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MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER MAY 2013 www.primaryclub.org

THE PRIMARY CLUB

The cricketers' charity for the blind and partially sighted

Funding VI Cricket

See pages 4 and 5

INSIDE: The curse of Rule 5(c) – page 2; CMJ by Peter Baxter – page 3; Hon Sec – page 7: Changing society – page 8

Editor's letter

"Hi Alex, the grant money has been imperative to the club's survival – a lot of our VI players struggle with funds and could not travel to the football tournaments without it. So it's helped a lot with travel cost, a new kit and a bit of training for the lads. As ever we are continually grateful. Thank you to all at the primary club for the support".

These comments from the chairman of South West Rovers VIFC Mark VandenBerg are typical of so many that I receive throughout the year. If you are ever in any doubt that your generous donations are simply disappearing into a black hole, then I hope the examples that you'll read about in this newsletter will dispel those thoughts. Dozens of groups across the country rely on the grants which your money funds, not merely to increase the range of what they can offer, but simply to keep going.

One of the most touching parcels I received came from Gerry Verbrugge at Kirkless Council – it included dozens of cards made by children who had benefited from sound systems, 'magic carpets', wind chimes, duplex towers, wigwams and sandpits, all bought with your money. Not only were the cards lovely, the thanks that the children made to you all were so heartfelt it brought a tear even to my hardened journalist's eye.

So please do dig deep again this year and help to make 2013 a special year for all the people that The Primary Club helps.

● *Alex Johnson*

Blind Cricket Fixtures 2013

The fixture list for this summer has been announced

The Primary Club provides financial support through your donations to many visually impaired cricket clubs, who compete in a range of competitions including the British Blind Sport Primary Club National Knockout Cup, and the Blind Cricket England & Wales National League.

"We thank the members of the Primary Club for their ongoing support," said Dave Gavrilovic, BCEW General Secretary & England international. "2013 looks like being another fantastic season."

The full fixture list is available at *www.bcew.co.uk/fixtures/*

Further details on match locations for those wishing to attend can be found by contacting Dave Gavrilovic at *davidgavrilovic@yahoo.co.uk* or by phone on *07866 751646*.

The curse of Rule 5(c)

The curse of rule 5(c) has struck again. The rule, under which members are asked to ***add £2*** to their annual donation for **each** primary achieved by an England batsman in a home test match, claimed the following victims in 2012 as certified by Malcolm Ashton from the TMS commentary box.

● **v South Africa (3rd Test, Lords)**

S. Finn c Kallis b Philander

Members are, therefore, asked to ***add £2*** to their annual donation. If every member observes rule 5(c) our income will grow significantly.

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR MONEY?

Useful Vision

Based in the North East of England, this charity was set up to address a need for fun and exciting activities that would stimulate a child with little or no vision but that would be enjoyable for the whole family. This year the charity has organised snowtubing, bowling, beachcombing, cookery classes, art workshops, swimming and farm visits.

Thanks to the generous donation from members of The Primary Club in 2012, Useful Vision was able to take a group of families who all have children with a vision impairment on a weekend break to the Windermere Manor Hotel in the Lake District. The hotel has been especially adapted to the needs of those with a visual impairment.

More than 60 children and 74 adults enjoyed a fantastic weekend. They had the choice of kayaking or the Beatrix Potter Experience on the Saturday, with a BBQ and disco in the evening, then a trip to Kendal on the Sunday. The sun shone, the hot dogs stayed dry, and the families really enjoyed meeting each other and having the opportunity to relax with people who understand the needs and difficulties of going to a hotel with a visually impaired child.

One of the visually impaired children emailed his thoughts: "Useful vision is a really good charituy. The days out I have been on are fun. Befor I went to useful vision activitys I didn't intercact as much as I do know. it has given me the confidence to socialise and talk about my eye condition."

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Christopher Martin-Jenkins remembered

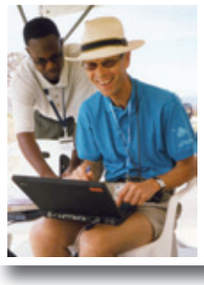
The leading cricketing journalist and commentator – who always mentioned The Primary Club during Test Matches – is remembered by TMS producer Peter Baxter

CMJ was a very good friend of The Primary Club for many years. He spoke at the Club dinner at Lord's in 2008 and, probably of all the TMS commentators, he was the most reliable in mentioning the Club – usually at around midday on Saturday. Here Peter Baxter remembers his life and work.

