

Interview with Ernie Guild

Interviewer Klara Janicki, May 2013

What brought you to sport?

Well basically what brought me to sport was many years ago when I was as a youngster at school as I was disabled as a young child and basically, not from birth but as a youngster, and one of the things doctor told us was to swim. So swimming was actually my first competitive events, and basically I swam from a very early age – nine years of age. Then when I went to mainstream school I wasn't able to participate with all the other boys and girls in my class, and I used to go there and was sitting on a chair or standing, sitting on a seat, with crutches beside me, noting all the scores and how the boys were getting on at football, and girls were getting on the netball (I always preferred the netball because it was better to look at the girls, than it was watching the boys playing the football). Then one time we had bad weather which we often get up north in Scotland, and all the outdoor sports got cancelled and the teacher said right we gonna go swimming and I asked if can I go on, and the teacher said can you swim and I said yes, so when I went in I was swimming we found out than I was better swimmer than most of the able-bodied boys and girls in the school. And things progressed from there, I just got better and then eventually I joined the swimming club at Dundee itself, which was for the disabled and progressed to that, and we actually represented Scotland at various sporting events.

So you started as a 9 year old.

I started at 9 year old at swimming and just progressed over the years and it was a great success. Eventually I was competing at various events and I got quite successful then, after many years, it seems many years now, is that I went down to Stoke Mandeville to the stadium, to compete in the games down there and I was representing Scotland at the swimming and that was where I met this girl from Manchester area, Jean, and she was there representing the north west of England for archery. We met there, got very friendly, got close, and eventually we decided, well we are living 300 miles apart (so basically I would go down to see her, or she would come up to Dundee and see me) and we decided, silly, this! So we both put in for transfers in our jobs, and Jean worked in the inland Revenue, and I worked in the health service, and luckily I got promoted and transferred to Manchester area, then we got married and we had a child Christopher, so we have two girls and a boy, and the two girls are living in the Edinburgh area up in Scotland, and Christopher is still with us yet - all boys they don't like to leave their house until

they got settled really. 3,42, and basically I still continued with the sports, then when I moved to England I went one of my old friends who I used to compete against and who had his club in Oldham [3,58] and he asked me to come along so I went and joined the club and we did basketball, wheelchair basketball and table-tennis, and swimming, which was great. Then I went down to Stoke Mandeville for the National Games one year and I was predominantly doing basketball at this time, because I was getting too old for the swimming, and I decided I didn't like getting up at five o'clock in the morning for the training and things like that, it got a bit much; so then - as I said I was doing basketball - then one day I had free time, and the guy who was my best friend David Foden, said "Ernie, why don't you give athletics a try, or try something else?" And we'd already done table tennis and all the other bits and pieces, so I said fair enough and went outside and tried the shot put and discus. And I was quite surprised and surprised other people there, and I was very lucky, because one of the guys who was there, he turned and said "Oh you're doing very well. We better coach him to see how you will get on." So he was coaching me. Then the next day, as I went there to compete in the shot put in the game, the championships and I actually won the event with a new British record. And it was lucky enough that the guy who was coaching me called me in a couple of days beforehand (he was the team manager, which I didn't really know at that time) and he invited me to join the Great Britain squad. And things just progressed from there. Then I went to my first international competition, which was in Belgium for the European Championships and I actually beat the Paralympic gold medallist, and a new world record.

It seems that you just started a sport and became the best at it without any training, is that correct?

Oh no, I was very, very lucky because, I did have power with it, with doing sport all my life, and as a disabled person, I was probably luckier than a lot of others, because I have upper strength as well, because I have always done a lot of medicine ball work and things like that so I have upper body strength, of which swimming gave you as well. Then doing basketball gave me a good cardiovascular workout so when it came to the shot put, the strength was there and all it was that the rawness got taken out of me. And over the coaching courses I was given with the big boss of the athletics – a guy called Roger Ellis - things just progressed and they put you through a system [in] which you couldn't help but improve, and that is what developed from there.

How big a part does sport play in your life?

