



Get Set Hangout 10: talking about equality with Sophie Thornhill, Helen Scott and Elaine Wyllie

CHRIS: Hello and welcome to the final in our series of Get Set hangouts. Today we're going to be taking a closer look at one of the four Paralympic Values: equality. Our Google hangouts give the Get Set community the chance to meet lots of brilliant athletes and supporting teams from team GB and Paralympics GB and other special guests. Now whether they're discussing training, competitions or work behind the scenes, Get Set hangouts are the best place to find out more about the world of sports.

So for today's hangout, we have some really great questions sent in from Get Set schools for our special guests. So, without further ado, let's meet today's guests!

Our first guests are Para-cycling champions Sophie Thornhill and Helen Scott.

Sophie first joined Great Britain's cycling team after being inspired by the events of London 2012. Soon making a name for herself by winning two world titles and breaking two world records, Sophie's success just keeps on growing in her partnership with Helen!

Helen has been an avid cyclist since childhood and was part of the Great Britain Cycling Team's under 23 sprint academy before moving across to para-cycling as a pilot at the end of 2010. After winning two silvers at London 2012 with her then tandem partner Aileen McGlynn, Helen and Sophie came together for the first time for the 2014 Commonwealth Games (where they won two gold medals)!

Together at Rio 2016 Sophie and Helen continued to build on their success with a gold in the tandem B one-kilometre time trial and a bronze in B 3000m individual pursuit.

Wow – what a team! Hi Sophie and Helen, great to have you with us!

HELEN: Hi guys, thank you for having us, we're very happy to be here.

CHRIS: Fantastic, great to meet you. Now, our next guest is the founder of the Daily Mile Elaine Wyllie. Whilst working as a primary head teacher in Stirling, Elaine started a fitness revolution in schools with her simple and winning Daily Mile scheme. The idea, that pupils take just 15 minutes each day to spend time walking, jogging, or running, has spread from Stirling to transform schools around the country and has seen Elaine named Teacher of the Year at the Pride of Britain Awards!

Hi Elaine, thank you for joining us!

ELAINE: Hello and thank you, it's nice to be here.



CHRIS: Fantastic, great to have you with us. So let's get started. Now we asked schools in our Get Set community to send in questions based around the Paralympic Value of equality. So let's start with a question from Nathan from Trumacar Primary School. The question is for Helen and Sophie, and it goes like this: do you all the countries at the Paralympics promote the value of equality to their athletes?

HELEN: Hi Nathan, that's a fantastic question, and it's very difficult for us to answer actually because when we are preparing for the Paralympic games we're in a big bubble of our own and we don't often get to see what other countries are doing to promote equality at the Paralympic sports. But we learnt a lot this summer from the heading on to Rio, where the media coverage beforehand was slightly negative about Paralympics and whether or not they'd be as much coverage and report as the Olympic Games. But we actually found when we got there that they were really promoting the Paralympics, and actually Sophie just informed me that the Paralympics sold more tickets than the Olympic Games in Rio, which is fantastic. And the people who we competed against from other countries in the para-cycling world, the athletes were fantastic which shows to us that over in their countries (Australia, the Netherlands, Spain) they're really promoting the Paralympics and getting disabled people involved in sports. And with the Paralympics being such a big thing now, since London especially, everybody seems to want to get involved no matter what disability. No matter how small or big, everybody is able to get involved.

SOPHIE: For me, I see what Britain has done and the promotion it's given to Paralympic sports. For me I got into cycling after the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing, seeing all the great performances. But for me what allowed me to get into sport was specific training sessions that we put on by well-trained coaches and well trained club staff with great facilities. And that's how people managed to get into para-sport, which hasn't always been the case in the past. So to see that progress (and that's growing even more in London especially and I'm sure even post-Rio as well) is brilliant to see. It's great to see so many more people with disabilities get into sports.

CHRIS: Fantastic, great answers. Thank you very much. Nathan has a question to ask Helen: how can we promote the value of equality in schools?