Christopher joined the staff of the BBC in 1970. His boss Angus McKay told him: "We shall call you Chris Jenkins" but Christopher stuck to his guns so for the rest of us 'CMJ' became common currency. In 1972 he was invited to commentate on the first ever series of one-day internationals. The following year he commentated on his first Test Match and remained part of the Test Match Special commentary team continuously from then until his illness forced him out of it in 2012.

Appointed Cricket Correspondent in succession to Brian Johnston in 1973 for the England tour to the West Indies the next year, he left that job in 1980 to become editor of The Cricketer magazine, but was reappointed in 1985.

That arrangement ended in 1991, when he was appointed cricket correspondent of the Daily Telegraph. In 1999 he moved to same job at the Times. That should have completed a remarkable and unique quartet of jobs, but in 2010 he capped even that CV by becoming President of MCC. In his early days in broadcasting, it was the conciseness of his reporting that attracted attention. That attention to detail remained throughout his career, but his later colleagues will be more likely to recall – fondly – the 'CMJ moments' and the period when his relationship with the clock had become more estranged. In a way, I think he secretly enjoyed a reputation of a certain professorial absent-mindedness, as when he rang me as a one-day international was starting at the Oval to tell me that he had gone by mistake to Lord's.



In the West Indies famously he tried for some time to get through to the Times sports desk, before realising that what he thought was his mobile phone was the television channel changer from the hotel. But he did the decent thing by letting us know of crises like cutting through the headphone cable from his Walkman and wondering why it had suddenly all gone so quiet.

In India in 1976 I had set up a pre-Christmas phone-in to CMJ and Tony Greig. It was an ambitious idea and the arrangements were made with All India Radio. CMJ just had to get Greig to the radio station in Gauhati where England were playing . They ordered a taxi and Christopher told the driver, "All India Radio, please."

He knew that the station was on the edge of town, but when rice paddies were going by, he thought it seemed further than he had reckoned. "How much further?" he asked.

"To Oil India?" the driver asked, as they pulled up at the refinery.

Area Representatives

In the last few Newsletters, we have appealed for members to become Area Representatives for The Primary Club

An Area Rep is given details of all recipients of Grants within their area and is encouraged to visit those organisations where they always receive a very warm welcome. To visit such an organisation makes you aware of how the Club's grants are being used and is a stimulus to recruit new members.

As a trustee, I have visited a number of grant recipients where we do not have active an Area Rep and what a rewarding experience it has been.

As you can no doubt see from the above, I have been profoundly influenced by visiting some of the many societies/clubs/schools that The Primary Club has been able to help in 2012 and I am now fired up to enrol new members in the 2013 season. How will I achieve that aim in my role as the Area Representative for East Anglia? Let me tell you:

The Primary Club has A4 and A5 posters and I request each cricket League to distribute these to member clubs at their pre-season meetings – I have yet to receive a response from a League other than enthusiasm for supporting the Primary Club.

I visit the grant recipients within my area and produce with them a joint Press Release with photographs which is sent to all local media outlets. A copy is also sent to our Club Secretary, Chris Larlham, for use on the web site and/or the annual newsletter. If you are worried about any lack of editorial skills, don't worry as within the Primary Club we have some very helpful media people who can hone your output.

So if you fancy becoming more involved with The Primary Club, meeting some of the grant recipients and enjoying seeing how your money is being utilised, please do contact me by email (*bob.southward@primaryclub.org*) and I'll be delighted to meet you to explain more about what is involved

Believe me, you will not regret getting involved and spending as much time as you can afford helping The Primary Club to raise more funds.

Bob Southward

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How your money funds

Lancashire Lions

"Thanks to the funding we received from The Primary Club," writes Sheraz Chohan, secretary,Lancashire Lions VICC, "we were able to start the project of setting up a first VI cricket club in the county of Lancashire for the purpose of providing an opportunity for blind and partially sighted individuals of all ages, genders and race.

"The money was used to purchase equipment, to hire venues for training, recruitment and for a place to play when we entered the development league. We also took up the services of highly qualified coaches to help develop skills, confidence and to learn the etiquette of fair play and respecting officials and fellow competitors.

"The single biggest cost to us was the transport to other counties to play matches against teams which were established and had been running many years before Lancashire Lions VICC came about and taking part in the national development weekend in Leicester at the end of the season.

"Thanks to your support we had a very successful year in our first season, entering and winning the northern development league. And as well as entering the same league in 2013, we have also put a team in the BCEW national competitions and BBS cup.