Oh, sport was a huge part of my life, to be perfectly honest I have been to three Paralympics, but after my last Paralympics, which I competed in which was in Atlanta, I decided while I was there, that I enjoyed competitions but it

was the training and I thought I just had enough (and I was getting old!) and basically I thought myself, I have been involved for so long, you know, either I have a complete break and think on what I am gonna do in my life now. But basically as I was coming to the end of my career, I done some coaching courses, but then become an athletic field official. I took the course on that, passed my exams and that takes me all over the place; now I help coaching and I do a lot of officiating both at able-bodied and at disabled meetings. And I travel all over Britain now, so that is a success, and what I also do as well is presently I am a vice chairman of British Wheelchair Sport Foundation, we all know it as a WheelPower – British Wheelchair Sport - and through that in the north west of England, I go to schools, Rotary clubs, or anybody who wants, I go and tell them about sport for the disabled, and how we take youngsters as early as 6 all the way up, to whatever age they want, and getting them to do sport, and show that life doesn't stop just because either you are disabled or you contracted a disability like spinal injury or later on in life (well not later on in life but even in early twenties) to show that life doesn't stop just because you're now on a wheelchair, life goes on, and it's amazing how it takes you to, if you become very, very good, the world is your oyster, you can go any place. But as I said, I still see a lot of people with my coaching and especially with officiating, and people seem to know me now, and they keep asking for me.

You said the reason why you stopped being involved in sport professionally was that you couldn't deal really with the training anymore. So what was the training like?

Well basically, one of the reasons, as I said about coming to the end of my sporting career was the training, is that every day you trained, one way or another. I had one day off a week. Even Christmas day you did a bit of training, one way or another, you're doing medicine ball work, cardiovascular, pushing to keep yourself fit, because you're not just sitting there and you're throwing frame chucking a shot put or discus or whatever. You've got to work up for that, to build up your strength and your cardiovascular because it goes on for a long time. In athletic event you go on for 2 or 3 hours, depending on the numbers in it and the event. So you might be working off to be the first in the event but on the other hand you could be the last in the event, and if there's 14 or 15 of you, you can be speaking about 2 hours after the event started, so and if you're out in good weather and the sun is beating down on you, you've got to make sure you're fit to compete after 2 hours in the sun, one way or another, even if you do go in the shade and things like that, you're still going to be affected by the heat, so you've got to make sure you yourself, your body, is ready for that competition, and that's what I always aimed to do. But when I got to the stage – we're speaking about early morning, well not early morning when you're speaking about athletics, but it's going to be

about 8 o'clock in the morning when you're starting, but then you go to work during the day, then evening, once you've had your evening meal you do a wee bit more training. But the one good thing is that I've always enjoyed it because I've done it for myself. I was never a professional, I was a total amateur and I've done it for the love of it and not to make... well, I don't know if people make money out of it, I hope they do, but I've done it for the pure pleasure for myself and also to help encourage others to do it as well and make them better than what I was.

How important was sport for you in overcoming your disability?

In overcoming my disability the sport played quite a big bit because it gave you a feeling of achievement and being able to overcome. As I said at the start, when I was at school, I was just sitting there watching, and it's a bore just watching others and I said well, there's something I must be able to do. And taking up the sport gave you more self satisfaction with myself and plus it gave me the discipline to do other things in life as well with it. And it took me to a different sphere in my life completely and gave me the assurance and the confidence within myself to do things. And I've always thought, I've always been singled minded, if I wanted to achieve something I will try my best to achieve it. It's the same as when I was in competitions. When I was competing in competitions, I went out there to win every competition that I went in for, and if I didn't win the competition, someone else's won it, it was my fault I haven't won it, not that they were better than me, it was my fault because I haven't beat them, and I would make sure that that will never happen again, I'll try my best. Obviously you can't win every time, but I'd give it a good go to try and do it (6:10).

You competed, you mentioned, in 3 Paralympics. Which do you remember most? What was the biggest memory you have from the Paralympics?

