

MIXED ABILITY STORY: JIM SCOTT

TEAM COACH FOR THE BRADFORD & BINGLEY BUMBLE BEE BARBARIANS
(AKA THE BUMBLES)



Jim has had previous contact with learning difficulties in his family, and has, himself, experienced mental health issues, anger-related problems and sleepwalking. He has also suffered several injuries and undergone major surgeries, including a craniotomy. Jim recalled thinking that disability was essentially a personal health condition, and used to feel sorry for disabled people.

"I thought disabled people were stupid. Now I think I was stupid because of my lack of knowledge."

Jim Scott, 59, is a driving instructor who previously spent 18 years in the Airborne Forces. During his military career he regularly played rugby for his regiment in addition to running more than 20 miles a week, skiing and occasionally playing football. However, when he left the Forces in 1997 much of this physical activity came to an end. While Jim is a long-term rugby fan, he never previously played for a Club, and hadn't supported a specific team apart from England.

Jim got involved with the Bumbles through his job as a driving instructor for one of the team. Jim reports that his first reaction was a sense of inadequacy due to not having played rugby for many years and admits that at the first training session he intentionally went to the ground without kit for the fear of being directly involved. However, what Jim expected to be a very quick visit to the ground turned into six years training every Saturday morning, playing and touring with the Bumbles and gaining a UKCC Level 2 qualification in coaching rugby. Jim also introduced a fellow former soldier to the Bumbles who subsequently became a coach for the team and encouraged his two brothers and their dad to be involved.

"I was told 'they' would never remember things, 'they' will forget. But this is not true. With the right coaching, patience and repetition, there's nothing that cannot be achieved. All of us."

Jim recalls that he was afraid of not understanding disabled people in the first instance and therefore being rude and awkward with them. Above all, he was concerned that he didn't know how to protect them from a physically challenging and demanding game. With regular training in the Mixed Ability Model, Jim overcame his fear of hurting disabled players and started to quickly realise that disabled people can progress and achieve their targets. He was also aware that he was learning a lot in terms of acceptance, positive attitude and group dynamics.

"I am more confident and relaxed about being accepted and integrated by the group, they all make me feel part of the team, and they teach me the joy of the game."

Jim says he can now see potential in people he wasn't used to seeing before. He no longer feels sorry for people with disabilities but approaches and talks to them to let them know about the Bumbles and new opportunities available for them. Nevertheless he is still afraid of raising false expectations because of the lack of resources, provision or overall support many disabled people still face.

Jim says the benefits to him of being involved in Mixed Ability Rugby are huge. He feels he now has a more open mind, he tends not to label or be prejudiced about people anymore and he now thinks the limits should be challenged and pushed a step further.

"With the correct approach, this model could work to make the wider society a better place, where mutual respect and understanding are the solid foundations of people's interactions."

FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS OF THE MODEL,
MIXED ABILITY WILL BE ROLLED OUT INTO 7 NEW SPORTS
INCLUDING TENNIS, ROWING, CRICKET AND BOXING WITH THE BACKING OF SPORT ENGLAND