"Our success in such a short period of time got Lancashire Lions national and local recognition in the press as well as radio and a video recording for the mayor's charity in Manchester.

"We are finding new players all the time and have already got a squad of 34 established players with a good blend of youth and experienced players, both male and female. We are expected to double these numbers by the end of the season with our latest recruitment plans and through our work with other organisations such as Action for the Blind, VI Dood's and regional blind societies. In the upcoming season we will have a second team competing in the development league along the first team who will be in the main league and cup competitions. Our aim is to create a path way from recruiting new players taking them through the development, first team and further on into the international team.

"We believe that the setting up of Lancashire Lions VICC has given young and older blind people an opportunity to make a difference in their lives who may otherwise have been lost in their own worlds at home or in schools. It gives all the volunteers in the club great pleasure to see so many happy people whether they win lose or draw.

"We are grateful for The Primary Club's support – without this the project may not have reached such a success level and with so many different organisations competing for few grants it has certainly been a lifeline for the club."

Sussex Sharks

"The Sussex Sharks Visually Impaired Cricket team has had a most successful year," says Toby Collins, "much of it down to the fantastic support provided by The Primary Club. "The team managed to win the National League for the second year running and also the Bill Frindall Memorial T20 Cup.

"With the support of a grant provided by The Primary Club the Sussex Sharks have been able to run a regular junior section which plays many tournaments throughout the year, but also provide a regular junior coaching session at the Sussex development ground. All of this focus on the junior squad and bringing in young people to play cricket has laid the foundations for a very successful squad.

"The senior team has also benefited from The Primary Club's grant, enabling it to travel the length and breadth of the country to fulfil fixtures. With your continued support, we are able to continue with success on the field but also with the continued benefits off the field, giving youngsters who might have felt unable to access sport the opportunity to take part and develop that feeling of being part of a team."

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VI cricket

Durham

"The largest expenditure that was funded by the Primary Club grant was the away trip to play Somerset in the BBS Cup and we used some of the grant on the hire of the indoor centre at Chester-le-Street for winter training," says Gareth Townley. "Part of the grant was spent on hiring a minibus for the away match against Nottinghamshire in the Development League and we spent the remainder on payments to Ron Young, our head coach. Ron continues to provide invaluable experience and support to the club."

Hampshire

Hampshire Visually Impaired Cricket Club (HVICC) was formed in 2008 to provide training and competitive matches for anyone interested in playing cricket in the Hampshire area, regardless of age, gender or ability. It also provides local coaches with experience of the game of blind cricket, sponsors members to obtain coaching qualifications and operates an open training session policy.

"We entered the Blind Cricket England and Wales (BCEW) League for the 2009 season," explains Jacki Killeen, HVICC Treasurer. "We applied to The Primary Club to help us with the cost of entering the league and cup competitions and were immensely grateful when they agreed to provide us with funding for our season expenses, which they have continued to do year on year. The grant is used to pay for hiring match facilities and providing the cricket teas. As the league is not local, it also provides for a minibus for players to ease their travel to all parts of the country and hotel accommodation when needed.

"The 2012 season was our best to date – we finished as runners up in the league and finished third in the British Blind Sport T20 Cup which has given all the members a real boost to their confidence."

Yorkshire

"The club started the year by training regularly at the Headingley indoor school and built up towards fielding two teams for the first time," says John Garbett, development officer at Yorkshire VICC. "The main value of having this second team was that it allowed more of the squad to play regular cricket and was also perfect for bringing in new players to the club.

"The YVICC now have eight qualified ECB level 2 coaches and this is allowing them to spread out more across the county, with particular concentration on schools and juniorVI cricket. The club continues to grow and there are plans for a Yorkshire league in the near future."

Sports upgrade

Henshaws Society for Blind People is a specialist charity providing expert support, advice and training to anyone directly affected by sight loss. It also works with people with other disabilities – and because sight loss and disability affects family, friends and colleagues, they work with them too

"The funding we received from The Primary Club covered the cost of a Rehab Treadmill that we bought as part of the upgrade of our Sports and Fitness equipment at Henshaws College in Harrogate," explains Tracey Poulter, Trusts & Grants Fundraiser.

"Our new treadmills have proved a great success and continue to promote increased participation for a wider range of physical abilities.

"With the longer base and extended side bars, learners with visual impairments and other disabilities feel safer when using the treadmills and this has made a big impact on the personalised fitness programmes we deliver to them."

