



Peter Harrison Centre

for Disability Sport

Newsletter

Issue 1 Spring 2008

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Welcome to the 1st edition of the new look newsletter from the Peter Harrison Centre for Disability Sport.

In this issue, the Peter Harrison Centre for Disability Sport (PHC) would like to celebrate its re-launch. As well as the new look newsletter the website is also being redesigned and updated to give it a contemporary fresh appeal and ensure the website is accessible for all users. The new website will also reflect the Centre's new aims and objectives and will show the two strands of research, sport sciences and sport culture and policy research, which are carried out at the Centre.

The Centre would like to provide a warm welcome to the new members of staff and students who will be associated with the Centre.

Dr Vicky Tolfrey has been appointed as the new Director and her staff profile can be seen on page 3. Alongside this there is a profile of Dr David Howe the Centre's Deputy Director.

Following this, there is an insightful interview of two Loughborough University undergraduate Sport and Exercise students, who are doing research on paraplegic and tetraplegic hand cyclists for their dissertations. During the interview they were asked how they think the Centre can support them with their future studies.

On the back page there is a student profile of Barry Mason, who is associated with the Centre and he is currently studying for his PhD at Loughborough University.

The Centre would also like to welcome John Lenton, Research Associate at Loughborough University's School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, who will be associated with the Centre. His profile will be featured in the next edition and this will highlight his work with the GB Wheelchair Tennis Squad.

Editorial: Charlotte Greasley

We hope you enjoy learning more about the Centre and find the links to the website and other resources useful. If you have any feedback or would like to contact the Centre please email: PHC@lboro.ac.uk or contact Charlotte Greasley the Information Officer on 01509 226387 or C.Greasley@lboro.ac.uk

Look out for the new website!

In keeping with the re-launch of the Peter Harrison Centre for Disability Sport, it was decided that the website should also be redesigned with a contemporary new look.

One of the most important aspects of the new design will be the enhanced accessibility of the website. After carrying out preliminary research on website accessibility, it was found that users with visual impairments who rely on screen readers to decode text, have difficulty reading websites designed in tables and frames. This was not good news for the Centre's original website, which like many other websites, has been designed using tables and frames. The new design will feature a more

user friendly layout to enhance accessibility.

The new website will also reflect the Centre's new aims and objectives and will show the two strands of research, sport science and sport culture and policy, which are carried out at the Centre. It is anticipated that the new website will be re-launched in March/April 2008. The Centre welcomes feedback and comments about the new website, which will be available soon at the following address:

www.peterharrisoncentre.org.uk/

For further information about website accessibility please see the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

The Centre's Key Objectives

The key objectives of the PHC are to improve knowledge and understanding of Paralympic sport. As well as researching high performance disability sport the PHC will promote the substantial health and quality of life benefits that can be gained through participation in grassroots disability sports. This will be achieved through educational initiatives and applied collaborative research projects coordinated by experts from the sports and social sciences within the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences (SSES) at Loughborough University.

As key PHC staff have focused their research interests on Paralympic Sports, the centre will work closely with the British Paralympic Association (BPA) and other partners, such as the International Network for the Advancement of Paralympic Sports through Science (INAPS), that has been established to extend the work of the International Paralympic Committee. An expression of interest will be made to the INAPS' five partners for inclusion to this network in the near future.

The Centre's Aims will be to:

- generate and extend the knowledge in disability sport through applied research
- assist in the development of evidence-based practice in disability sport
- ensure that significant research findings are translated into practical outputs and guidelines that help inform disability practitioners attached to sports both in the UK and Internationally
- enhance the national focus for disabled sport
- ensure that information and support is provided through a website, newsletters and seminars

Director Dr Vicky Tolfrey

In September 2007 Vicky joined the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences at Loughborough as a Senior Lecturer in Exercise Physiology and was also appointed to the Director's position at the Peter Harrison Centre for Disability Sport. She is currently the Lead Physiology Consultant for the British Paralympic Association (BPA) and has provided extensive support to disability athletes which has taken her to both the Atlanta and Sydney Paralympics. Her work with the BPA has meant that she has attended the holding camp for Athens 2004 and is involved with the current preparations for Beijing later this year. She serves on the International Paralympic Committee as a member on the Sport Science Committee.

Vicky is a British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) re-accredited physiologist and interdisciplinary sport scientist and received the award for 'Outstanding Contributions to Applied Practice' at the BASES 2005 Annual Conference. This award recognises Vicky's work in supporting athletes at Paralympic level. Vicky has several on-going International collaborations in disability sport, which include work with Dr Lucas van der Woude at the Free University of Amsterdam and Professor Liz Bressan from Stellenbosch University.

Vicky's research and teaching interests include: disability sport; wheelchair propulsion kinematics; elite sports performance physiology; exercise testing and interpretation; training & performance.

Deputy Director Dr David Howe

In January 2006 David joined the staff of the School of Sport and Exercises Sciences at Loughborough as a Lecturer in the Sociology of Sport. In December 2007 David became the Deputy Director with a responsibility for the sport culture and policy research strand within the Peter Harrison Centre. David is a former Paralympian and has held roles on the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) as Athlete's representative and as a technical officer both within the sport of track and field athletics. David has been consulted by the United Nations on issues related to the rights of disabled people and currently is a member for the IPC's Development Committee Experts Network.

