



Meet the Team: Wales' Para Triples

The Commonwealth Games is the only international multi-sport event which features an integrated para-sport programme.

2018 will see the largest para-sport programme in the history of the Games and Bowls will be a key feature.

Given their current form, and previous bronze medal winning success at the

Commonwealth Games test event in 2017, this Wales' Triples combination will be definite medal contenders.

Representing Team Wales, Pauline Wilson, Raymond Lillycrop and Jonathan Hubbard will compete in the open triples (B6/B7/B8) event at the Games.

Pauline got into the sport at the age of 18 when she felt that her then boyfriend was having all the fun playing bowls, so she decided to go along and join in.

Wilson left the sport for some years while her family was young and, after a move to Wales decided to get back into bowls, she explained,

'I thought it would be a great way to meet new people and re-introduce myself to bowls again.'

After struggling with a health problem for many years Pauline took the decision to have her left leg amputated. Following this she was introduced to para bowls,

She was encouraged to get involved in para bowling, by Hazel Wilson (WWBA). Following visiting an open day she was put in touch with Gerwyn Owen and John Wilson and hasn't looked back.

When describing how she felt when she heard she was going to be representing Team Wales, Pauline said,

'I felt overwhelmed, excited and emotional, in fact I couldn't speak when I received the phone call.'

The news of her selection soon become a reality as preparation began in earnest,

'As well as playing in four different leagues and a

variety of competitions, I attend training sessions with the Commonwealth Games bowls team.

I have also been swimming to help build up my fitness and have changed my diet to exclude a lot of the rubbish I was eating and introduced a healthier style of eating.'

As part of the build up to selection Pauline and the other members of the triples team had the opportunity to play at the home of the Commonwealth Games 2018 Bowls competition as part of their preparation, she explained

'Playing at Broadbeach was invaluable as it allowed us to play in the environment that will be used for the Games and against teams from Australia and New Zealand which was a new experience.

Learning how they play their game has given us an insight of what we can expect when we meet again in the Commonwealth Games.'

Pauline has also been playing indoors to help with adjusting to the playing environment of Australia, she explained,

'Playing indoor is helping me with adjusting the weight when I deliver my bowls and therefore the transition should hopefully be easier to adapt to when we play on the Australian greens.'

Another member of the Para-Triples is Raymond Lillycrop from Milford Haven.

When Raymond was 15 he gave bowls a go as part of a school taster session.

Following this, coach Jim Lewis invited him to join Pembrokeshire Disabled Bowls Club and he hasn't looked back.

'I started playing in the disabled group back in 2011 and I have progressed from there.'

On hearing of his selection for the Commonwealth Games Raymond explained,

'It made me feel excited when I heard I'd been chosen, and I am really looking forward to the Games.'

Together with team mates Jonathan Hubbard and Pauline Wilson, Raymond won a bronze medal in the Commonwealth Games test event which took place in 2017, which augurs well for his return visit in 2018.

To continue with his preparation Lillycrop plays up to 6 hours a week at his local indoor club, as well as playing more matches for his club and county.

Joining Pauline and Raymond in the Triples is Jonathon Hubbard who has had quite a journey within bowls.

Having sat watching his parents play at his local club in Tenby, he soon got fed up of spectating and persuaded someone to show him the basics. Jonathon explained,

'From that day, I was hooked. It has now been about 27 years since I began and I haven't missed a season.'

Whilst the forty-three-year-old admits that his greatest challenge is overcoming cerebral palsy, he admits he has a 'never say die' attitude.

He has found his own way in the game, discovering ways to bowl that work for him.

Hubbard said,

'Due to my disability it took me a couple of years hard work, dedication and determination to find a way to bowl that was comfortable and worked for me.'

Jonathon persevered and soon found that he was competing at an equal level with everybody else,

The team also has invaluable opportunity to practice together, Raymond explains,

'Overall preparation is going well, it's great to practice with the team.'

Given that he has experienced a great deal throughout his bowls career, Raymond's favourite sporting moment came when he played for Wales for the first time in the Home Nations Championships against Scotland and England.

When he isn't bowling Raymond works as an administrator in a furniture manufacturing factory that employs and supports people with disabilities in Haverfordwest.

He has also been active in urging employers to see past jobseekers' disabilities and has led a group of young people in making a film to get their message across with the national charity, Fixers.

He continued,

'I had so much support from everyone within my club, county and the sport in general because of it.'

Hubbard plays for Tenby Bowling Club and Heatherton Indoor Bowls Club.

He can't wait to represent Wales at the Commonwealth Games and says it would be a 'lifetime achievement' and a great opportunity to showcase disability sport.

When he first heard of his selection, Jonathon felt excited and happy, but also was in shock, he explained,

'Since taking the game up I often wondered if I could play at a high level but due to my disability and lack of opportunities out there over the years I didn't think it would happen. Now I am about to represent and play for Wales at the highest level as a Bowls player. It is a dream.'

Preparation is going well for the games with the experience in Australia in 2017 really providing a foundation for success.