Tracy says that the upgrade of the fitness equipment has increased attendance and enabled access to less able learners following therapy programmes.

"One of our male learners who has no sight and was previously very nervous when using the treadmill can now follow a half hour fitness programme on the treadmill and has increased from walking a distance of 2,400 metres to running a distance of more than 5,000 metres."

In addition to students at college, the treadmills are used by residents of the charity's Community Houses for fitness training.

Six residents entered the Skipton Triathlon this year and made full use of the treadmills to increase their fitness and endurance levels.

"We would not have been able to purchase the treadmills were it not for the generosity of our supporters," added Tracy.

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WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR MONEY?

Skiing

"Our ski trip to Pila in Italy consisted of 23 blind or partially sighted children and young people," writes Moira MacQuarrie from RLSB Dorton House School, "all of whom were either present or past students of RLSB Dorton House, plus their family members.

"As this has been an annual event, there has been considerable progression and success amongst our skiers. But this year, I feel it necessary to highlight one student in particular, Declan Dexter.

"Declan started as a beginner skier several years ago and he has now reached a Level 5 standard of skiing. Declan's dream is to become a ski instructor, and not only has he completed a week's work experience in resort with Interski, with the desire and possible opportunity for future employment with the company, but the standard which he has reached with his skiing is good enough to embark on an instructor's course.

"Residential sporting activities help families and young people to forge the friendships and network of support which is so vital to the well-being of all people who either have, or are connected with disabilities such as sight loss.

"I know people's lives have been changed through finding that inner belief and drive to change their skiing dreams into reality - the thrill of accomplishment as they stylishly swish down the slopes, yes, they are living life without limits.

"On behalf of these children and their families, thank you to everyone at The Primary Club for supporting them."

Projects roundup

"The grant from The Primary Club has enabled our allotment project to well and truly grow," says David Shaftoe, Open Country Project Officer. "With the generous grant that we received, we have now been able to complete the allotment's development stage.

"Over the last six months, we have built a greenhouse, stocked a wildlife pond, planted a willow hedge, laid a patio, established a forest garden – the list is endless! All the practical work has been carried out by our teams of adults with a variety of disabilities.

"However it was always our intention that the allotment would be for work as well as play. Many of our countryside activity groups now use it as a focus for sessions as diverse as pond-dipping. pumpkin carving, sculpture workshops, curry making and live mammal trapping.

" It is made very clear to us that our members thoroughly enjoy the allotment gardening experience and they are always full of ideas for how we can improve things in the future. We have been so delighted with the progress of our allotment project that we are contemplating expanding the area that we cultivate. Thank you to The Primary Club for making this possible."

"BCBS' Get Active Sports Club is run monthly in both East and West Berkshire providing visually impaired children (many of whom have additional needs) with the opportunity to participate in and enjoy sporting activity," writes Ros Taylor from Berkshire County Blind Society.

"London's Paralympics certainly raised the profile of blind sport and resulted in an increase in people getting touch to find out more. The Club is very much based on providing tasters of a wide variety of sports including football, goalball, tennis and athletics. It boosts their confidence and also helps them and their parents to see what they can achieve with the right help and support.

"And the Berkshire Stags VI Cricket Club is now well-established despite the weather! The team has provided visually impaired men and women with the opportunity to participate in something on a regular basis that is physically active, boosts their confidence and provides them with the opportunity to develop important team skills. The support of The Primary Club has been instrumental in supporting this work."

"The Congress Support Scheme encourages less experienced players to take part in mainstream tournaments," explains Gill Smith, Treasurer of the Braille Chess Association .

"In addition to the costs involved, it can be difficult for a VI player to pluck up the courage to attend a sighted tournament for the first time, particularly if unaccompanied. The scheme provides a subsidy to make attendance more affordable and, if necessary, to enable the player to take along a sighted companion. With generous funding from The Primary Club, the scheme has been very popular, with 15 members being able to take advantage of it.

"One of our key objectives is to do everything we can to provide good quality chess equipment for our

members at affordable prices. We have had a batch of 40 sets made for us by a UK supplier. These cost us £55 per set but, with generous support from The Primary Club, we have been able to sell these to our members at £25 each. The sets are proving to be very popular."

From the Hon Sec…

Dear Member,

My "dusting pitch" comment in last year's newsletter proved to be about as wide of the mark as Steve Harmison's first ball of the 2006-07 Ashes series: no sooner did the hosepipe bans come into force than it began to rain and, in most parts of the country, nothing resembling a "bunsen" was seen all season.

