



The Inclusion Club

# WHAT IS INCLUSION?

IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY  
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY



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# WHAT IS INCLUSION?

In this book we are going to explore the concept of ‘inclusion’ related to the provision of opportunities in sport and physical activity for people with disability.

Over the years the term ‘inclusion’ has been used across governments world wide to describe practices that ‘include’, or at least attempt to include, all people regardless of ability, race, culture, age, gender and a variety of other characteristics that are often regarded as being ‘disadvantaged’ when it comes to gaining access to regular services, including sport.

Taken in isolation the term itself is simple enough to understand. Wikipedia, the font of all knowledge in 2012, describes it from a disability rights perspective:

Inclusion is a term used by people with disabilities and other disability rights advocates for the idea that all people should freely, openly and without pity accommodate any person with a disability without restrictions or limitations of any kind.

Inclusion has certainly been used in relation to sport for some time and has superseded terms such as mainstreaming and integration in recent years. We are not going to define the word inclusion here or get stuck on semantics.

It's only when you start to discuss and probe a bit deeper into how inclusion works that you discover it can be quite complex. It becomes complex because it involves things like attitudes, technical skills, ideas of equal opportunity and human rights.

In *What is Inclusion?* we are simply going to explore what inclusion in sport means in a practical way by asking four very experienced and knowledgeable people. We are sure they may not like being called 'world experts' but, between us, they are!

This book is divided into four chapters. Each chapter is a transcript of an interview conducted with each of our four experts. There is a short biography of each expert at the start of their chapter, so you'll know a little about their background and experience.

The chapters are direct transcripts of the interviews with a few grammatical improvements here and there. We have not changed the content or tried to make these perfect English.

Our hope is that these interviews stimulate your thoughts and help your understanding of inclusion in sport and physical activity for people with disability. We'd like to say a big thanks to our contributors to this book - Martin, Eli, Steffi and Hamish. Please continue to make a dent in the world.

This is an Inclusion Club production. If you are not a member of The Inclusion Club you can join for free by simply going to our website at <http://theinclusionclub.com>. The Inclusion Club is all about sharing best practice in sport, physical activity and disability. We'd love to have you on board. Enjoy.

Peter Downs and Ken Black

Directors and Founders of The Inclusion Club



# MARTIN MANSELL



Martin Mansell has been involved in disability sport since 1975. First as a competitor with 2 Paralympic Games, two World, two European championships and 15 other international competitions (last games 1998 Seoul, 1 gold 2 silver 1 bronze, swimming) and later as a coach. In 1990, as a result of the sports minister's report Building on Ability which was an outcome from the 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games, he was appointed as one of the first professional Sports Development Officers for People with Disabilities within a Local Education Authority in England.

In 1989 he was elected Chairperson of the British Paralympic Association Athletes' Committee and later as Chairperson of the International Paralympic Committee Athletes' Commission and was a Director of the British Paralympic Association till January 2005 when he stood down. He has been working with Paralympics GB on their work on their Schools Education program called Ability v Ability. He also works for a number of organizations and in 1998 set up MJM Associates as

advisers on disability sport. He works with organizations such as the Youth Sport Trust, Paralympics GB, English Federation of Disability Sports and NASUWT as a consultant to name just a few. In addition to this he has been involved in a number of other projects such as Floatsation ([www.floatsation.com](http://www.floatsation.com)) that is now one of his companies as well as working in a self-employed capacity.



PETER

In a broad sense what do you understand by inclusion?

MARTIN

I think in a very broad sense Peter, we are looking at making sure that people with disabilities have equal opportunity to take part in sport, physical activity and physical education – or whatever environment people chose to do it in. I think that historically we tend to think of inclusion as sport that is done by the disabled alongside the non-disabled people, but that in reality it's about creating the opportunity to do whatever people choose and where they feel the most comfortable participating – and whatever level they choose.

PETER

Does that include then disability specific type activities?

MARTIN

I think it would, yes. We can look at disability sport in two ways. We can look at it as a sport that is played only by disabled people or we can look at disability sport as just a form of sport that is played by disabled and non-

disabled. But I think that historically we have this issue about non-disabled people looking at disability sport as only sports for disabled people and therefore it excludes them. So you've almost got a concept of reverse exclusion in a way.

I think the time is now that we can allow those individuals, whoever they are, to take up sports such as boccia, goalball, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby, sitting volleyball – it doesn't matter. The real issue is what the competition structure allows. So as an example of that I would advocate that hypothetically, to compete in the Paralympic Games or a Disabled World Championships you have to have a disability in the same way as if you want to compete in the under 15's championships and you are 16, therefore you are not eligible.

PETER

What about have parallel activities for example, in PE lessons having separate sessions for children with disabilities. Is that still inclusion?

## MARTIN

I think some people would see it as not being inclusion. They might see it as not being with their other peers therefore it is not inclusive. But I think inclusion is more about how you plan and structure the lesson and I think if you want to segregate – for want of a better word – children with disabilities in a PE lesson to facilitate skill development then I think that's fine – whether they are disabled or non-disabled kids.

The real issue is whether you bring them back together socially within that lesson so they have the opportunity to exchange and interact with their peers. So yes, if a kid with a particular disability or a kid with a coordination or obesity issue is struggling then why not take that kid aside and spend some time with them on an individual basis as you would in a coaching environment.

## PETER

What would you say then to people who would say that it is separation and the best choice for people with disability is to be with people who do not have a disability.

