



PLENTY of WHEELCHAIR SQUASH

by Rich Manners

I've known Rich Plenty for a long time, and have played against him a number of times over the years, when I found a very able player, who invariably put me to the sword (for younger readers, that's medieval for a right thumping!)

Rich is also a qualified squash coach and has been active in the development of young and not so young squash players at Rhiwbina.

Over many years now, Rich has been devoting his free time to developing his interest in wheelchair squash at Rhiwbina, something I've been very aware of whilst attending for my own matches. So, when I discovered that arrangements were well underway for the inaugural Wheelchair Squash Open tournament to be held at Rhiwbina, I thought it was time that our members knew a bit more of how this has

2.

come about, and the efforts that have been made by Rich and his co-conspirators, in particular, Alan Coslett.

So, who better to explain what's been going on, than the man himself. Rich agreed to have a chat, and we met one Saturday morning and recorded our conversation.

Rich explained the difference between wheelchair squash and disability squash, *"Disability squash is inclusive to everybody with a disability, that's in sight impairment, hearing impairment or physical impairment. Obviously, you can't have people with those conditions running around on a court with a wheelchair, so we have to separate the sports as such."*

Back in 2013/2014, Rich's daughter Laura, attended Western House school in Bridgend, which catered for persons with disabilities, *"that's how I got involved...I just thought it would be a nice idea to bring the kids up from Western House and give them a chance to play squash or racquetball."*

Rich ran the idea past head coach at the time, Bob Perry, and Bob offered his full support.

Wheelchair squash began to take off at the club, taking place on Thursdays, and even in those early days, the work was being recognised, with the club awarded a prestigious Gold Award, one of the first awarded to a Squash club in Wales, through the Insport series programme of Disability Sport.

Nowadays, wheelchair squash at Rhiwbina takes place at sessions run by Rich every Thursday evening, and he is hopeful that a new Saturday session will begin soon.

Rich told me that he had the full support of the Squash Club Committee at Rhiwbina in developing wheelchair squash at the club. He said, “*..I can only thank the boys in the squash club (committee) so much, because without their support, and giving us ...the courts for free...they're very supportive.*”

Squash Wales have also been supportive of Rich's efforts, and ran interviews with Rich, and players John Cooper and Steve McGrath at the end of last year, highlighting the work being done. You can view this footage via the link below.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15-B_1-qlUw

There are three regular players who attend the sessions, and Rich's hope is for more to be attracted. To assist the flow of the game, the rules have been adapted to include extra lines at the front and back of the court, a bouncier red spot ball, and the allowance of two bounces.

I asked Rich what tells him that the sessions have a positive impact on the players. “*They wouldn't come if they didn't like it*”. Good answer!

John Cooper clearly outlined the positives in the YouTube link.

He went on to say that there was also an important social side to the sessions. Rich explained, “*We're a social group* 4.

as well...we meet up three or four times a year outside and go for a curry and a couple of pints - we're friends as well"

This year in September, saw the inaugural Welsh Open Wheelchair Squash Tournament take place at Rhiwbina. Rich approached Squash Wales with the idea, and was afforded welcome support. Once again, Squash Wales sent a film crew over to our club, to highlight the forthcoming event. You can catch up on on their efforts through the below link.

<https://squashwales.com/the-inaugural-welsh-wheelchair-open/>

On the day, Russell Edwards attended on behalf of Squash Wales. *"Russell Edwards was there all day"* said Rich, helping with the scoring and presentation of prizes. *"He's been brilliant."*

Eight players participated in the event, which was the initial target set for the event. A practice session was conducted in the morning followed by the tournament action after lunch.

"Everyone enjoyed (the tournament). It was just a really nice day...and a good bite to eat in the bar afterwards," said Rich



4.

https://link.mail.beehiiv.com/ss/c/u001.RL2Ey0SLIF1JL0sMX6TE0GrYX9B-ICCAdmktG3z2b_c147_PCNvUMxwu1Qrx1G-JwZxOhG-Jg4F-6Gba8og7eykmOKb8ho5CqWuqEQvGM-lzGa7F7nQLQvITdJAMqN4Qew2YusnmJ-s_aArF4Q4ukBw5i6Knx4cCS4Ymlcaw1Uc1Szo3T6ERTuFvtagfhxE2buC2KGk1t3CrqyTzVj-3mdM4G0qILWRQmSLhkXHHtnKyo3H1o1WtikZWkqjb0MCENE8mwNqn9lbpD3E3vAfeWc_8iFJ0e9DBH-OeBBxaVvbwLJovtxSpuLDybi18ECMA/4k8/dT5vxvSrQhC9-ySmdC8FVA/h9/h001.FkzQxzmvDZBj7OsdvdHUE0A6CEshqb4VXJq8bzjFrO4

Rich is happy with the inaugural wheelchair squash open tournament, and is hoping to expand next year, with the addition of some players from outside Wales. In fact, this year's event did not escape the notice of World Squash, which also gave coverage in its online platform. (Link below)

<https://www.worldsquash.sport/squash-history-made-at-inaugural-welsh-wheelchair-open/#>

The event also attracted the attention of the European Squash Federation (ESF), which also ran an article on its platform.

<https://europeansquash.com/welsh-wheelchair-open-squash-rhiwbina/>



5.

Rich succinctly clarified the rationale for the future of the tournament?

"I bought a trophy with 12 plaques on it, so it's got to go these 12 years - I want my money's worth out of it!"

Rich explained that Squash Wales supplied the trophies, and his employers provided sponsorship.

Richard is helping to build a reputation for Rhiwbina Squash and Racketball Club, as an organisation of inclusivity, as well as one of the foremost clubs in Wales, a regular host of national competitions, including the Welsh Masters Closed. The club has already held the coveted Blue Ribbon award, and both Richard and previous head coach at Rhiwbina, Bob Perry, were nominated for the Welsh Sports Personality of the Year in the disabled sport category in 2018.

This month (November 2025) sees Rich travelling to London to represent the Club as a nominee for the Sports Business Awards, put forward by Squash Wales.

As possibly the only squash club in Wales catering for wheelchair squash participants, and now offering the World an open tournament, I can only wish Rich the best with his continuing endeavours.

Well done, and thanks.

