



Double Euro gold for Mark and Maggie

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The recipient of a double lung transplant who only has 23 per cent lung capacity has beaten the odds to become double European champion in table tennis – again.

It brings his European Transplant Games gold tally to six, as well as a number of silver and bronze medals to add to his British titles.

Mark Allen took gold in both the singles and doubles in the European Heart and Lung Transplant Championships in Vantaa, Finland.

There were a number of other medals for English competitors, with Mark's doubles partner Maggie Gambrill also claiming singles gold.

Jill Edwards won gold in the 70+ singles and doubles, with her doubles partner Joan Whitney taking singles silver. Also on the top step of the podium were Wayne Lang (age 55-59) and Susan Wrightson (45-54).

Mark, who is coached at Halton TTC in Widnes by Karen Tonge MBE and is Communications Officer for Halton Borough Council, received a £100 sports development grant from the council towards the cost of attending the event. He is now gearing up to compete again in the British Transplant Games in Liverpool from Thursday 28 to Sunday 31 July.

Mark said: "The medals were a bonus, but it was great seeing people from different countries all with something in common. Some of whom I have known for years, and raise awareness Europe-wide about the benefits of transplantation."

Mark was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis when he was nine months old, causing mucus to develop in the lungs. Already challenged with limited lung capacity, Mark fell ill with pneumonia while working as an English teacher in Korea in 2005.

Hospitalised and in a serious condition, doctors caused damage to his trachea by leaving him ventilated too

long. This also had serious consequences for Mark's lungs, which deteriorated rapidly leaving him in a life or death situation needing a double lung transplant.

That same year Mark received his double lung transplant at The Freeman Hospital, In Newcastle but suffered rejection in 2006 leaving Mark to now live with just between 20 and 25-per cent overall lung capacity.

Mark added: "I don't let this hold me back. Sport has always been an important part of my lifestyle and I keep as active as my lungs will allow.

"Winning medals at the European Games just goes to show people that you don't have to let your health problems get in the way of living life to the full. I'm a walking demonstration of just how important and amazing organ donation is."

The Westfield Health British Transplant Games in Liverpool will see Mark join over 900 participants who have each received lifesaving and life-changing organ and tissue transplants. The uplifting celebration of life will see transplant recipients, live donors including altruistic donors and their supporters take part in more than 30 sports together.

Mark said: "I love the transplant competitions as it brings people together. The main aim of the British Games is to raise awareness of how being on the donor register can make the world of difference."

For more information on the Games, please visit www.BritishTransplantGames.co.uk

To join the NHS Organ Donor Register and help save lives TEXT: SAVE to 62323, call 0300 123 2323 or visit www.organdonation.nhs.uk

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