

Mark's up to the gold standard in Euro Games

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Mark Allen in Vilnius

Widnes table tennis player Mark Allen is a double European champion.

The 42-year-old member of Halton TTC won golds in the overall doubles and age group doubles at the European Heart and Lung Transplant Games in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Double lung transplant patient Mark has less than 30 per cent lung capacity of most people. But that did not stop him from winning the double gold alongside his French partner Paul Baudry.

And for good measure, he claimed silver in the singles, beaten by his good friend, Hungarian Gabor Rimoczy.

It added to Mark's collection of medals from previous stagings of the event – he won gold in the doubles and silver in the singles in 2010 in Sweden and joint gold in the singles plus silver in the singles in 2012 in The Netherlands.

The Halton Borough Council media officer said the Games were more about raising awareness than the competition.

He said: "If you get hundreds of athletes and supporters with their country's flag and signs up saying they are living with donated hearts/lungs in English and Lithuanian it really has an effect.

"It is great to win medals but there are people who train every day, just to be fit enough to attend. And there are people who will die this month on the transplant list.

"It is great to see friends from other countries I only see once every two years. There were so many helpful Lithuanian people too."

Mark also represented Great Britain at petanque and the shot put in Vilnius, narrowly missing out on bronze in the former.

The Halton Club is a Table Tennis Ability Club for players with disabilities. Mark is coached there by club chairman Karen Tonge MBE.

The Freeman Heart and Lung Transplant Association helped the GB team with travel costs but competitors met the rest of their costs themselves.

To find out more about registering as an organ donor, visit

https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/how_to_become_a_donor/registration/registration_form.asp?campaignCode=-1

By Karen Tonge

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