HELEN: Nathan thanks very much for this important question, it's a really good one. I think all schools are good at having values, I think values are central to every school. And for me, the number one top value always is equality, and you have to live and be it. So it has to be part of the school community, everyone has to know about it, you have to have it in your policies for schools but also in your practice. So you talk about it at assembly, you make sure that everyone is promoted equally. And a really good example of equality is the Daily Mile, because the Daily Mile is about every child every day. And one of the things we've noticed about it across the country is that children with



special educational needs embrace the Daily Mile and do it their way, and that's in their school setting in mainstream or in a special school setting. We've seen many examples of children in their walker, in their wheelchair, with their caterer, with their friends – children with a range of needs, some of them great profound needs – succeeding at the Daily Mile. And so one of the key things about the Daily Mile is that within it all children are equal, it's every child every day.

CHRIS: Fantastic, thank you Elaine. We'll go to the next question, and it comes from Harris Academy in Merton and it's for Helen and Sophie and it goes like this: how do you work together while cycling, and try to explain what a pilot does?

HELEN: I guess it's best I answer this question because I'm the pilot on the tandem. Thank you Harris Academy, we get this question quite a lot. For Sophie and I it's very important that we work as a team, ultimately we're one bicycle but there's two people on it and the bike will only go fast if we are both working together in synchronicity. My role on the front of the tandem is to; the pilot effectively steers the bike to make sure that I'm not taking Sophie everywhere on the track and hitting the boards. My job is to follow the black line and just get us into the racing. I don't know whether any of you has watched the tandem events, they often come out of them a standard start gate. So my role is particularly important that we get out straight and smoothly, but for me my role is made much easier because Sophie and I work together so well. So I rely on Sophie to lean into the bankings of the Velodrome and that makes my job of steering much easier.

So ultimately it's a team effort, though I'm on the front and I'm steering, Sophie can affect that massively as well. So that means we need to work together especially well, certainly in a race situation when the pressure is on and we're all a little bit jittery. So the closer we are; and we work together every single day on that to make sure that that's on by race day.

CHRIS: Fantastic, thanks Helen. We move on to the next question; this question is for all our guests, and it's from Kitty and Leslie from Newport Junior School. Their question is this; how does it feel to perform in front of a lot of people? Do you get scared, and what would you say to someone like our brother who gets scared by big crowds? So we'll go to you Elaine first of all.

ELAINE: Hello Kitty and Leslie, and thanks for that question. I'm not a performer like an athlete, and I think you know that these athletes do really well to go out there and perform in front of huge crowds, and that must be an amazingly exciting thing to do. I tend to speak in public, and that's kind of what I'm doing just now. So do I get nervous? Well, I always want to do my best, so a little bit of nervous is going on; but I've gotten better at it over time. So I've gained confidence.



What I would say is that practice gets perfect, and you're never quite perfect. So the more you do it, the better you get it. For your brother, I would say this: get used to doing something in front of people in small doses. So start with you two, he can do whatever he's doing in front of you two; then the rest of the family, perhaps in a small group at school, in front of the class, then at the assembly and beyond. And if it's too much just go back a little bit and put an example performance in front of you too. He mustn't get stressed out, and that's really important. His happiness and wellness are really important. But I would say practice makes perfect, that would be my main message.

CHRIS: Great advice, thanks Elaine. We can come to you Sophie and Helen for than question.

SOPHIE: Performing in front of crowds is always going to be a nerve-wrecking experience, it still is for us and we've done it lots of times. You can never get used to that, but you learn how to deal with it. So as we focus on the job that we've gotten at that point in time, at the end of the day all you can do is your best. And if you focus on doing that, then you will do your best no matter your ability. You just have to focus on that and make sure that crowd and the nerves don't get to you. Like Elaine says, using different layers and trying different steps and build yourself into it. Don't rush yourself, it takes time to learn how to focus and learn what good techniques are for you to be able to deal with that.

CHRIS: Fantastic, great answer, thank you. We're going to question number five, and it's from Harris Academy in Merton and it's for all our guests. We'll stay with Sophie and Helen then we'll go to Elaine on this. The question is this: what inspired you to set out and achieve your goals?

