

*MEDIA RELEASE – for immediate release*

*08/03/2019*

## **32<sup>nd</sup> Inter Spinal Unit Games attracts newly paralysed sports participants from across the country in April 2019**

Next month Stoke Mandeville Stadium is hosting the nationally renowned Inter Spinal Unit Games from 8-12 April 2019, organised by the national Charity for wheelchair sport, WheelPower to transform the lives of disabled people through sport. The highest number of spinal units and participants ever recorded are set to attend this year.

One of WheelPower's flagship sporting events, the Inter Spinal Unit Games, enables newly paralysed adult patients from 15 spinal units across the country (UK and Ireland) who have sustained a spinal cord injury within the last 12 months, to try and compete in a variety of sporting activities and improve their wheelchair skills, health and fitness. It also supports the mental and physical rehabilitation of participants and is a fun social, confidence building experience.

The Games are set to feature 117 patients this year who will take part in up to 20 sports activities such as Wheelchair Basketball, Wheelchair Tennis, Golf, Athletics, Handcycling and Wheelchair Fencing.

This year, there will be added emphasis on building social interaction and networking between participants who have experienced similar life changing injuries. This is a core part of the Games as the sharing of experiences, tips and advice is hugely important for people coming to terms with their new life after injury.

The benefits do not stop there as it is often the case that participants continue their healthy and active lifestyles after the event, at accessible sporting opportunities local to them in their regions. WheelPower assist them with finding sports they have tried out and taken an interest in at the Games. It is in this way that we keep in contact with the participants becoming an information hub to support them during their life in sport and physical activity.

The Inter Spinal Unit Games exists to promote a lifelong engagement in physical activity and sport, improve mental health, and also provide connections to rehabilitation experts, wheelchair equipment specialists, carers, parents and staff trainers.

*Transforming lives through sport*

WheelPower, Stoke Mandeville Stadium, Guttman Road, Stoke Mandeville, Buckinghamshire, HP21 9PP

Tel: 01296 395995 Email: [info@wheelpower.org.uk](mailto:info@wheelpower.org.uk) [www.wheelpower.org.uk](http://www.wheelpower.org.uk)

Royal Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales KG, KT, GCB, OM, AK, QSO, PC, ADC

Patrons: Ade Adepitan MBE, David Barnett, Annabelle Christie, Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE, Paddy Hopkirk MBE, Roger Jelfoate CBE DL, The Countess of Westmorland

President: The Hon. Mrs Mark Vestey Life Vice President: Kevan Baker OBE

Vice Presidents: Ann Cutcliffe OBE, Dennis Guttman FRCP, Sally Haynes MBE, Glyn Hibbert, Mark Jarrad, Rod Jones, Eva Loeffler OBE, Baroness Masham, David Skinner

Chairman: Rob Wilson Chief Executive: Martin McElhatton

Charity registration number: 265498 The British Wheelchair Sports Foundation Limited (WheelPower) registered office: as above Company registration number: 01059490

Registered with



FUNDRAISING  
REGULATOR

Last year PC Kris Aves, one of those injured in the London Bridge terror attack attended the Inter-Spinal Unit Games, saying 'Sport is a big, big thing and it's worked for me, is still working for me and I think it will work for everyone else', he shared.

Previous participant John Bowen: "I had a heart attack 20 foot off the floor up a ladder when I was decorating, so I hit the floor with a big impact, a concrete floor and fractured my neck and severed my spine, then died for twenty minutes. Luckily enough I died in the presence of a midwife and the next door neighbour was a GP, who had just had a refresher course in CPR", says John. Speaking about being asked to join in at the ISUG Games, 'as soon as I was asked I said yes straight away', says John.

At this year's event, we are set to have former Paralympians coaching the participants including Alan Sherriff and Justine Moore (Wheelchair Fencing), Louise Sugden (former GB wheelchair basketball player), and Gordon Perry, former GB Wheelchair Basketball player and the first winner of the wheelchair event in the London Marathon.

Gordon Perry comments on how impactful this event is for the nation: 'Here at Stoke Mandeville Stadium, WheelPower have everything you need to provide for access to a wide variety of sports all on one site. I get great enjoyment from seeing how people improve their lives through sport – it's a fantastic effect!'

Fleur O'Reilly from Salisbury is attending this year's Inter-Spinal Unit Games. 'Before my injury my husband and I were cave divers, we loved hiking, and travelling, we were learning to fly gliders with the aim of getting private pilots licenses', comments Fleur.