## MARTIN

Maybe we have become a society then, that says 'is inclusion for everyone, not just for some disabled people' and therefore we've either always been inclusive or we have never really been inclusive because working with non-disabled people we segregate them out as well by their height, their sex, their age and, in some cases, their skills – so we segregate them out to try to get the best out of them – that's how I would look at it.

## PETER

So does it come down to what is the best choice for an individual?

## MARTIN

I think it does come down to that. I've always had a concept in my mind that inclusion – if there is such a thing – is about facilitating educated choice. Now, some people will say 'what is educated choice' and I'd say its about making sure that individuals are able to experience the options available. If we are professionals looking at it, our role to be inclusive is to facilitate what that

individual wants based on their educated choice and experience.

### PETER

Being 'educated' for some people might mean being able to adapt and modify activities so that you can include people with disabilities. How far do you think we can go in terms of adapting and modifying activities?

Sometimes there's a fine line between adapting and modifying and offering the best choice for people. So how far can we go in adapting and modifying?

### MARTIN

I think we need to go as far as we possibly can to modify and adapt an activity as long as it still represents the original activity itself. What we don't want to do is start modifying an activity that becomes so far removed from the original game or concept that it no longer has any relationship to that activity. You don't want to modify a football game by bringing in a rugby ball and changing the rules so that you run with the ball instead of kick it.

You have to ask the question 'why does the individual want to play football?' Probably because they are

stimulated by the media, they are influenced by the superstars of the world. We've all got role models in our lives. We take up sport because we want to be like our role models. If we change that sport to something that no longer represents it, then you lose the motivation to take up the activity. It's no longer got a relationship to what I'm seeing on the television.

PETER

When it gets to the point where it affects the integrity of the activity for the whole group, that's where it actually breaks down, isn't it?

MARTIN

It does. I think you've hit on two very important points there. One is that the integrity of the activity itself is important and also the integrity of the whole group as a team sport. I think if it's an individual sport, like athletics or swimming, it can be a little easier. And it makes adapting a little more comfortable. I think with team sports there are some larger challenges.

PETER

Martin, I want to ask you about medical and social models. Do you think a conversation around medical and social models is still relevant in terms of inclusion?

MARTIN

No. In a word. We still hang our hats on making the differential between a medical and social model. You've got the stuff that Ken Black and Pamela Stephenson have done around the Inclusion Spectrum and the original Winnick model – so we have those models of inclusion which are good. I think these models are relevant in a social application of disability and sociology.

But I think when it comes to physical activity I think we need to take the best of both worlds and look at what I would call a 'functional' model, rather than a social or medical model. I've done some work over the last couple of years in trying to draft up a functional/sports model with a couple of colleagues in the United States. We have not yet finished and it seems like a long slog to get there. This will be a combination of the social models

philosophy and the medical models stance and brings them together for a functional outcome.

PETER

Yes, its interesting whether a social/medical mindset is significant these days or whether it is more advantageous to talk about a functional model in the way that you explain. Do you think its just more of a progressive way to say the same things?

MARTIN

I think so. You know, I've talked to my coach over many years about how he perceived me when he coached me. His approach was always that he didn't know anything about disability and he didn't know anything about the social and medical model. All he knew about was swimming coaching. And what he advocated was that he looked only at what I could do as opposed to what I couldn't do. And he worked with me as an individual on that basis.

The analysis of that is, that this is him working only on a functional basis with me or any other swimmer that was in the pool.



PETER

Did you ever come across other coaches though that thought 'I couldn't coach Martin because he has a disability'?

MARTIN

In the early days, yes. I think the issue though there, is that someone like myself and other Paralympic athletes who get to a certain stage of development and semi elitism – they are dead easy to work with because all the hard work has already been done. It's the ones at the base level that are starting out. If you look at some of the top athletes in the world I think what we need to do is draw an analogy between who they were when they were 6 or 7 years old to who they became.

We all look at some of the top disabled athletes and think they should be dead easy to coach, but if you had seen them when they were only 6 years old then would your response be "I don't know anything about disabilities so I can't coach them!"

## PETER

What's a good response to that? We've all heard that kind of thing over the years but how do you respond to the question – "I need to know about the disability first?"

## MARTIN

I am not quite sure what the academic response would be. I think the response might be 'why can't you just work with us initially and we'll work with you'. So that those that are in the 'know' will work with individuals who are a little bit hesitant. You might say 'let's work for the next few weeks and then we can review it'. And if the person still feels that they can't deal with it, then we will look at the reasons why.

If we are to remove the barriers, then it is about almost counsel the coaches that do that. And I think there would be some coaches out there that would be very open to that kind of support and counseling. I don't want that to sound like 'counseling' in a patronizing way but it's about supporting them and giving them the benefit of the knowledge that we have. It's about mentoring them through it. I think you'd find that 75% of coaches have got the skills but they just don't know it.

## PETER

That's great Martin. One final thing I would like to ask you about is that there seems to be a trend, not sure if it's a world wide trend but certainly is here in Australia, that we are using the word 'inclusion' in a much more generic way. We apply it to all of us working across areas in disability, Indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse populations. But there comes a time when we need specific advice and experience in targeted areas such as disability. We can't all be giving all advice about inclusion all of the time!

## MARTIN

No, we cannot expect everyone to be inclusive all of the time. You know Peter, I've worked in this field for a long time – I won't go into how long that is – but, I don't think we can expect everyone to be totally inclusive because we haven't all got the knowledge necessary. I think it's about letting people say "I have a problem with this individual – how do I resolve it and where do I go to resolve it?"

So it is about making sure that those coaches and teachers know where the avenues are, as to where they can find information if and when they need it. So that if I was working with a group of kids with severe obesity then I am not sure where I would start. But what I would do is look for the organizations that know about obesity and talk to them about health related obesity.