Competing in the Paralympics, I was very, very lucky that I was able to compete, as I've said earlier, in 3 Paralympics, in 1988 at Seoul, South Korea, in 1992 in Barcelona, Spain, in 1996 in Atlanta, USA. And I think that my best memories, I would say, for... because the three were completely different so I had 3 different outlooks. But having never been before to Asia and things like that and seen the cultures and everything in Korea, was unbelievable. When I went to Spain it was one of the best sporting events I've ever been to in my life and the way we were treated by the people in Spain - who know a lot about sport, no matter what people say - and they were very very good, and the competition went on at a different sphere as far as I was concerned, the professionalism was tremendous there. Then in 1996 we went to Atlanta, and it was different for me there because I was coming to, I knew that was the

finish of my career, as I was going to retire in Atlanta, so basically my idea was to try and put up a good performance as I could and enjoy it because I knew that was my swan song and that would be it. And I've always said that at Atlanta that would be the last time I pick up a shot put in a competition, a major competition that is, and basically it was. The only time I've picked one up was about 2 years afterwards, in 1998, when I done it just to help out in a small competition because it had a lack of numbers of wheelchair competitors, and I went there as a guest. And I done very well, I was that as good performances, but there was no pressure put on me, I just went out to relax and enjoy myself. But I would think, getting back to Paralympics, Korea will always have a special part in my memory, mainly because that was the one where I won my gold medal and I really enjoyed myself and everybody went as a good team, good comrades between us , and we were there for quite a long time, and the way the Korean people took us to their hearts was unbelievable and really enjoyable. But as I said, winning a gold medal does that to you as well, it's something you'll never forget, because you know no matter what your name will always appear on that book, you know the Paralympic gold medallist. World records are different, they are there to be broken by someone else and your name disappears, but it can be never taken out of the Paralympic gold medallists. And it was really enjoyable. So I think Korea was my number one. But I think a lot of people, you know, who have been to them and they've been to 3 or 4, and if you've got the gold medal, the first gold medal, was the special one, everybody remembers that. And I know even the likes of Tanni. Tanni Grey Thompson who is a multi-Paralympic medallist, I am sure Tanni still remembers her first one with great enjoyment.

Could you describe it?

Well the feeling of being told that you've won the gold medal is unbelievable. I was a bit unlucky in a way because my competition in Korea, at the actual ceremony I was given second place, I was given the silver medal. The gold medallist was the one who won the gold medal in 1984 when it was held in Stoke-Mandeville, but he had been reclassified and he was in the wrong class, and he knew that and so did his country. And a protest was put in which I didn't know about before the medal ceremony but they went ahead with the medal ceremony and he got the gold medal and I got the silver. So after a bit of to-ing-and-fro-ing I was told the next day that I'd actually won the gold medal but by then the prize giving had already taken place. So then comes the bit of when they had to take this gold medal away from him and the silver medal from me, and the bronze medal from the guy who won the bronze medal, (and I think he was from Egypt, if I remember rightly, and then to rearrange the medal ceremony, but apparently there was no time slots whatsoever, so I was very very lucky because it was decided that I get my medal at Stoke

Mandeville in the 1989 National games. And I was told to come there with my Paralympic kit which was a given, and I was very fortunate that the big boss, the chairman, the president of ISMWSF, or ISMGF at that time, he actually came over from Australia and presented my gold medal to me in Stoke-Mandeville, which was tremendous, I loved it, because one of the things was when you're in places like Korea and you get a gold medal, it would be you there and some of your friends, you know, your teammates and things like that, and because there're so many sports everybody is all over the place. But getting a gold medal to me in Stoke-Mandeville was in front of all my colleagues, all my friends, family, everybody, and all the different sports. So I consider myself very fortunate in being presented it in Stoke-Mandeville. And it was great, a great feeling. But at the stadium, even though I got the silver medal, it was my first Paralympic medal and it still felt a lot to me, really good, some people say oh, you've only got a silver, but silver is better than being last or being fourth. It's the worst position to be in fourth because you get nothing, apart from a little certificate saying that you competed, but when you get medal you get that certificate anyway, so... But at the end of the day, at Stoke Mandeville, being presented that gold medal was out of this world as far as I'm concerned, and especially seeing not just 5 or 6 of your teammates, but there was about 500 non-teammates there because you're friends with everybody in Stoke-Mandeville because you're there all together for 7 or 8 days, and everybody knows each other, and... great feeling.