Obviously becoming a paraplegic has had a fundamental impact on our lifestyle. It feels like life is only just starting again now. I'm hoping that with the games I'll gain some more confidence and try some new things', Fleur continues.

Coloplast UK are the proud sponsors of WheelPower, enabling more disabled people to enjoy leading active and healthy lives.

Coloplast develop products and services with a focus on continence, urology and wound care that make life easier for people with intimate healthcare needs.

"Around 80% of people will experience continence problems following a spinal cord injury. As a result, bladder and bowel management becomes one of the top 3 concerns for people living with a spinal cord injury. At Coloplast we share a passion to make a real difference to people's quality of life. By creating and delivering life-changing products and services we enable users to live the life they want to lead.

We are really excited to be sponsoring this years' Inter-Spinal Unit Games inspiring newly injured people with hope and confidence." shares Tim Mercer, Head of Marketing CC.

*Transforming lives through sport*

WheelPower, Stoke Mandeville Stadium, Guttman Road, Stoke Mandeville, Buckinghamshire, HP21 9PP  
Tel: 01296 395995 Email: [info@wheelpower.org.uk](mailto:info@wheelpower.org.uk) [www.wheelpower.org.uk](http://www.wheelpower.org.uk)

Ollie Buncombe, Sports Development Officer comments on what an inspiring event this is for newly paralysed people:

'The Inter Spinal Unit Games provide a fantastic opportunity for individuals with a spinal cord injury to discover activity and sport after injury. The Games provide the opportunity to meet with people in a similar situation and share tips and experiences for how to come to terms with their new life. The Games provide the perfect platform to discover new sport and physical activity opportunities but also promote social interaction and a sharing of knowledge. From the first to the last day it is possible to see a real change in the participants, demonstrating the really transformative work these Games can have on people's lives'.

-ENDS-

To arrange an interview or visit to the event, please contact:

Carolyn Fray

Communications Officer

WheelPower

Email: [carolyn.fray@wheelpower.org.uk](mailto:carolyn.fray@wheelpower.org.uk)

Tel: 01296 395995

*Transforming lives through sport*

WheelPower, Stoke Mandeville Stadium, Guttman Road, Stoke Mandeville, Buckinghamshire, HP21 9PP  
Tel: 01296 395995 Email: [info@wheelpower.org.uk](mailto:info@wheelpower.org.uk) [www.wheelpower.org.uk](http://www.wheelpower.org.uk)

## Notes to Editor:

Media are invited to cover the event and interview case studies

## 15 Spinal Units are set to attend the Inter Spinal Unit Games 2019 at Stoke Mandeville Stadium

1. Belfast Spinal Cord Injury Unit
2. Dublin - National Rehabilitation Hospital
3. DMRC – Stanford Hall – Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre
4. Glasgow – Queen Elizabeth National Spinal Injuries Unit
5. Hobbs - Hobbs Neurological Rehabilitation
6. Middlesbrough – South Tees Hospital NHS Foundation Trust - Spinal Injuries Unit
7. Oswestry – The Midland Centre for Spinal Injuries
8. Pinderfields – Yorkshire Regional Spinal Injuries Centre
9. Royal Buckinghamshire – International Spinal Injuries and Rehabilitation Centre
10. Rookwood – The Welsh Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Centre
11. Salisbury – Spinal Treatment Centre – Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust
12. Sheffield – Princes Royal Spinal Cord Injuries Centre
13. Southport – North West Regional Spinal Injuries Centre
14. Stanmore – The London Spinal Cord Injury Centre (SCIC)
15. Stoke Mandeville – National Spinal Injuries Centre at Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

## Times:

10am-9pm each day

**Thurs 11<sup>th</sup> April:** Sports Championships Dinner at 7pm

## Event venue address:

Stoke Mandeville Stadium

Guttmann Rd, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire

HP21 9PP

## About Coloplast

Our business includes Ostomy Care, Continence Care, Wound & Skin Care and Interventional Urology. We operate globally and employ about 12,000 employees.

From getting to the grocery store to biking up a mountain, users' hopes and aspirations fuel our passion of finding new ways to help make their lives easier.

*Transforming lives through sport*

WheelPower, Stoke Mandeville Stadium, Guttmann Road, Stoke Mandeville, Buckinghamshire, HP21 9PP  
Tel: 01296 395995 Email: [info@wheelpower.org.uk](mailto:info@wheelpower.org.uk) [www.wheelpower.org.uk](http://www.wheelpower.org.uk)

We constantly question the status quo across every aspect of intimate healthcare and seek to understand our users, to better anticipate and advocate for their needs. Ever since the founding of Coloplast in 1957, we have worked closely with healthcare professionals and the users of our products to discover new solutions as well as new ways to create solutions that are sensitive to their special needs.

