Luke's Boccia Stories

Luke who has Autism is part of the Paul's Place Boccia Team and was introduced the sport through the charity, Paul's Place. Paul's Place is a charity that enhances life for physically disabled adults.

They do this by providing social activities that connect people, reduce isolation, improve health and wellbeing and give people the opportunity to develop new skills, enjoy new experiences and live life to the full.

Boccia is a fully accessible sport, and at Paul's Place the boccia teams are run by disabled people, with the support of Paul's Place staff. Paul's Place regularly promotes the sport locally, taking their love of boccia into schools and colleges. They currently have six teams, three in the Super League and three in the national league.

During a Zoom call with Paul's Place staff, Luke shares his previous experiences with the sport as well as what he has been up to in lockdown.

Tell us about your favourite boccia moments?

In his 3rd season Luke reached new levels

"My number one was winning the Nationals in 2013. When I first got there, I was thinking to myself, I'm in the final, I've got nothing to lose, we've just got a Super League place.

When it was the first end, I was so nervous!

We were doing all good, I got this far, doesn't matter and then when we went to the last end, we were like 6-4 down, we needed 3 to win. The best part was when the referee was holding up his hand showing 3 fingers. I just looked at my hands and I was like shaking, I couldn't believe it, I was like thinking we done it! We just won a competition! Everyone was celebrating, my mum came to watch it and she was on the phone crying, everyone was crying but for me I was just jumping and celebrating!

We got the medals and the trophy as well.

I think that might have been one of my best days ever that was."

How about another favourite boccia moment?

"Winning the first Super League. Getting to that level is probably one of the best achievements."

How did you feel when you first started playing boccia?

"When I first started, I was very nervous. I was just trying to get it right but as the years went on and ever since I got to the Super League stages, I'm like more confident now. I'm like not worried about anything now."

Is there another moment that stands out?

“The Heathcoat Cup in 2017, a singles competition. When I first thought of it, I thought I want to give it a try as it looks really good. Also, when we first went, we spent most of the time as a team but to do it on your own is really different. I won the cup and got my Heathcoat Cup trophy. Winning this was a really good achievement because it’s good I’ve done it as a team but now I’ve done it on my own which I’m really happy about.”

What else do you like about boccia?

“The friendships and also whenever we win or lose it just doesn’t matter, it’s just all part of the game and it’s about friendship as well.”

How else are you involved with boccia?

“I’ve also been going into schools and that, and sort of coaching them, sort of refereeing, which makes me feel like If I finish my boccia career I can sort of like go into coaching and refereeing.”

What are you doing in lockdown?

Luke is taking part in the Rainbow Cup.

“Doing the challenges at home as well, has sort of helped me. Yeah, I have really enjoyed them. It’s very different. There was one challenge, I did find it very difficult. There was like 2 balls in front and then there was one massive ball and you had to like try and hit it…it was on a target. I keep getting 1s and 2s, mostly 1s. I was like scratching my head and thinking, argh! This is really difficult!

Luke and the team were on a high before Covid-19, doing well in competitions. Luke came runner up in the first end and won the second end. Luke is looking forward to boccia returning and being able to take part in the Super League again.”

The Paul’s Place Boccia team have previously been nominated for Club of the year which was another great memory for Luke.

A big thank you to Luke for sharing his boccia stories!