So the biggest or the most important memory of Stoke-Mandeville that you have, is it connected with the moment of you being presented with the gold medal, or have some other important things happened in Stoke-Mandeville?

Well, in Stoke-Mandeville over the years, I've been fortunate enough to be down there for many, many years now, and I would say every year has special memories, one way or another. I could say the most special memory was meeting my wife there who was competing, as I said, in the archery. But then there's the likes of being presented the gold medal and also I was very fortunate that all the years I was going there in the shot put competition I was never beaten. I won the gold medal every year till I retired. And to me every year meant something special because I got that medal to represent me, I was given there, and it means a lot to me. And some of the other ones, you know one year we were down there, I entered maybe five or six different sports and I got gold medal in, I think it was 5 of the events, 5 different sports, which was great. Whether I was lucky at the time or whether it was the work I put in. Somebody says, somebody asked me about that and he said oh, you're really lucky winning that winning this and I said yeah, but the more you train the luckier I got.

You have mentioned that you are often giving lectures to young people, to children at school. So what's their approach to disability sport?

Basically I go around the schools and Rotary clubs on behalf of WheelPower, British Wheelchair Sport, telling them about the Stoke-Mandeville stadium and area and how sport all started there, because most children at school have no involvement with disability sport at all, but they might know some friends who are in wheelchairs or who are disabled, who may be able to compete or take part in events, no matter what their disability is, how badly disabled they are. We always have an event for someone. And the kids all seem to like it. I've not had any adverse comments to my lectures that I've given... not lectures, talks I call it, not lectures. The talks seem to have done very well and everybody seems happy with it. Basically I speak about how the Stoke-Mandeville hospital, not the hospital but the sports stadium. We run so many events there each year and we have 3 different categories, we have the juniors, we have the primaries, and we have the seniors, who are over 18. And we tell them all the sports that children get to do and take part in, and it seems to go down well. And what I say to them and also to the Rotary is basically if you know anybody get them get in contact with us and I always give them our phone number to contact us, and we invite them to take part in sport and get them to do something instead of them just sitting in the house doing nothing or sitting in front of a TV screen or in front of a computer, get them to do something, put some effort into their lives to help them progress for the future, when they get older.

So what do you think is the biggest challenge for disabled people nowadays, is sport accessible for them?

The accessibility of sport is quite difficult. It's a lot easier now than it was when I was a youngster. Most local authorities have to make special provisions now for making, helping disabled, all disabilities, you know they would be ramps or handrails or things like that and it's a lot easier to get into a lot of places now that to do sport. And plus the fact is a lot of the clubs, both private and local authority, have now got people who specialize in being able to help youngsters or anyone with a disability to take part in sport. It's so much better what it was 40 years ago when it was "Oh no, you can't do nothing. We're not going to touch you with a ten foot barge pole." Now people are so very helpful. Plus the fact I think is being shown that through people doing sport, but not just myself but the others through the years, Margaret Maughan, you've probably heard of her, also lots of other lads and lassies, Tanni Gray, who have brought sport for disabled to the forefront, and a wide range of disabilities, is that if they can do it, we can do it. And it's proved that it helps in later life as well, like when you get an IPC, who would ever thought of some guy in a wheelchair as the big boss. Now Sir Phil Craven who used to be a basketball player, has now climbed to the dizzy

heights of the president and it's great. And people see that and it inspires a lot of disabled to say if he can do it, I can do it. And it's the same way as I looked at it when I was a youngster and in hospital, getting an operation or something like that, and the guys used to come along and speak away to me and things like that, and I always thought... and it used to inspire us to do more sport and to get into a different level of competing, giving us more reassurance within ourself that we can... if they can achieve it, we can do it. And that kind of helps you as an individual for the progressing of your life, because you felt, you know, at the back of the queue...but basically the more sport you did the more confidence you got within yourself. And more confidence, you were better in life, you were able to achieve more, because you had the ability to know what you can succeed at. And one thing I've never done is let anything stop me, I've always tried my best. I might not always succeed but at least I've tried.