I can give you a scenario. I tend to use this when I'm talking to coaches – is that there was a famous runner in the UK - a 400 meter runner – he broke down in the Barcelona 400 meter final and his dad walked onto the track and carried him off. He was originally coached in a small athletics club in Corby in the UK and when he was recognized as having good talent he moved to Birchfield Harriers, which is a much bigger and more successful club in the Birmingham area.

But he had an Achilles tendon problem and when he transferred to Birchfield Harriers – if the coach at Birchfield Harriers had coached him in the same way that he coached his other 400 meter runners then he would have aggravated that Achilles tendon much earlier and probably would not have got to Barcelona.

Now the coach had no experience of this runner and his Achilles tendon problem previously, but he went and looked up and researched about Achilles tendon injuries – he researched what he needed to know so that he could apply that to his coaching knowledge and coach in a different way.

If you relate that to disability and if you have a problem and an individual is struggling, then why preach about vision impairment when the coach may never have someone with a vision impairment come through the door – and if they do what level of vision impairment is it going to be?

PETER

I guess it's about adapting to individual requirements?

MARTIN

Yes, and how is that any different to anyone else? Maybe that's inclusion!

PETER

So what about the future Martin? Where do you think inclusion is going?

MARTIN

I think that in the future the warning is that we become complacent. That we think we've got it right. A warning sign is also that we are bringing new people into the area with no historical background and knowledge of what's gone on before. I am not saying that we need to go back and revisit the past, but sometimes we need to be aware of the past. If we are not aware of the past we can end up making mistakes and go backwards if we are not careful.

PETER

Nice. I think that would be a good place to conclude the interview. Thanks very much Martin, is there anything you'd like to add?

MARTIN

Maybe just a couple of things. There is a tendency to work with those with more ability – there's less work happening with more severe disabilities. We need to be careful of that. **Phil Craven, President of the International**

Paralympic Committee - he's been on the record as saying 'inclusion as a word shouldn't exist because the very fact that we're having to be inclusive means that we are excluded in the first place'. It's disabled peoples' god given right to be there in the first place so why should we have the word 'inclusion'?

PETER

Very good. It reminds me very much of the words of Elizabeth Hastings (Disability Discrimination Commission) 15 years ago at the launch of the Willing and Able program here. Her words were almost identical.

MARTIN

Yes, I don't disagree with Phil and he has also gone on record recently where he has said he doesn't like the word 'disability' because the word disables us in the first place.

PETER

What do you think about that?

MARTIN

Well, my wife's a social worker and she says that's a great philosophy but what are you going to replace it with? It's great to think that but what are you going to replace it with in society? We need something to be functional for service providers.

PETER

Yes, there's a reality around that.

Thanks again Martin, I really appreciate your time and input.



# ELI WOLFF



Eli Wolff is the Director of the Sport and Development Project at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

Eli sees sport as a social development tool, not simply a form of entertainment. His work originally focused on disability, as he researched and advocated for the inclusion of disabled athletes in collegiate, professional, and Olympic sports. He helped to draft the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2003, and is still recognized as a leader in this field today.

Yet Eli has also become interested in larger questions of sport and social change. At Brown, he co-directs the Sport and Society Fellowship, which enables student-athletes to explore the intersection of sport and human rights. He also directs the Sport and Development Project, which includes a broader group of stakeholders in programs and initiatives focusing on sport and social change.

PETER

Hi Eli, great to meet up with you again and thanks for agreeing to the interview. What do you understand by the word 'inclusion' in a disability and sport context?

ELI

I tend to think of inclusion pretty holistically. Particularly how a person is valued and respected and involved in a particular experience. So a person with a disability can reach their potential - whether it's in a disability specific setting or an integrated able bodied mainstream setting. One thing that I see a lot of, is that people with disabilities can take part in multiple settings along a spectrum or continuum of opportunity. So it is important that we don't box a person with a disability into any particular situation. But we should try to maximize their potential through being open minded and creative and really trying to value that person as a human being.

So a lot of it goes back to the human rights framework which I tie into this a lot. For me inclusion is about a holistic approach and how you value the whole person. Sports can sometimes be exclusive - so how do you create a paradigm shift so that it can be more inclusive?

PETER

You mentioned a couple of things there that I'd like to pick up on. The first is the tie in with human rights. And the other is the exclusive nature of sport. So from a human rights perspective, what is the dilemma between inclusion as opportunity and choice, and sport that naturally, and unnaturally, excludes people?

ELI

That's a great question. I think that it's important from a human level - a human rights perspective is just realizing that a person with a disability has the right to be able to use their body and be athletic. To be able to reach their potential and to see that sport and physical activity or recreation is a dimension of our lives, that people with disabilities have a right to be able to access in the same way as everybody. People should have the chance to 'try out' and be on the team. But with sports sometimes you may not make the team or reach the standard of excellence that is needed. But from a human rights perspective you have to understand that you may not have the same equal opportunity that those without disabilities would have. So if people without disabilities are sometimes being cut from a team for whatever

reason, you'd like to expect that the same criteria applies to people with disabilities.

But it's more the idea from a human rights perspective that sport is a sphere of life that people with disabilities can partake in and go through all the experiences and emotions that go with the domain of sport. These things are just as applicable to people with disabilities. The one thing that comes from an exclusion standpoint with regard to sport and disability is that often the average sports fan regards sport and disability as a kind of oxymoron.

