

PORTSMOUTH SITTING VOLLEYBALL CLUB CASE STUDY

HOW DID THE CLUB BEGIN?

'Moving Forward' is the User Group of the Disablement Services Centre at St Mary's Hospital in Portsmouth. In August 2009, a group of amputees representing Moving Forward attended the Amputee Games (now called the LimbPower Games), at Stoke



Mandeville Stadium in Aylesbury. The group participated in a number of disability/Paralympic sport taster sessions and found that they all really enjoyed playing Sitting Volleyball and wanted to set up a team to play more regularly.

Portsmouth Sitting Volleyball club was established on 15th October 2009. Steve Bailey, later to be the club's Chairman approached Volleyball England and Portsmouth Council's Disability Sports Officer for advice and it was decided that the club would come under the umbrella of Portsmouth Volleyball Club.

In November 2009 Dave Willoughby, a highly respected indoor volleyball coach, stepped forward and became Head Coach. Only two months after having first tried the sport, the team was participating in the Volleyball England Grand Prix, the premier competition for Sitting Volleyball in England. Sadly, in July 2010 Dave passed away and after a period of stand-in coaches Richard Osborne took on the role of Head Coach and has been working with the team since.



WHAT SUCCESSES HAS THE CLUB HAS ACHIEVED SO FAR?

- A number of players have represented both GB men and women teams, including some who played at the Paralympics in London 2012.
- The club has improved year on year, to the extent that it was regarded as the most improved club during the 2014/15 season.
- The team has travelled to Holland to take part in competition

- Activity in the local Portsmouth community to showcase the sport and encourage others to give it a go.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES THE CLUB HAS FACED?

Player Recruitment

Sitting Volleyball is a niche sport and although it is growing across the UK and the signs look positive for its future, there is a constant need to raise and maintain its profile, particularly in the local community where the club exists.

Once recruited, players tend to stay with the sport as they realise there are many benefits to playing – it's fun, competitive, sociable, inclusive and a very good work out!



Adapting Sessions

It is also a challenge delivering training sessions to a wide range of diverse needs. Every individual is different, has a slightly different disability or learning style and special attention needs to be given to each person to ensure they do not injure themselves while, at the same time, helping them to participate as much as possible, and develop.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF KEEPING THE CLUB RUNNING?

One of the key successes at Portsmouth has been its survival. The club is entering its sixth year and that in itself is a huge success given the challenges described above. To make it sustainable players pay £3 each week, for a two hour session, with £5 monthly subscriptions. This enables the club to cover hall hire costs, although it relies on other income, such as grants, to keep going.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO START A NEW SITTING VOLLEYBALL CLUB?

You are making the right choice! It is a fantastic sport which provides a level playing field for everyone that takes part, whether they are disabled or not. There are lots of things I would suggest to get things going:

Funding

Organisations such as Cash4Clubs or Sportivate may be able to award a grant to help you with your funding needs. Local councils are also a good source of support, both in terms of identifying training venues and assisting financially.

PUBLICITY:

- Utilise **Social Media**, e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, a bespoke website...
- Your **local radio station** can be used to raise awareness and invite participation.
- **Flyers and posters** can be placed in strategic areas such as hospitals, rehabilitation and disablement centres, doctor's surgeries, libraries etc.



- **Taster Sessions/Affiliation** – pick a weekday evening and offer a 6 week block at a reasonable price to gauge whether there is scope to form a new club. If you have a local volleyball club in the area draw upon its resources including experienced coaches. You may then be able to utilise its related website saving you time and expense.

TOP TIP to increase numbers – while publicity has its place there is no better way to drum up interest than getting out into the community – don't expect it to come to you! Identify shows or events that the general public will attend e.g., fetes, festivals, exhibitions etc.

Equipment

A set of posts, a net and a dozen balls will probably cost about £1,000.

Disability Organisations

Although the game can be played by anyone it is found that amputees are the most prominent disability group that participates. Use Google to search for disability organisations in your area and then contact them to ask if they will promote your club.

Above all else, **persevere!** You may find in the early days that mobilising interest is challenging, but if you can get three or four people interested and training regularly, whilst continuing to do all the things described above, then hopefully more will join and soon you will have a thriving club.

If you are interested in establishing Sitting Volleyball within your club, get in touch with **Rich Stacey-Chapman**, Sitting Volleyball Development Manager, who can give you more information.