HELEN: Thank you Harris Academy, another great question. It's one that we always forget when we have the Paralympics in sight, because that is a major goal of ours. But ultimately, it all started off by being inspired by an athlete; so for me it was Louise Victoria Pendleton, the greatest British cyclist of Manchester that we're in at the time. I was a keen cyclist when I was younger, I absolutely lived out of my bike and watching the Olympics – that was the main, I would love to do that one day. And I've been very lucky that I've worked hard and I've been able to make to the program and progress and achieve my ultimate dream of competing at the highest level. But it all stemmed from enjoying it to begin with, and I think that's so important; not to be pressured to do anything that you don't enjoy, you can only achieve your very best if you enjoy what you're doing and for me that has been the main thing throughout all of this. I feel so lucky to be able to do what I love as a job, and I hope what you guys decide you'd like to do, I hope you enjoy it all the way through as well.

CHRIS: Fantastic advice, thank you. What about you Elaine, what inspired you?



ELAINE: Always every time it's the children and seeing their faces; seeing them come from the Daily Mile with their eyes sparkling, their face shining, their hair stuck to their head with sweat, the cheesiness and the excitement. And that over time, changing these children and making them fit and healthy – and that the ones who were the least fit are the most transformed. So the Daily Mile works for all children. Seeing children for example, we have an expert coming from Education Scotland; and expert in PE came to see the Daily Mile and he said to me that a little boy called Jimmy had a perfect running style, and none of us knew that, and Jimmy was so pleased.

Successes like that (I must say to Harris Academy, I know you're a great school), and children individually achieving their goals first of all at St Ninians and then the other schools; schools in Scotland, London schools, schools across the country are hearing these stories of children with special needs and able-bodied children doing so well in Daily Mile. So when I need to think why am I doing this, I don't need to think very long because it's about these children and their success.

CHRIS: Lovely, thank you Elaine. We move on to another question, it's from Louis at Trumacar Primary School. This one is for Sophie and Helen, and the question is this: since becoming success Paralympians do you feel you're being treated differently?

SOPHIE: Well that's a great question. I don't think people treat us differently, but our lives changed a little bit. We did a lot more exciting things, we've gone to media stuff and speaking, I've spoken to a lot of schools and a lot of children. To see them inspired is great because that might be a catalyst for someone to go into sports in the future; you just don't know. I don't think people treat us differently, but you speak to more people and you get to know a lot more people because new doors are opened for you. You just have to put yourself out there and enjoy the experience because that's what it's all about.

HELEN: These shiny things come to as well! This is a little bit of a frenzy, so here are our medals as well. These are the main things we look to going and show the kids at school. I've got some family members and friends who would tell us to go to their schools and speak to their kids. And the way their eyes light up when they see these medals, that's what it's all about – to inspire the next generation to get involved.

CHRIS: Thanks for bringing those medals along, it's fantastic to see the medals, what an achievement! Make sure we get to see them again before the end. We'll move on to the next question which is for all our guests, and we'll come to Elaine first. Again it's from Harris Academy in Merton, and the question is this: when you experience a setback, who or what helps you get through it?

ELAINE: Yes there are setbacks. There's nothing you do where you don't get setbacks. So they're part of succeeding, and the determination to succeed is recovering from



setbacks. You need a plan to do it, and my plan is always to think of people who've had real difficulties and have overcome them. I look at Sophie and Helen there and their inspiration and those lovely medals. People like that, people who have overcome difficulties, are always a lesson for me. I think you can always find a way, you need to be determined. I think 'stickability' is really important. So prepare for setbacks, know that you're going to succeed, and practice setbacks in so that you're ready for them and you can say I'm going to try harder.

We have something in Scotland (and I'm sure you have in England) called growth mind-set. Maybe you've heard of that, but it's when you prepare to do your best and think, "Okay, I can't do it yet, but I'm going to do it." And so that sort of growth mind-set or mastery mind-set where you've not achieved your goal quite yet but you're going to do it, I think everyone needs that. So being prepared for setbacks, knowing they'll come along and then doing something to overcome them; and then looking at inspirational people like the people on the hangout this morning – all that should help.

