

'To Walk Again' - Experience Report in Wheelchair Basketball

Vekeman Josse^{1,2}

¹ Ghent University, Belgium; ² Faculty of Sport Science and Physical Education, University of Coimbra, Portugal

'To Walk Again' (TWA) is a Belgian organization that provides sports for people with a physical disability. The organization is founded by former triathlete Marc Herremans after suffering a life-changing accident. Marc Herremans finished the Hawaiian triathlon in a wheelchair. He inspired many people and founded TWA.

I had the opportunity to be an assistant-trainer in the wheelchair basketball team of TWA. This project is only one of the many that TWA runs, including, amongst others, an adapted fitness and horse-back riding. TWA poses no limits or conditions to enter one of its projects, except having a physical disability. This accounts for the big variety in physical disabilities present in the basketball team, ranging from a lesion in T2, and an intellectual disability, to 'only' a L2 lesion. One athlete was recovering from a car crash. This big variety means that the objectives of participation were personalized, according to athletes capacities and wishes. This required a great flexibility from

the trainers, which was really hard at first, but ended up being an enrichment, that cannot be overestimated.

The differences in athletes and their goals were visible in every training. For the player with the T2 lesion the goal was to touch the ball as many times as possible and to stimulate social interactions and skills. He had his own small basketball goal and was protected when in possession of the ball, since he could barely lift his arms. The player with the L2 lesion aimed at becoming a professional wheelchair basketball player, which is why he got harder exercises and was pushed to his limits. The 25 year old had only one goal: revalidation. In the last month of my two year period at TWA he stood up and walked out the door.

Keywords: physical disability, basketball, wheelchair; personalized goals.