People with disability are often seen as being on the sideline or simply not on the playing field. So I think that it's important that we have a paradigm shift to be able to realize, that from an inclusive standpoint, the way that we actually see a person with a disability as being part of the sports culture, the more we can create awareness and the more that the average sports fan begins to see a person with a disability involved in sports not just as an outlier or a token - but this is just part of the sports fabric.

This should be anywhere in the world and at any level of sport, competitive or not. The key is that we begin to just see disability in a different way within sports. This is contrary to some of the more archaic views of what disability means that is reflected in some of the language that is used such as ‘that gimp athlete’ or ‘that crippled athlete’. The language that is used and the way that people with disabilities are sometimes portrayed, means there is still a lot of stigma there.

This is why it is fascinating from an academic and real perspective. How do we adjust these problems? How do we work toward creating a more inclusive society? I think it’s getting better but we have to keep working at it by being diligent and vocal.

## PETER

I’ll come to the stigma issue in a second but going back to the human rights question. There is a gray area between what is a ‘sport choice’ and a ‘human rights choice’. It’s that difference to when people make a decision on choice based on the rules of sport as opposed to a decision based on human rights. Have you seen examples of problems arising from a ‘sport choice’ to a ‘human rights’ choice?

## ELI

That's a really good question and I think that often it is on a case by case basis. You can sometimes see the situation whereby it's unclear if athletes' rights have been violated and he has been discriminated against, or whether or not he simply didn't make the team. So its is often taken on a case by case basis and you have to look at the situation. There are many cases where an athlete has not necessarily been discriminated against as it might just be a 'fair play' situation. But there may not have been reasonable accommodation for the athlete. But there are also many instances where a person with a disability could be involved in a much more comprehensive way but the organization is not make those accommodations and the kids with disabilities are just sitting on the sidelines. That still happens all over the world.

So I think there are some clear distinctions between what are rights violations and what is more to do with things like selection criteria. Because of the nature of sport as you go through the continuum of recreation to leisure to fitness and all the way to more competitive sport, there are these lines and questions such as 'can this be more inclusive and participatory'? You get those all along. It is

particularly so at the more participation end where the human rights perspective comes in. I think where you get into the higher levels of competition when you have things such as selection criteria, you can still see human rights violations, but there are different circumstances and situations here.

PETER

You mentioned 'stigma' too. I'd just like to get your thoughts on that. Stigma is can be attributed to why exclusion happens. Where do you think that stigma comes from? Are we ever going to combat stigma through sport?

ELI

Being involved with the United Nations and disability rights and focusing these past 10 years on raising awareness of disability in general society I think the work on addressing the 'fear factor' is significant. Disability generally in our society brings up a lot of emotions in people, simply because it is different, especially for physical disability but also for intellectual disability. Because it is different people are not as

comfortable. They don't have the experience or the knowledge base to fall back on. People are not exposed to disability.

People react in very different ways. It could be they are just shy, or angry, or mean - so you find a lot of different ways that people respond. One of the things that I have found by working in the Olympics and professional sports is that often it is just a lack of information. I think in the last few years there has been more curiosity and people taking an interest in sport and disability - seeing it as an exciting and emerging new area. So I feel that there is a lot of hope and potential now for transforming the culture. The way that I have approached it with my colleagues has been to look at it historically, and to also look at racial inclusion and gender inclusion and making those comparisons.

If you look historically around race, gender and disability and in particular around race and apartheid, and you look to see where we are now in terms of race relations or other forms of discrimination and stigma, you do see progress. You do see it evolving and I think in regard to disability and stigma, I feel it is on that trajectory so that in 20 years from now it's going to be very different. We



are going to be that much more of an inclusive society, especially because of those of us that are pushing the envelope and asking good questions and taking more of an educational approach.

There may well be things that are going to happen, such as legal cases, that are going to push even more for social change. There'll also be more athletes that are in positions of power that are going to be able to make key decisions. So there are all these factors that will allow for things to change over time.

Some days I think this is never going to change, but other days I'm feeling very hopeful. I'm sure we all have those kind of days. But stigmas can be very embedded and one thing that I talk about a lot is both external and internal stigma. Internal stigma is where people with disability stigmatize themselves. This is part of our own empowerment process. This will help us understand what does inclusion mean.

So if you look at other social movements in sports, you can learn a lot and see ways in which we can progress the disability movement.

PETER

I like the comparison with other movements and I agree there is a lot we can learn there. You mention that 'lack of knowledge' is one thing that restricts inclusion. What other things do you think impact on how inclusive we can be?

ELI

I think the athlete interactions with their allies, peers and people without disabilities contribute a lot. We need people with disabilities and people without disabilities speaking up. One of the things that I feel strongly about is the media. The more documentaries, movies, commercials and even viral videos out there promoting the disability movement through sports, the faster things will progress. Also, with policy it's not enough to have it sitting on the shelf. All these things help and add up. **But in 2012 there's not a good disability sports website, like an ESPN. They don't even have a disability section or a constant thread of stories that show case disability sports.**

I know the BBC has picked up some that is helping to grow disability sports in different markets, but in terms

of really embracing disability sport there is a way to go. Even the language and symbols that are being used in these contexts are not helping at times. Appropriate language and symbols should be used by governing bodies, such as FIFA and IAAF. That is happening now but there does need to be more involvement from the mainstream sports movements. For example, how do the Olympics and Paralympics interact? I know for London they are doing a lot. But we must keep pushing.

I have been fairly outspoken about the philosophy of Olympism, as this philosophy is a very holistic philosophy that embraces everybody, and people with disabilities are part of the Olympic movement. In the past the Paralympics have been identified as a separate movement and it is only recently that the Paralympics has been described as being part of the Olympic movement. I think this is a really good thing from a humanitarian standpoint. It's important that we realize that this is all part of one movement. Even if there are actual different events, its still together as part of one movement.