CHRIS: Thank you Elaine. How about you Helen, who or what do you turn to when you experience setbacks?

HELEN: We're in a very privileged position that we're part of a massive setup at British cycling here. Just an example, even this year myself and Sophie although we are now sat here with these amazing medals, at one point we didn't think that it was going to be possible. We went to our World Championships in March full of confidence thinking that we were far ahead of the next position on the tandem, and they beat us by a lot. They raced amazingly and beat us by over a second in our event, so we came away from that with five months to go before the Paralympics thinking, "Wow, how are we going to do?" we put all our hopes and dreams in Rio and we saw it all falling away from us.

So at that point we looked at the people around us. Ultimately, it was myself and Sophie who were the most important factor in this. We were a team, we talked about how we were going to do this. And then we set about seeking our coach, our physio, our psychologists – all of the people who were there to make sure that we perform well. And we set a plan and every single day we had just that one goal in mind; how are we going to get this back? And we worked so hard and by some miracle it worked out for us. But it was all the people around us and our family and our friends.

So for you guys back at the other end of the camera, it could be different. You might not have psychologists, you might not have coaches, but you have your teachers, your school friends, your parents, your siblings – of course we had all of that as well. And ultimately, it's everybody who you can gather who you trust and who cares about you who are going to help you move forward and work hard towards your goal. Even if you think it's not achievable, it can be and it will be.



CHRIS: Great answer, and what an achievement as well! And it sounds like you're saying sometimes a setback can be a blessing in disguise because it makes you work even harder.

HELEN: Exactly.

CHRIS: Fantastic. So I'm going to go to another question for Helen, and this is from Beth at Trumacar Primary School. The question is this; what made you decide to join para-cycling team as a pilot?

HELEN: Thank you Beth. This is a question I don't get asked very often actually, and it almost stems from the last question that we talked about, about coming back from a setback. As I mentioned before, I grew up watching the Olympic Games, I didn't really know much about Paralympic Games at that point. My dream was to become an Olympic champion. However, I spent a year on the 23 Sprint Academy on the able-bodied sport, racing on a normal bike that you see or you even have at home yourself. And after one year, I just had a really sort of improved, things weren't really clicking for me and the coach just decided that it was the end of the road for me on this journey to become an Olympic champion. Of course as you can imagine, I was absolutely devastated, I felt this was all I wanted to do, I don't want to do anything now.

But one of the coaches on the para-cycling team had actually seen me training, had admired my work ethic; and seeing me working and speaking to other guys – we often interacted with the para-cycling squad as well. And so he said to me, "Would you like to be the tandem bearer and would you like to pilot?" At first I was a typical stubborn teenager and I said absolutely no chance, I want to keep going, I want to go to the Olympic Games. But after some thought, my parents and my brothers and sister they all said, "Just give it a go, what have you got to lose?" And from the moment I joined the tandem, I knew that that was where I needed to be, and it just progressed from there for all six years now. So I've been here a long time now and I've loved every year more than the last; and that's been helped by meeting Sophie and being able to work with her to create a strong tandem bond on our hand of the by.

So again, sometimes it's not the path you choose that works out at the end, it's not all the right one for you, but you need to take every opportunity and each will open and embrace it and give it your all and you never know what will happen.

CHRIS: Terrific, thank you Helen. So we get to stay with you because this question is both for Helen and for Sophie. It's from Katy and Leslie in Newport Junior School. Their question is this: if I cycle in a pair, I would cycle with my best friend. Is your tandem partner your best friend?

SOPHIE: That's a great question Katy and Leslie. Are we good friends, of course we are. We are best friends, we're like sisters. We spend so much time together. It's life,



you're not always going to get along with people but luckily we do, we are really good friends on and off the bike. And that is what makes what we do even more enjoyable than it already is, you know you are best friends and you don't want to do it with anybody else. It makes it fun, it makes it exciting, you have to train every day, you make each other laugh. So to be friends with everyone else in the sport makes it a more fun environment and it's exciting to train and you're excited to go to the next session; even the hard ones that you don't like and they always going to hurt. But it's just that fun side of it that's provided when you are friends.

