

Report from the Chairman

Welcome to the Annual General Meeting of the Great Britain Wheelchair Basketball Association in Sheffield. This is the first time for a number of years that we have held the meeting away from Stoke Mandeville and I would like to thank Yorkshire South and the English Institute of Sport for their hospitality.

Many of the plans we have had for developing the association over the last three years have become reality this year with the appointment of a junior development officer, membership and finance officer, coaching staff, performance administrator and a new performance director. The team is really getting stuck in to the programmes and working hard for us all.

On the world stage I was privileged to see the Men and Women qualify for the Paralympic Games in Beijing. We should all be very proud of the teams, it is through our clubs that the players are first developed and when they compete for us in September, it is with the wealth of knowledge and experience they have gained in part by playing with you. We should by no means forget however the coaches. Murray and Garry have achieved great success with the teams and they are ably supported by Sinclair Thomas, Stephen Duff, Matthew Foden and Haj Bhanja as well as the team's support staff.

I would like to thank Sport England and especially Lisa Wainwright, Victoria Pace and Perry Crimmins who over the last year have worked with our Chief Executive to secure funding for a club and coach development manager. As soon as the new officer starts with us we will be able to coordinate a series of much needed coaching courses across the country.

The Leaders Award developed by Tina Gordon is an excellent piece of work that is being used by our clubs and with a number of developing clubs. This is an excellent resource we can now use in schools and with community groups in spreading wheelchair basketball throughout the country. My thanks go to Tina who is delivering a world class junior development programme made possible through the very generous support of the Lord's Taverners.

£100,000 per year from the Taverners guaranteed to 2012 is enabling us to get more young people playing wheelchair basketball. Special thanks to Keith Bradshaw and Jean Ratcliff who lead on this with the Lords Taverners.

The league has been a hot bed of competition and with the revamped Super League next season we hope that high quality wheelchair basketball will continue to be seen throughout the league. I would also like to congratulate Aces for flying the flag for Great Britain at the Andre Vergauwen Finals last month.

The Under 22 team are currently preparing for the European Championships in Turkey. The funding from UK Sport has made a real difference to the national team programmes, but this can be seen best in the performances of both the Women's and Under 22 teams. The programmes we have in place are world class and as such we have spent much of this year developing a new performance group to support and advise on the work of the teams. A special thanks to Alan Edge for his hard work and Michelle Hammond from UK Sport for their continued support and advice.

In the men's programme we saw Colin Price retire after the European Championships in Germany. Colin is an extraordinary athlete and I believe we should all pay tribute to all he has achieved over the last twenty plus years with GBWBA. He continues to play with Sheffield and I was pleased to see him awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by Wheelpower in November. Congratulations also to Clare Strange and Simon Munn who won best female and best male athlete of the year respectively at the same event.

Thanks to Kim Wall and Denise Hartley who continue to work tirelessly in the office and have been instrumental in underpinning our work. Denise has also been able to develop the database to enable an easier and more professional registration system.

Brian Scowcroft retired from IWB Europe this year and I would like to thank him for serving the association for such a long time on the European Federation. Congratulations goes to David Foden and Maurice Hammerton who were elected on to a 'newly structured' European Executive, I am sure that working together we can see

wheelchair basketball in Europe go from strength to strength. We were also invited by UK Sport and Unicef this year to assist Brazil in trying to get more children from deprived areas in to sport. We are the first disability sport to be asked to be involved in the programme that was devised as part of the UK's bid to win the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Our influence and reach across the world continues to grow and this will assist us as we move forward as a country.

Thanks to our officials and special thanks to Bob Bhanja and Jan Timms for all their hard work over the season. People do not know the full extent of their work in developing officials and they should be thanked.

I would like to thank my fellow Executive Members and the League Secretary for all of their support over the last year. I believe the members should also recognise the contributions made by Anna Jackson who unfortunately is stepping down this year from the executive and not seeking re-election. Your contribution has been valued and it has been a pleasure working with you. Thank you also to the Chief Executive who has had to storm to office moves this year and recruiting the new staff.

Last, and by no means last, I would like to thank all of the players, secretaries, volunteers and people behind the scenes. You make our sport what it is, thank you.

Joe Fletcher
Chairman