So it's important that we create these systems that are not parallel but integrated. Like I said, even if they are

separate events, it's the way we communicate about them, the way we talk about them and package these things. We do need to consider what it means for people with disabilities to be part of the same systems, rather than separate systems.

## PETER

I think you've hit on one of the real grey areas here. While sport that is only for people with disability - such as the Paralympics, is all part of 'inclusion', it is not often packaged that way. They are packaged as 'separate' events, somehow different to everything else. But they are no different to women only events, or events for people of a certain weight category. But we are not very smart sometimes in how we package these events.

## ELI

Yes, and I've learnt off you over the years, as I think there has been a select number of us that have been trying to communicate this message and raise the awareness for what this means - trying to simplify that. There are folks that talk about the 'identity' of people with disability and the uniqueness of that - but you can also say the same thing about women **or anybody that comes with a unique identity**. So it's about how do you

create events that package events together rather than separate them in this way, such as the Commonwealth Games. The more that we can have those conversations and the more that we can educate about that, the better.

This semester I am teaching a course on Olympism, and one of the weeks is about the Paralympics and disability. Every time I get involved in a discussion with people who know nothing about the Paralympics, they often talk about why there isn't a way they can be packaged together. It doesn't seem to make sense to them that they are separate. And that's great to hear. That gives me hope for the future for people that are in sports organizations and positions of influence, that they will have that awareness, and it will make them think about how they can create events that are more inclusive. It's clearly going to take more time, but there are things we can do in the short term to keep pushing.

One other thing I'd like to mention. I've been working on this project the last few weeks. It seems so obvious but I think it could have a huge impact. At the moment **there are no video games on Paralympic sports or disabled sports.** It seems to me that this could be a huge - for one of the sport game companies to make a wheelchair rugby

or wheelchair basketball game. To me, that level of integration could go a long way. Think about all the people that play video games, especially kids that get into sports games, and to have that as an option.

PETER

I totally agree. At one stage a few years ago we looked at developing Sports Ability - an inclusive games program here in Australia and elsewhere in the world - to become a Sports AbiliWi. A Wi game around sports such as Boccia and Table Cricket would suit the Wi environment really well. If you can play tennis and golf that way then you can certainly play other sports, such as boccia, that way too.

ELI

Is it in production?

PETER

No, it's not. It never got further than a thought bubble. But it's a great concept.

One more questions if you don't mind Eli - something you have touched on a couple of times - the future!

You've been around for a while now. Where do you think we will be in ten years from now in terms of inclusion?

ELI

For me, I always feel that I am learning. It's been an intensive last ten years or so. You know, I was at the IPC VISTA meeting and there were several other sports federations there. They were telling me that they were really trying to push integration, trying to get more disabled sports involved with their sports. They said that they were getting some level of support from the Paralympics but they thought that they could receive even more, so that it became a priority area for them.

I also feel that right from the relationship between the Olympics and Paralympics - right through to grass roots partnerships at the school and club level - we're going to see more and more best practices, more sports that are really integrated and more events that are integrated. I would hope that there is more information readily available, that you could go to an ESPN or any of the main sport news channels and you could go to a tab for disabled sports. It will become more and more of an industry and I think that will be an exciting thing.

I also think that it will become more business orientated, more complicated and more of a 'complete' industry. From a teaching standpoint, there are only a few sports management programs that teach about disabled sports and adapted physical activity. Hopefully in ten years from now they all will. They will just be one of the courses you can take.

Hopefully, in ten years from now we will be much further along. But there some things we have all been working on for the last ten years and they are still the same! But I do feel hopeful because of the enthusiasm that I see from young people. And the definition of inclusion is changing. From a human rights standpoint it was more about access issues and getting jobs, but now there is a greater level of awareness. The basic things are there a little bit more and its shifting to things like youth advocacy and realizing more that you can be more innovative about programs and that you can change the way that clubs are run. Even in schools there's an awareness that if a kid does turn up that they can have a good experience.



Still, I realize there are many parts in the world where that is not the case, and there is still a lot of work that needs to be done in those parts of the world. Disability is more on the agenda of developing agencies now, especially since the UN Convention process has been in place. Disability is a part of all that now, it's not off the radar!

But there has to be a group of us that keeps at it.

PETER

I agree entirely. While some things have changed dramatically, others have remained the same. Overall, it's come a long way in the last few years and it will be exciting to see what happens in the next ten years. I might conclude it there as you've given us a lot of rich material. So thank you very much. I really appreciate your time and input.

# STEFFI DE JONG



Steffi is co-founder and Impact Director of [Playable](#). She is passionate about using the power of sport for social change. Steffi co-founded PlayAble while still at university. After receiving her Master degree in Adapted Physical Activities in Leuven, Oslo and Stellenbosch and a Master degree in Implementation and Evaluation of Sport Projects at the Paris 10 University, she was committed to continue impacting lives of people with disabilities.

As her main motivation, Steffi refers to the enormous changes she has seen in the children who participate in PlayAble. "A

child that used to be neglected by the community can develop into someone with a disABILITY who is confident and aware of his/her rights just in a few weeks of sport participation. Isn't that amazing?!"

In her free time, Steffi loves to be active, from playing soccer and squash to mountain biking and skiing. When she is not working or playing sport, you'll find her enjoying life with family and friends.

PETER

Hi Steffi - in your experience, what do you understand about inclusion of people with disability in sport and physical activity?