CHRIS: Terrific, thank you. The next question is question number ten from Harris Academy in Merton and it's for all three of our guests. We will go to Elaine first with this. It is in two parts, for Elaine: where do you put your Pride of Britain medal?

ELAINE: Well, like Sophie and Helen (I like seeing your medals Sophie and Helen) I've got it right here. I want you to think it belongs to the whole school community, the students who worked so far in the four years of the Daily Mile. And the culmination of that was me representing them at the Pride of Britain awards, and unknown to me 10 children from the school run with Gordon Ramsey from Buckingham Palace all the way to the award ceremony to present me with this. So it was unbelievable, and they had 'Team Elaine' written on their t-shirts, it was just wonderful. Normally I like to keep it in view, not in your face but I like it where I can see it.

CHRIS: Fantastic. And Sophie and Helen, where do you keep your Paralympic medals apart from bringing them with you today? We definitely have to see them again.

HELEN: Well that is not a question that we're allowed to answer, it's a secret where we keep our medals. But they're kept very safe. We get in the mail quite a lot in the moment so we have to try to hide them as best as we can, they'll probably go in somewhere a little safer once we've finished using them.

SOPHIE: For me it's a secret where the medals are, but when we run a podium we also have the mascots made in the downstairs toilet because mom I've got to keep my feet on the ground so my head doesn't get too big. So they're in the downstairs toilet.

CHRIS: Great. One final question for you is from Abby from Trumacar Primary School, again it's for all our guests. We'll start off with you Elaine. And the question is this: what was your dream job when you were younger?

ELAINE: Thanks for that question, it's a lovely question. We all had a dream job when we were younger. I never became that person, I wanted to be an astronomer. I'm now an amateur astronomer (I think the emphasis being on 'amateur') but I do love it. I look at the stars a lot and I've got some nice binoculars which I use. What I didn't realise as a child is that astronomy is really a lot about Maths and Physics, and my strengths were really elsewhere. But it became a magical pursuit all my life, and looking at the stars,



the amazing stars, I wanted to be an astronomer and I'm a kind of an astronomer though I don't get paid for doing it.

CHRIS: Thanks Elaine. How about you Sophie and Helen, what was your dream job?

SOPHIE: For me I love history and so I wanted to do that. I watched a lot when I was little, so I always wanted to be that to know what's happening in the past or recent or really ancient. It was what I found interesting and that's what I've always wanted to be.

CHRIS: Fantastic, thank you.

HELEN: Hello Abby, I think I've already explained it a little bit that my dream job was to ride my bicycle and I'm very lucky that that's what I'm doing. However I also wanted to be a teacher when I was younger, and since I joined the program I've been doing a little bit of side coaching, so a very similar sort of thing, I get to teach what I love. I really like to pass on the knowledge of the game and see others enjoying their bike and getting into sports. So I'm very lucky I'm able to do a little bit of both at the moment. And then when I become too old to ride my bike hopefully I'll be able to teach some of the youngsters to ride faster than we ever could.

CHRIS: Fantastic, brilliant. Well I'm afraid that's just about all we've got time for today, so I just want to say a really, really big thank you to all of our schools for submitting those really fantastic questions. And also of course to our participants Sophie Thornhill, Helen Scott and Elaine Wyllie. If you're watching this hangout on a website at www.getset.co.uk, you can find out how you can relive the Olympic and Paralympic Values by taking part in our Values Awards. These awards reward and recognise young people for understanding and enacting the Values, and you can start today by testing your knowledge with our interactive Values quiz. You can also still take part in our road to Rio challenge and get active by virtually travelling the distance from London to Rio.

That's really just about all that we've got time for today, so I'll just like to say once again a massive thank you to Elaine (Let's see that Pride of Britain award again please!), and also to Sophie and to Helen. Thank you very much! Thank you and goodbye everybody!

ELAINE: Thank you, bye bye!

SOPHIE: Thank you, bye!

HELEN: Thank you!