 1980, it was in Arnhem and the only thing I remember from that is they'd got some sponsor of flooring to put down the flooring for the wheelchair basketball court but it was this sprung spongy flooring which was useless for wheelchairs - it might have been ok for runners and jumpers in stand-up basketball. And I remember having to fill in a five-page questionnaire towards the end of the tournament with regard to injuries we'd sustained, because it was like pushing through sand trying to play wheelchair [basketball], terrible – so again another example of something that was really bad for the sport. 84, the guy ran off with the money from the University of Illinois, so we were in Stoke Mandeville - again a very small basketball arena, but packed all the time and great atmosphere from it. So that was 84; 88, for the first time the games came back to be with the Olympics in Seoul; great facilities, but when you've got about a thousand spectators in a facility that'll hold 15,000 it's not very good; it'd've been better to have been in a facility where maybe there were seats only for a thousand and it was packed. So, Seoul it was great that the principle that we came back together with the Olympics but then that relationship had to develop, and of course I had nothing to do with the developing of that relationship at that time in 88. I retired in 88 but then became president of IWBF, I was technical delegate for wheelchair basketball for the next three summer games, which were Barcelona, Atlanta and then Sydney. It was Barcelona that really (and I still say this to this day, even after by far the greatest games ever in London last year) were the games that made the biggest difference, where there was no charge, it was free entry, but the stadia were packed out. On the first night of a pretty poor women's wheelchair basketball game between Spain and the USA there were six and half thousand watching that; the following night the Spanish men's team took on the USA, there were twelve and a half thousand inside and four thousand outside who were being told to go and watch it on their TVs at home. And so it was the first time that hundreds of thousands (and I'm sure in the end it was probably one and a half million) fans came out to watch Paralympic sport and (something clicked in my head then) that was it, were on a roll here! And [in] my view of the International Paralympic Committee, (which had been founded in 89, but was not responsible for the games in 92; it was a former organisation which ran those; the first games they [IPC] were responsible for was the winter games in Lillehammer in 94) they did not pick up on the potential of the Paralympics; we didn't have good games in Atlanta (like they didn't have good Olympic Games) where money, money, money was the only thing that counted and nobody saw that Paralympic sport and the Paralympic games could generate any money therefore we had very poor games in Atlanta; and then we had brilliant games again in Sydney. And it was Sydney that took what I'd seen (and I hoped others had seen) in Barcelona and really brought it to the world. I mean there were more spectators watching wheelchair basketball in Sydney than there were for basketball in the Olympics (the reason being that there were a lot less media so there a lot more paying seats available, that's the reason, I'm only making the point). Sydney was amazing and the Paralympic

movement has been growing at a rapid pace ever since. But it's that Barcelona experience that's still so bright in my mind.

Was Barcelona a happy accident or was there something else to it?

No I don't think so. I think that in Spain at the time and with Juan Antonio Samaranch who is known for bringing the IOC out of the dark ages, particularly with Los Angeles where there were no Paralympic Games in 84 – but he must have had some sort of feeling that the Paralympics could be far bigger and more important than they then were (I have spoken to him about this; I met him several times after I became president of the IPC) But I think he put that sort of attitude into (he was from Barcelona) into the fact (not quite as the Chinese said in 2008 for Beijing “games of equal splendour”) but we had some very good people in the organising committee at Barcelona who believed in the Paralympics and our CEO of the moment, Xavier Gonzales, that's where he first came into contact with Paralympic sport, a Catalan from near to Barcelona. And we also had major backing from the Fundacion Once (Once being the foundation and organisation for blind people in Spain and they make most of their money from having the right to have the National Lottery of Spain) and therefore I think they put what was then a massive figure into the Paralympics – I don't know if it was the equivalent of \$30,000,000 or something like this – but I know there was major investment into the Paralympics, for the first time ever I would say. I know that Samaranch was behind that and I know there were other Spanish people involved in Paralympic sport in Spain who were behind that and for the first time ever....If Spain had got through to the finals of the wheelchair basketball (in the end they were sixth and we were fifth in the men's) it would have been televised all over Latin America. So again, you've got that television interest in the sport which has taken time to develop but it has been developing; and we saw how it came to an amazing – not conclusion – came to Channel 4 in London and how Channel 4 have got the winter games in Sochi in 2014 and the summer games in Rio in 2016 for the UK. You know, you've got to have those moments in your life when you say, “Wow!” And what can it be in the future now you've seen this taster of what it could be - and you either see it and do something about it, or you see it and do little about it = or you don't even see it. And I think I saw it and then when I got the chance, but ten years later, we started to do something about it.

(Jocelyne) One thing you forgot to say about Barcelona and why it was so important, especially for basketball, because Badalona which is a little town near Barcelona was really ... you know Britain doesn't really know anything about basketball, never has done, but Spain is very, very much into basketball...And Badalona is the birthplace of basketball in Spain...So when they were playing in Badalona the public knew and the fans wanted to see basketball and wheelchair basketball.

It wasn't in Barcelona, the basketball, it was just up the coast in Badalona and so they were basketball fanatics, whereas you would say that Barça is also basketball but it's primarily football. Absolutely, great point, and that's why so many turned out. We had international incidents there: we banned a Spanish player who'd become rather physical on the sideline during a - but of course it had to be Spain against Great Britain in the pool matches - and then what had been the press bar area for the Olympics in the Badalona stadium, they hadn't shut that down for the Paralympics, because there were very few press there, but it was still open, so we went back to have a beer; and anyone could go, it could be players (I don't mean anybody, not spectators), members of their

families, coaches and even referees – and this player who was really mad at t one of the referees and when he saw him passing through this bar he had his pint of beer and he tried to throw it over the referee, missed and threw it over the US and Australian coaches and after that we banned him from the tournament. Then the British angle came in with the press, saying that the president of the IWBF who is the technical delegate is really doing what (there'd been that book, 'Lords of the Rings' that'd just come out from Jennings, the British sports journalist, which hadn't gone down too well with the IOC) and of course Samaranch and Barcelona and all this, they referred to me as being the second coming of Jennings and not good for Catalan and Spanish sport and all this. We were at a table as officials near to the court and we were bombarded with coins and, fortunately empty, or nearly empty, plastic water bottles – all sorts of things after that, so you had to have your hard hats on – but went through with the decision which we believed was the right thing to do

(Jocelyne) Another things as well when you are talking about classification and why did basketball do that, I think maybe because it was the only team sport and I think that was so important, why people could see as a team the classification.

So it was easier to stand up to the classifiers because there were more of you?

I don't think she's meaning that. What she's saying is that to change a classification system in a team sport is possibly slightly easier to do – but at the end of the day you have to believe and you have to take the necessary action.