STEFFI

What I understand about inclusion and what we try to teach in PlayAble to our coaches and instructors, is that inclusion is all about providing a choice to people with different abilities to play together in the way that they want. For us it's not necessarily one type of activity. It's really about enabling trainers and coaches to actually adapt existing games in such a way that everyone that comes out onto the field can play together.

Whether it's kids without disabilities or kids with different disabilities, it doesn't matter, kids with all different abilities, they actually get a chance to play together. To play together at the highest level of their performance, so that each and every one of them is still challenged in a sense that they can reach their highest level.

PETER

You've worked in some challenging environments. What do you think are the major challenges to inclusion?

STEFFI

I think that one of the biggest challenges that we are facing in the African countries that we are working with is the tendency to really stick to rules. For example, if you are going to do Volleyball you must stick to all the rules, so if a person cannot 'set' then they can't join, and that's it! That's the mind-set that lots of people have. That for us is the biggest challenge. We need a change in mind-set. To try to enable people to be creative and letting them try with different rules and different equipment and using different instructions. That takes a while and is one of the biggest challenges that we have.

The second one is the attitudes. Some of the initial attitudes can be really negative. You know as you have been to different countries. There's an attitude that people with disabilities just can't play sports because they are in a wheelchair, for example. Their disability is equated to their inability in a sense. That is a challenge for inclusion at the first point, because it's not only other people that

believe the kids with disabilities don't have ability, it's the kids themselves.

If you have been locked up in your house for years and you have never had the opportunity to play, then you don't have the confidence in your own abilities. So what we see in the beginning, very often, is that fully inclusive activities can have a very negative effect, because kids with disabilities can get very insecure playing with their able bodied peers.

The other kids are like "hey, they can't play with us". So I think that is a big challenge. We try to tackle it by doing it step by step. Those are the two biggest challenges that we face.

## PETER

We will certainly explore attitudes a bit more. But I was interested in 'the rules'. Do you think rules are one of the most restrictive things about sport, particularly for people who are more used to the rules that govern sport.

STEFFI

I think for those that do physical education training they are so focused on the rules. For example, their exams are focused on the rules of the games. So I think for them it is even more of a bigger challenge to change their mind-set as opposed to others who are not so familiar with the games. They are open to adapting at first because they simply don't know the rules in the first place. Of course there are exceptions because there are teachers who are trained but that 'get it' very fast and they are really creative. But there are also some that really have difficulties in sticking to the rules.

PETER

Now, I'm really interested to know. You have worked in Africa and in Europe. Do you see any differences between how creative people are in these countries?

STEFFI

From my experience the biggest difference in Europe and Africa is perhaps the educational system. People in Europe are forced much more to question and think creatively about different solutions, whereas in Africa, at least in the areas that we have worked, the teacher is there to tell the rules and that is what you do. That is my

own interpretation, but it is what I think is the biggest cause of this difference. They are not really taught how to question and think creatively. Of course, that's a generalization and doesn't count for everyone.

### PETER

Yes, I understand the generalization and see what you mean. Can I ask you about attitudes. Are there differences you've seen into attitudes towards inclusion and how are these linked to culture?

### STEFFI

Yes, definitely. I think this is why going to Africa was such an eye opener for me. In many African countries there are still many cultural beliefs around disability. Disability as a curse and the punishment of god. It's something very negative and lots of parents feel ashamed of their kids. We work with a lot of kids who are in orphanages, but they are not orphans. It's just that their parents won't have anything to do with them.

There are also kids that have been locked in their house for many years and even neighbors don't know they exist. It is because it is seen as some kind of failure of



the family. I think that if you are more in the urban areas it's changing and getting better, but in the rural areas there is still a lot of stigma attached to disability.

## PETER

That's very interesting. Do you think that sport can help change that?

## STEFFI

Oh yes - otherwise I could definitely stop working for PlayAble right now! This is the whole reason we started PlayAble and why we continue working because we really believe in the power of sport to changing those attitudes. To give you some examples, in Kenya we worked in a community, in one of the slum areas of Nairobi, where we had about 20 kids just staying at home and we got them playing activities every week in community fields. In the beginning, the community members didn't quite know what was going on, but over the weeks we really saw that their attitudes changed. We saw people coming out to watch and being surprised. At one point we decided to invite the local school, their teachers and the local leader. **When they saw the activities they were able to see that those kids really do have abilities.** So they thought they should get a chance

to go to school. The activities convinced people that those kids do have abilities and they can do lots of things if you just give them a chance. In the end they opened up a whole new classroom for those 20 kids so that they are now going to school.

That's just one example but it's typical of what we have been experiencing over the last few years in all the areas we have worked in. It really is changing attitudes, and the impact reaches much further than on a personal level. It's also on a societal level that things are changing.

## PETER

That's a great example of the power of sport. What is the reaction of children without disabilities to what you do?

## STEFFI

At the beginning they have 'big eyes' and are staring a bit! They are thinking "what's going on here and who are those kids?" There might be a bit of giggling and not taking it all that serious, but then, for example, in Uganda we started some parallel activities first to help the kids get to know each other first. After some weeks we really saw that, step by step, they started to talk to each other

and started to kick some balls with each other. Now we are in the position that some of the kids are in completely inclusive teams. It takes time, but you really do see that friendships are being made between the kids.

PETER

Now, I'm assuming that you use local equipment too, as its important to just use what people are used to. Do they manage to adapt and modify ways of doing things with different kinds of equipment too?