David's teaching interests are broadly focused on cultural politics and sociology/anthropology of the body in sport and leisure. David has been appointed visiting lecturer on the Erasmus Mundus Masters in Adaptive Physical Activity at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium (2007-2009).

His research concerns the impaired sporting body, health and identity. This area of work is being developed through a life long involvement in, and commitment to, the Paralympic sporting movement. David has recently published a book entitled *The Cultural Politics of the Paralympic Movement: Through the Anthropological Lens* (Routledge, 2008).

Interviews with two Undergraduate Sport and Exercise Students

Student Interview: Vicki Oldfield is currently studying at Loughborough University for her BSc in Sport and Exercise Science and is expected to graduate this summer. I was interested to interview her as she has decided to carry out research for her dissertation on the area of disability sport. The proposed title for her dissertation will be 'establishing the validity of the rate of perceived exertion scale for paraplegic and tetraplegic hand cyclists'.

For Vicki the inspiration for her research stemmed from her own interest in physiology. She said the idea to study paraplegic and tetraplegic hand cyclists originated last summer when a group of friends went cycling. Whilst carrying out a literature search, she found that the majority of journal articles focused on arm ergometers and wheelchair propulsion with very few focussing on handcycling.

She explained that the 'new craze' for paraplegics is the triathlon which includes handcycling as well as wheelchair racing and swimming. Although the triathlon has not yet been accepted into the Paralympic movement, handcycling was accepted in 2004 and was first showcased at the Athens Paralympics, with a time trial and road race. The International Triathlon Union (ITU) has been pushing to get the triathlon included in the Paralympics since it was accepted in the Sydney Olympics in 2000.

Vicki was asked how Centre can play a role in supporting her in her future studies. She said it was reassuring to know that the Centre existed if she decided to study for a PhD. The Centre would be able to provide essential networking opportunities and provide contacts for athletes, who are otherwise difficult to contact.

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Student Interview: Jimmy Goddard is working alongside fellow student Vicki Oldfield on the same dissertation title. Jimmy is also studying for his BSc in Sport and Exercise Science at Loughborough University and is expected to graduate this summer. They will both carry out joint data collection but will write up their findings separately. Jimmy provided an interview via email, in which he wrote:

I was inspired to carry out work in this area through my own experiences after having a spinal injury myself only a few years ago and having to navigate a sometimes confusing road through rehabilitation. I wanted to try to find a sport to become involved in and get physically fit again (as I had always been

extremely physically active as an ex. commando forces officer) but this was not always easy.

Very little information exists about training programmes, thresholds, intensity zones etc. for disabled sports people. My undergraduate dissertation is just a very small step in what is a long road to try to fill some of these blanks and make disability sport more accessible. The primary support that I need for the future is funding in order to continue my studies. I would like to commence a masters in sports physiology at Loughborough or a PhD into an area of disability sport but need some sort of funding if I am going to do either.

The PHC would also like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of its existing staff and students. Research Associate Nadine Geddes has been working on various projects within the field of disability sport, including TOP Sportsability and Elements. PhD student Marie Dannhaeuser is exploring the lived experiences of female Paralympic athletes to identify relevant socio-cultural features

which contribute to and influence participation (see her profile in the next issue). PhD student Katherine Black has studied fluid balance and thermoregulation of athletes with a disability and is now looking at water turnover in individuals with spinal cord injury. Katherine and Marie will be presenting at the BPA Conference this month.

Student Profile: Barry Mason

The PHC would like to welcome PhD student Barry Mason to the Centre. Barry previously graduated from University College Chichester, with a BSc in Sport and Exercise Science and an MSc in Sport and Exercise Biomechanics. Barry's PhD research is concentrating on *The Ergonomics of Wheelchair Configuration for Optimum Sports Performance*. He started his four year part-time PhD at Manchester Metropolitan University in February 2007 and recently transferred to Loughborough University when his supervisor, Vicky Tolfrey, was appointed the Director's position at the Peter Harrison Centre for Disability Sport. Barry's position is funded by a joint agreement between the British Paralympic Association and UK Sport, as part of the UK Sport Graduate Innovation Programme.

Barry explains that for his PhD he will mainly be using a series of manipulation studies to look at the different ways that wheelchairs can be set up for optimum performance and user comfort. He is concentrating on three different sports which are wheelchair rugby, wheelchair tennis & wheelchair basketball. Each sport is being studied individually because the wheelchairs for each sport have different requirements.



Barry Mason carrying out tests on wheelchair athletes for his research

He has recently undertaken two different types of studies. The first was an interview study which involved all three sports, where experienced and elite players from each sport were interviewed to obtain their views on the way wheelchairs are set up. The second study examined the effectiveness of different types of gloves upon wheelchair rugby performance. Data analysis is ongoing and will be presented at the BPA Conference this month.

Barry recently accompanied the GB Wheelchair Rugby squad to the US. During this trip he ensured that the squad's wheelchairs were mechanically

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