How did you enjoy the last Paralympics in London?

The London Paralympics was really good. I find it a bit embarrassing at times because people go on about the London Paralympics were the best ever. I've always found it, all the Paralympics I've been to, they've all been good. Basically it's the public's perception: it's great for the people in London, or the Great Britain, because the Paralympics were here and they can extol the virtues because they were able to see it. But to me, having been to Korea and few others, Barcelona, is the public in Barcelona in 1992, which is 20 years later [earlier], was just as intense as what it was in London last year. But the games in London I thought were very good, well organised or so it appears to be at the front. Obviously when you have a big games like that there's always problems at the back in the background and the public don't get to see it. But I thought they were very well run and really enjoyable and personally myself I was lucky enough to be there for practically the whole 2 weeks and went to many of the sports. But it was great that the chairman of WheelPower and myself, we actually went on a daily basis the first week. We stayed at Stoke-Mandeville and travelled by train into London to see the sports. And what was good about it is we saw lots and lots of disabled boys and girls on the train as well, coming down to see sport for the first time. And to be perfectly honest we've spoken to quite a few youngsters and we got them involved, and at our last primary camp, which is for the 6 till 11 year olds, some of the kids that we actually spotted on the train, we've got them coming to our games, our primary camps. So it's great, as far as we're concerned it was a great success, and it's got the kids. And it's not just good for them, it's good for their families as well, their parents, to see that their children can achieve something in life without just sitting there, you know, doing nothing and getting pushed about. And they've actually taken part in sport and the parents when they come to the games as well, they're over the moon because they never thought their young

Johnny or Jenny were going to be doing anything, and they're actually doing some sport. So their parents are very happy about it as well. But the games itself, I enjoyed it very much indeed, and it was great seeing the achievements of the British athletes. But to me there's no difference in achievements of British athletes or the achievements of an athlete from America or Asia or Africa or South America. They've all been there, they've reached the top of the tree and as long as they've all tried their best in their competitions, I'm happy.

Probably you would praise anyone who is doing sport regardless on their successes, whether he's achieved the gold medal or the world records. It's not about that, it's about...

Participation. Yes, exactly.

Yeah, one of the things that is good about the sport for disabled is that primarily anybody who was selected for the Paralympics especially or the World championships has reached the top of their tree in their country, and they deserve the accolade of representing their country at World championships or Paralympics, whatever it may be. And that in itself is an achievement. At the end of the day, the difference between winning the gold medal or coming eighth in an event could be a fraction of a second. And for wheelchair racers it can be just on that touch at the start which has lost them the race. But whereas you're a winner one day you could be eight, the next day whatever, or in field events you could be winning by a centimetre, which is negligible, but it can be the difference between the gold and the silver, and it's unbelievable. But providing you have tried your best, nobody can ask any more of you than that, and to me that is the main thing. In a competition I don't believe in anyone going... I don't like the idea of people going just for the sake of, well, it's going to be a nice holiday. To me that's not what it's about. It's about actual participation and doing your best in that competition, not just for yourself, but for your country, and to me that is the main thing, but is to be proud of your own performance, no matter what. Even if you've come last; provided you've done your best to do it, nobody can ask more of you. But I was lucky that my 3 Paralympic competitions, because I was in 6 different finals, and I only got two 2 medals, but I was lucky enough to get into 6 finals. The other 4 finals I've never made the medal, but I got into the top 8 which to me (especially since 3 of them were discus, which was my No.2 event) getting to final at that 3 times I was really pleased with that, and I was over the moon just to achieve that. And as I said I really tried my best and that's all one can ask of anybody.

We touched a little bit on the legacy of last Paralympics. Could you comment a little bit more? You have mentioned the concrete example of people getting involved, or children getting involved in sport. But could you give us different examples of the legacy, how do you perceive that?