STEFFI

Yes, we do use as much as possible local equipment. For example, we have introduced in Uganda boccia. There were no boccia balls available so we just used whatever we could as balls, even stones. I think even the coaches get more and more creative too, as we have to use what is available.

PETER

One of the discussions we've had with the other people on this project is the idea that inclusion is sometimes perceived only as activities that are for people with and without disabilities together. And inclusion does not

mean disability specific type activities. Is that perception something you have seen in African countries?

## STEFFI

In the countries that we work those terms are not known.

We are trying to teach different ways of inclusion. But, basically I think that's more of a personal thing. I don't really care which name we give it. I think inclusion is

not necessarily adapting a game for kids without disabilities, so that kids with disabilities can be included.

For me it can be the opposite way too. A game for kids with disabilities that can include kids without disabilities.

To me, it's not just about adapting activities to include

kids with disabilities. It's more about creating an

opportunity for all kids to play together, whether it's so-called 'reverse' integration, when kids without

disabilities play boccia, for example.

I understand that there is a difference and I understand

that some people might argue that real inclusion is

having kids with disabilities all playing together in

mainstream soccer, for example. You know, I think it is

only really in English speaking countries where there is

this difference between inclusion and integration. For

me, it's more important that there is a choice and that

they can play whatever they want at the level that they like.

PETER

So you are saying that inclusion is really only about 'opportunity' and 'choice'.

STEFFI

Yes, I think for me that is the most important. We could also see inclusion as being in 'sport', whether that is being included in Paralympic sports, or being included in unified sports. But for me, the important thing is that there is a choice. If the kids don't feel comfortable playing soccer together, then there is still an option to play in wheelchair basketball, and that is the case for both kids with and without disabilities. I don't have a disability, but I play wheelchair basketball and I felt I was included in that team. I'm not sure I am making myself clear, but to me the differences in phrases and words don't really matter. It's more the final outcome that counts for me.

## PETER

Yes, it's the global language isn't it! Everyone understands when an opportunity is created. That's fantastic Steffi. To conclude, I'd just like to explore a little more the kinds of attitudes, fears and approaches you have come across, because it is a bit different and you've seen first hand the power that sport can have on those communities. How fast does this transformation process happen and when do you start seeing results?

## STEFFI

I think that depends a lot on the background. For example, in rural areas the attitudes are still a bit more negative, so it takes longer there than in the cities. Obviously, it varies from person to person but I've really been surprised by how short a time it takes. Even during our course for coaches of 4 to 5 days, there's coaches that have never worked with kids with disabilities and they come in and say things like "oh god, why did we chose you and why are you in this course?" But over the four days when they get this experience in working with those kids, you really can get some great changes.

They really realize that their attitudes were wrong. For adults, maybe it goes faster than for kids. We do see

coaches after the course immediately have great attitudes and they really want to try their level best to help everyone that comes their way. For the kids, in Uganda it was pretty fast too. If you only have a few kids, it only takes a few, to go and talk to the kids with disabilities. Then the others will follow. We do try to pick a few role models, both for kids with and without disabilities, so you can connect them up better. This promotes a lot of interaction.

A funny part is also the parents. In the beginning they are also skeptical. Having their kid playing with someone with a disability. But at the end of the season you really get their reactions. They are completely changed and they realize that these kids also play soccer. They are pretty amazed initially. One of the kids in Uganda was top scorer, he was born without legs, so he was playing soccer with his hands, among kids that were playing with their feet. It was amazing and he is such a powerful role model for all those parents. He became the rock-star of his community.

We've already talked about the power of sport. It is way more powerful than anything we can talk about. Just seeing those kids in action really helped.

PETER

Yes, that's a great place to stop the interview I think.

You've done a fantastic job so it's good to finish on such a positive note.

STEFFI

Thanks Peter, I really enjoyed it.

PETER

Thanks Steffi, and we'll speak soon.

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Take a look at PlayAble by visiting their site at:

<http://www.play-able.org/>



# HAMISH MACDONALD



Hamish Macdonald is a passionate advocate, speaker, administrator, educationalist and leader in the field of sport for people with disability. Now in the ‘veteran’ athlete category, he has represented Australia in a number of Paralympic Games and World Championships in athletics.

Hamish currently works for the Australian Sports Commission in an Assistant Director role, combining that with his many athletic commitments. He is a skilled educator and has been instrumental in designing and delivering education programs that have gone all over the world. He has organized and delivered on many disability education workshops across Australia and overseas, including Asia, the South Pacific, the Caribbean and Africa.

Hamish manages to combine an in-depth knowledge of high performance sport with an acute understanding of

the issues facing community participation, all with a keen sense of humor and enthusiasm.

PETER

What do you understand by inclusion in sport and physical activity for people with disability?

HAMISH

I think it is all the things we know. Providing opportunities for people to have the choice to participate in parts of the community that they want to participate in. It's about reducing the barriers, whether these are perceived barriers or real barriers.

The work of inclusion, is identifying what the barriers are and then doing the work collaboratively, so that everyone has a sense of ownership about reducing those barriers.

PETER

Can you give us an example of what a barrier might be?

HAMISH

Some of the biggest barriers are the attitudinal barriers. On both sides of the fence. The attitudes of the person trying to access sport, these can be huge barriers. Whether they are barriers of the people themselves, or

the people that facilitate the opportunity, such as their family members or care providers.

Then there are the attitudes of the community more generally, they can be huge barriers too.

PETER

If you want to break down these barriers, how do you influence peoples' attitudes?

HAMISH

Immersion. I think people can only understand something by being immersed in it. **The immersion really has to happen in a non-deliberate way so that it is just part of life.** People can't be expected to understand something they have never experienced. Any type of immersion is valuable. The opportunity to explore what that immersion experience was about, in a discussion format so that people can discuss what their experience was like, this helps people shape how they think.