Together, we move care forward.



## About WheelPower

'Transforming Lives Through Sport'

WheelPower is the national charity for wheelchair sport – helping more than 78,000 disabled people to get physically active and play sport each year. We're based in Stoke Mandeville Stadium, the birthplace of the Paralympic Movement, and we work nationwide with children and adults with physical disabilities. This includes a wide range of disabilities including spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy and limb loss.

WheelPower delivers a range of sports rehab programmes and events to suit disability. We then provide ongoing support and help people find local clubs and facilities where they can remain active.

62,099 disabled people were supported by WheelPower in the last year. Whether it is a team sport like wheelchair basketball or an individual sport like archery, there really is something for everyone and the physical and psychological benefits are incredible.

## Donate | Fundraise | Take Part

You can be directly part of WheelPower's drive to transform disabled lives through sport by fundraising for us or donating today, or setting up a regular fundraising function that helps us plan for the future. If you prefer to get involved and take on a challenge, there is lots to choose from, or alternatively you can volunteer for us.

You can even book a WheelPower Speaker for your next event, or book us to visit your school and do a special talk and enjoy one of our infamously interactive 'Wheelchair Relays'!

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for our latest news.

Whichever way you can help us you will be making a huge difference to a disabled person's life and their family.

- £10 provides training for more wheelchair sports coaches and leaders
- £24 enables us to give a disabled child aged six their first ever experience of sport – at a WheelPower event where they can try six different activities

- £49 allows us to buy sports equipment which we use to get recently paralysed people active

For more information, get in touch with us on 01296 395995 or email us: [info@wheelpower.org.uk](mailto:info@wheelpower.org.uk)

Visit our website: [www.wheelpower.org.uk](http://www.wheelpower.org.uk)



Image from previous ISUG event (2018)



*Kris Aves attended the Inter-Spinal Unit Games in 2018*

**Further quotes from previous Inter-Spinal Unit Games 2017 Participants:**

“I shouldn’t doubt myself about playing sport, because I’ve done it now. So it’s about developing it and making it better.”

**Ainsley Sinckler–Campbell 22 years old from Wolverhampton. (Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital - Oswestry). Winner of the Archery Paraplegic Division**

I think it’s good to get to know people, knowing people with the same sort of injuries. You learn things as well chatting to other people, you can do a lot through the sports.”

**Dean Doherty (Musgrave Park Hospital – Belfast) Age 27 Limavady, Northern Ireland.**

“Events like this really bring that all together, bring the competition aspect of it back in, all the different spinal units together, it’s just such a simple concept but it works so well and it’s fantastic.”

**Danielle Hurst Age 42 from London. (Stoke Mandeville)**

"I was speaking to someone in the pool yesterday who was in my race, who was a bit nervous of swimming and I said 'look just do it', he said 'if you can do it you're the same age as me I can do it'. He was "umming" and "ahhing" on getting in the water and he just did it and swam and he said thank you at the end. I think this is what these Games are about - seeing other people doing what they think they can't. What Games like these do - you are around people either better or worse than you - you spur each other on, if you know someone can't do something you try and help them."



### **Ben Pritchard from Swansea (Stoke Mandeville)**

"The Games provided a judgement free environment which gave me confidence to compete in so many sports that I didn't realise were there! Going from an active person to paraplegic is a hard pill to swallow but finding and meeting so many people in the 'same boat' is reassuring."

"Now on top of work, I have some personal goals in the sporting field that I intend to follow and the confidence gained from the weeks competing has lit a little fire now."

### **Ben Hasselman (Belfast) Won 3rd place Paraplegic Division - American 9 Ball Pool**

"It's been amazing, my injury was about seven months ago and to come to a place like this and try all these different sports I never thought I'd be trying has been great and you meet lots of other young people who are also in a wheelchair. It's nice just to trade tips and ideas and it encourages you to get active again despite the injury.

You don't lose that competitive edge, you know, it's fun to compete!

**(Oliver Carpenter quotes - age 24 representing Stanmore.)**

"It taught me that although there are barriers in life, in whatever form they come in, there is still so much we can do and experience."

### **Sarah Haenaghan, Participant at ISUG 2017. London Spinal Cord Injury Centre**

"The week was very enjoyable and to attempt sports which I would never even thought about prior to my accident certainly opened my eyes to the fact that there are no barriers for a spinal injury person."

### **Graham Brown, Participant at ISUG 2017. London Spinal Cord Injury Centre**