One of the things you always get after something like the Paralympic games as well as the Commonwealth games is the legacy issue. And we find that this is working very well, especially after 2002 when we had the Commonwealth games in Manchester. I was actually involved in the Legacy committee. I was asked to represent the disability sport on the Legacy committee. And we just had to see the advantages which were given to Manchester, it's still actually going on yet, the legacy, and it's something that's getting built on, it's getting bigger and bigger all the time. And we've got more and more children taking part, more and more adults taking part in sport and it's a great success, not just for disabled, but able-bodied as well. And also it's helping to integrate disabled into the able-bodied world. There were times when you would never be considered, but the legacy has brought all this forward, to help people participate more, and participate together. You have competitions, the likes of let's say shooting competitions, archery competitions, where before it was us and them, but now there's integration now more. In some of the sports you can't do it, but other sports then it goes the other way, wheelchair basketball, we have able-bodied people wanting to do wheelchair basketball. We've got able-bodied people wanting to do wheelchair racing. And to me that is a progression that if an able-bodied person wants to do our sport I think that's out of this world... providing it stops here, participation, it doesn't go the full way to Paralympics. I don't think it should be allowed there, but it's great. And London, it's in its infancy, but people like ourselves, be it the WheelPower or the Cerebral-Palsies, or the blind, or the Dwarf Association, they will ensure that the legacy of London continues to increase and get better, and help all spheres of the population, and take everybody into consideration, not just being isolated pockets. And I think it will be, because we've always been speaking about, what, eight months after the Olympics, so we're still in its early days, and Manchester took a few years, and to see all the success that they've got, and it's 11 years later and it's still a great success and they're building upon it all the time. And I'm sure London will... and the good thing is the special likes of next month we'll have the year after the Olympics and the Paralympics, so we've got a big sporting event going on down in London, which will be part of the legacy as well, and we'll see how that goes. But I've got a lot of confidence in it and I think things will progress to higher levels. It might have even done it better in the Paralympics, or the Olympics.

You're an optimist, aren't you?

Yes. To me it's better to be an optimist than a pessimist.

What about the legacy or the impact of the Paralympics on the public perception of disabled people? Could you see a shift or development towards better? How the public perceives disabled people generally, not only sportsmen?

I think following the Paralympics, especially the likes of Britain, which was probably what happened in other countries as Spain, is the general public has realized that to be perfectly honest the only difference between an able-bodied person and a disabled person is that the disabled person might be in a wheelchair, having an aid-stick, using crutches, having an artificial leg, and I think they probably say there's no difference really, they can... you just have just got to look at some of the running events, they're just as good as an able-bodied person, in fact some of them can actually run quicker, in fact most of them can run quicker than anybody on the streets, which is natural anyway. But you have the other sports as well, likes of when we have shooting and archery, huge sports - snooker and pool - where actually we are competing on equal terms with each other. And I think the general public following the Paralympics can see that there's nothing wrong with you guys, in fact, you know, having been to various functions, even social functions, when you go to the pub and things like that, there's, you've got to find your way through the crowds because you're treated just the same as anybody else. You're just one of the boys now, there's no difference. And they know that you've got limitations, for instance you might need a help, you know, if there's a step or something like that to get your wheelchair over the door and things like that. And whereas before they would do nothing to help you, now they'll help. Most people now ask, which is the difference, whereas before it could've been that they would just say alright, we'll grab you and they wouldn't know where to, how to, what to do. But now I find that a lot of them are asking do you need help, do you want help, coz they don't want to ask you if you can manage yourself, they don't want to embarrass themselves or embarrass me. There's no problem with that. If I'm needing help I'll ask you. But most people, especially before, as it used to be, if you needed help, physical help, bodily, they'd just grab you anyway. Now they're asking what is the best way. And to me that's progress. And I've had no problems and I don't know anybody who's had any problems since the Paralympics. But people seem to be closer now than before, not so much "us and them". To me, it didn't bother me one bit, because it used to be before, when you went into shops and that you were never noticed, if you were in a wheelchair people looked over you. But now they realize that we're the... our money's just the same as everybody else is as such, buys the same. And so there's a closer tie-

up, and people have more contact with each other, and not so much us and them, we're all one, we're all God's kids, at the end of the day.

What about the issue of classification. Did you personally have any problems with it. Tara Flood was referring to it as dehumanizing, that a doctor is measuring you, exploring you, and that she felt very bad about it. So what is your attitude to classification?