PETER

Do you think that this immersion, this experience and exposure to disability for the first time, can be negative and positive?

HAMISH

Yes, if it is done in a controlled way, then it has to be done very carefully and in a non-deliberate way, or almost incidental way. When we've seen this process, for example, helping people experience disability by using wheelchairs, then this can have a negative impact on longer term attitudes. But if you are able to immerse someone in the experience of disability in a non-deliberate way, then you can positively influence attitudes.

It's almost like people are doing it, are experiencing it, without calling it a particular thing, and then it becomes part of their everyday behavior.

PETER

So, it's trying to influence everyday behavior?

HAMISH

Yes, absolutely, it's influencing everyday behavior in a non-labeled and non-deliberate way. The difficulty here, as educators, is that you have to actually be quite deliberate in how you do that.

PETER

As educators then, are there ways of speeding that process up?

HAMISH

I think there are. I think effective inclusion is like learning a language. For example, if you are taught Japanese all your life, but never have the opportunity to use it, then it is of limited value. So, the typical education process for learning a language is that you are deliberately exposed to it as part of a school curriculum. Then you have to make a choice as an adult to carry that on or not, 99% of people don't, so their understanding of the language is limited to what they can remember from a long time ago.

So, the way people get exposed to inclusion is important, as is the way people go about finding practical solutions.

It's the opportunities that people have to put it into practice that is important. Unless they have an immediate and ongoing opportunity to put it into practice then it can be lost. So, as educators, whatever behavioral change you are trying to make should focus on deliberate and ongoing exposure to that situation.

That's a tough thing to try to do, to put people in front of people with disabilities on an ongoing basis.

PETER

How do you develop a sense of ownership around inclusion then?

HAMISH

To me it has to be success. You have to build your outcome to be a success. If the overall outcome of being inclusive is success, this is a global outcome rather than an individual outcome that says "if we behave this way then Peter is going to be included more effectively". If it is a global outcome then people will start to own it.

The challenge here is that if everyone owns it then it is nobody's responsibility. There has to be a balance

between collective ownership and individual responsibility here. The overall outcome is the most important, but so is individual responsibility.

## PETER

So the overall outcome, inclusion, becomes just everyday practice. It's the way people do things.

## HAMISH

Yes, it's a culture. It isn't about attending a one off education session and ticking a box and feeling that you have done your bit. It's about what we want to feel like when we come to work everyday, and what do we want to feel like we are achieving by living this culture. So in some ways, it has to be an internal choice. Not something that we can tick off and say we have done. So this is a grey space to work in, but in many ways there are more tangible outcomes in the long term.

The effect will be that people have better experiences and make choices to come back and revisit that activity or organization. The culture will attract you rather than you coming back for your own personal experience.



PETER

How far are we away from achieving that?

HAMISH

Oh, we are miles from that happening! But there are some shining examples of when that approach is taken it can work. It's difficult to describe, but on the one hand you know exactly what you want to do, and on the other you do not want to portray that's what you are doing. You, kind of, don't want to label it an inclusive activity.

PETER

So again, if we are teaching about inclusion, we need to be conscious of the broader goals of doing things this way?

HAMISH

It is a kind of 'covert operation'. For every piece of work that's labeled an inclusive activity, then there's always 100 other bits of work that go on below it. People need to feel attached to what you are doing, if they are not, they are not going to be attracted to it.

Whatever service or activity you are offering, if people cannot see themselves already there, then they are unlikely to come back through the door.

PETER

It's like an incidental effect of inclusion. To put in place things that cause the incidental effect of inclusion.

HAMISH

Because it is covert. Which is an effective way to do it. It's a real skill to teach this.

PETER

What do you think then, are the major challenges of embedding that kind of approach into the practices of a regular sports coach, who has never worked with a person with a disability before?

HAMISH

The challenges are that you are working with someone with little experience and who is structured around the rules of sport. There is also too much busy work that happens within a local sporting environment. Someone has to run the kitchen or look after first aid. So the longer

term softer stuff has to be embedded into everyone's business. And someone needs to take responsibility for this, for embedding inclusive practice into everyone's business.

It's messy, but for it to be everyone's business then someone has to make it everyone's business. Someone has to be clever enough to do this so that it doesn't look like an obligation and it's not a course that you begin and complete and understand, and therefore don't need to do anymore. So there's a danger with a deliberate and specific education process, that it's easy to say "yes, I've done that, therefore I am inclusive". So in order for it to be ongoing, it has to be in the subconscious. So for it to be there, there must be someone that is outside the 'busy space' dedicated to putting it into the subconscious. Those people are rare, and those people that are capable of doing it well are often not available at a local level.

**PETER**

It's a funny irony, you want to teach about inclusion but you don't want to at the same time!

HAMISH

Yes. And there is a place for teaching about inclusion because you need an initial level of exposure. You need the people waving 'the big flag' saying “this is what you need to learn”. But the challenge, after that initial exposure, is to embed it. And the only way to do that is for people to 'live it' when they go back to where they operate. So it needs someone clever enough to embed inclusion into the day-to-day operations of an organization.

PETER

Excellent. I think we will leave it there Hamish. I really appreciate your time and thoughts here. Thanks very much.

HAMISH

Not a problem - thanks.

Thanks to our contributors to What Is  
Inclusion?

If you have read this book and you are not a  
member of The Inclusion Club, then we  
think you have enough interest to join. It's  
free and takes a couple of minutes.

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