

Carl finds golden inspiration at table tennis event

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Carl Griffith

Londoner Carl Griffith has been crowned table tennis champion at the Inter Spinal Unit Games, an event for newly injured patients to discover and compete in wheelchair sport.

Carl has been rehabilitating at the Spinal Cord Injury Centre in Stanmore following a spinal attack, which he describes as similar to a heart attack in that area of the body.

With his Stanmore teammates, Carl travelled to Stoke Mandeville Stadium to compete alongside 80 patients representing 12 spinal injury centres from the UK and Ireland in what is established as the leading sporting event for newly injured patients.

Not interested in sport before his illness, Carl describes his journey which led him to win the gold medal.

"I was never into sport until I came to Stanmore and they really inspired sport for physio and for getting a sense of being a person again after your injuries," said the 45-year-old.

"I've never won a gold medal before. When I left Stanmore I wanted a way to repay them for all the work they did helping me and I think this is the best way to say thank you for their kindness, physio, nursing and guidance. They found the sport in me.

"Using sport as a form of rehab is a brilliant way to help people, deal with losing in sports and extrapolate that throughout life."

The annual Inter Spinal Unit Games, organised by the national wheelchair sport charity WheelPower, aims to provide participants with the confidence and understanding of living a healthy active lifestyle after the trauma of a spinal cord injury.

WheelPower's Physical Activity Mark O'Neil, based at Stanmore, has supported Carl throughout his rehabilitation.

Mark said: "He's a great person to have when you are a physical activities adviser because he's willing to do everything and it kind of encourages the other patients and we are hoping he will keep coming back.

"We've been playing a lot of table tennis recently at Stanmore, it's an easier game to play for a wider range of disabilities or injuries. It's fantastic, I am really pleased, his game has come on in the last few weeks."

Stanmore's Barbara Hunte also claimed a table tennis silver medal.

Carl plans to continue developing his table tennis game by playing at his local club.

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