Classification is a very, very hard subject. There's people more cleverer than myself who decide what classification of you as an individual is going to be, and basically I've got to respect them for that. [That] I can't understand a lot of the classifications which they do, is because you could be doing table-tennis and have one bad hand, but you play with your good hand. So where does the disability come in or that? Its things like that I can understand. Personally, I've never had any problems with my own classifications, having been classified periodically over the earlier parts of my life till I was made a permanent classification. Once you get a permanent classification, really, and in my case because of the disability it was never going to change anyway, you know being spinal cord, there's gonna be no problems, once you've got a certain level. And I've always been happy with the way I've been treated. I can see there can be problems in other sports or individuals where they could be borderline with their disability, good day or bad day, and depending what sport that is as well, because some of the sports you can't get classified, you know, athletics is completely different from other sports, you know, where they would look on someone's disability, it doesn't fit into our sphere, and basically that's where the problem is. I can't understand some of them where, you know, you can get two different disabilities completely. For example you can get someone who can use their four legs, four limbs, and you get someone else who's a spinal cord injury and paralysed from the waist down. How can they be in the same classification? But to me that's up to the classifiers, who're more skilled than I am at that. It's the same as they probably wouldn't understand me when I'm officiating let's say a shot put when I "no-put" somebody for lifting, you know, because the rules which we have in lifting classes and the classification of the individual is that I "no-put" somebody for lifting, coz they haven't seen it, but I know what I'm looking for the same as they know what they're looking for. And I always believe that doing the classification... it's not an easy subject to go through, but I respect them for what they've done and hope that they've got it right. And to me there's not much else you can do about it. You can't protest, but I think likes of everybody else, like we do with as officials, classifiers should be looked at regularly and be assessed and make sure they know what they're talking about, the same as all the other officials are and happens to them..

My last question would be probably a little bit more political. Do you think this government is doing enough for disabled people?

On a political side of help, to be perfectly honest, I think it's a very hard time at the moment because of the present financial difficulties which we, members of the public, are told about by the government and the opposition parties. I'm sure that there can be ways of finding monies to make things better. Take the likes of Stoke-Mandeville where we have unique accommodation down there, the training facilities which we have and the accommodation, but we do not get any help from the government. Now the next thing is we find out, oh yes, that something's happened in the world and we're going to give 10 million pounds to that. I find it a bit galling that you can give this money away to help some other countries, in a small bit, although I'm not saying it's not deserving, but as we get nothing, we don't seem to get any help apart from people like Sport England let's say and things like this, you've got to be self-financing and fundraising ourselves. I don't see why we should be giving loads and loads of money to other countries when we can't help, let's say, the disabled in this country to make facilities even better and giving them better standards in life. Because it doesn't just help them, at the end of the day it helps the government of this country, because the more the people have got to help themselves, they've got more reassurance, and it means they're better looked-after, they're looking after themselves better, which means there's less work and money being spent by let's say the National Health Service. And helping them to overcome various problems which could be achieved by themselves through let's say doing sport. And it helps the local authorities as well because the longer you keep at it, the fitter you are, the better you look after yourself, the less pressure is put on local authorities to have to say oh yes, we've got to find this home for Johnny and things like this, when Johnny is quite looking after himself with a little bit of help without going the full hog and costing lots and lots of money. I think the government could do a lot to help, especially when I hear, basically, of we're giving money to Russia, China, India and all these, some of the other countries. And there must be a reason why we're giving this money, but we as members of public are never told the full reasons of why they're giving them this money. And we should think well, why is it given to them, some of these countries can put rockets in the space. I remember when Britain used to do it, and we were told we can't do it now because we can't afford it. So if we can't afford it, how can we be giving money to those countries, who are doing it? And if they can afford to do it, it's obvious they don't need our money, so that money can be given to help the people within Britain. And I'm not speaking about disabled, I'm speaking about sports clubs, to help them, because, being a member of an able-bodied sports club as well, I do realize how much it costs to run sports events. And that is a thing that helps the community in general.