Instead we had the wettest summer since 1912, the year of the ill-fated first (and, so far, only) triangular tournament. Sufficient dry weather returned later in the summer for England to lose their No. 1 ranking to South Africa in an unsatisfactory three match series – but the fall in status was not accompanied by a glut of England primaries; indeed our Rule 5(c) levy was generated by the very last ball of the Test Match summer. Bring back Giddins, Mullally & Tufnell at nine, ten, jack. Is Chris Martin of New Zealand the last of a dying breed of "ferrets"?

After a record year in 2012, this year's revenue is down very substantially. What might be termed our core income fell from £144,294 to £120,123 and we had just the one legacy of £5,000 instead of last year's £175,000 – and no dinner receipts. New members were also down – by some 50% – and are still very dependent on the support we receive from TMS. Notwithstanding a drop of over £200,000 in income, we have managed to make grants of just under £200,000 to the clubs & schools that need our help even more in these difficult times. Please give as generously as possible this year – and be on the look out for prospective new members.

I hope you all enjoy your cricket in better weather in 2013, in whatever form that enjoyment takes.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Larlham

THE PRIMARY CLUB FORECAST RESULT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2013

	2012/13 £(forecast)	2011/12 £(actual)
Joining subscriptions and donations	120,123	144,294
Exceptional items	5,000	175,000
Profit on dinner		14,032
Profit on sales of merchandise	3,174	2,038
Tax claim under Gift Aid	20,222	25,242
Interest receivable	3,190	2,321
Total income	**151,709**	**362,927**
Publicity and administration costs	(10,687)	(11,948)
Surplus for the year	**141,022**	**350,979**
Surplus from earlier years	189,328	60,547
Adjustment for grants refunded		471
	330,350	**411,997**
Grants (details below)	198,803	222,669
Surplus to carry forward	**131,547**	**189,328**

Note: Copies of the Club's full accounts may be obtained from the Honorary Treasurer.

2013 GRANTS TO SCHOOLS AND CLUBS FOR THE BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED

Action for Blind People	Action Activity Weeks		10,000
Berkshire Co Blind Society	Monthly sports club & cricket club		10,000
Birmingham Sports Club	Futsal		3,000
Blind Cricket England & Wales	Equipment and development programme		7,550
Braille Chess Association	Tournament support		4,300
British Blind Sport	Cricket – KO Final	7,645	
	Archery	1,440	
	Football	5,300	
	Tenpin bowling	3,000	17,385
Bromley London Borough	Sporting acivities & children's picnic		3,075
Cambridge Dons	Goalball expenses		3,000
Joseph Clarke School	Horse riding, swimming & music tuition		5,200
Clevedon VHBC	2013 Season Expenses		1,000
County Bowls Association for the Blind	West Country bowls tournament 2012		2,500
Cricket for Change	Development programme		8,384
Derbyshire Association	Swimming and tenpin bowling		5,504
Devon Bowling Club	2013 Season expenses		2,500
Durham VICC	2013 Season expenses		3,000
English Blind Golf Association	2013 Matchplay Championship		3,000
Hampshire VICC	2013 season expenses		3,000
Kent VICAG	2013 season expenses		2,755
Lancashire Lions VICC	2013 Season expenses		3,000
London Futsall Club	2013 season expenses		1,500
London Sports Club	2013 season expenses		1,000
Merton Sports Club	Hall hire & insurance		1,850
Metro	Cricket & Lawn bowls & tennis		8,000
Milton Keynes Torch Fellowship	Holidays for members		2,050
National Blind Tenpin Bowling Association, Belfast	Winter Trios League 2012		2,500
Northants Steelbacks VICC	2013 season expenses		3,000
North Regional VIC Board	2013 season expenses		1,500
Nottingham Knights VICC	2013 Season expenses		2,000
Nottinghamshire VICC	2013 season expenses		3,000
Open Country	Tandems		3,060
Pennine Bowling Club	Season expenses		3,500
RLSB	Activity days		9,350
Royal National College, Hereford	Goalball & cricket		6,300
Scottish Blind Golf Society	2013 Strokeplay Championship		1,850
Seashell Trust	Gym equipment		5,550
Sheffield RSB	Bowls & Actionnaires		3,100
Somerset VICC	2013 season expenses		3,000
South Wales Dragons CC	2013 season expenses		3,000
South West Rovers	2012-13 football expenses		3,000
Surrey VICC	2013 Season expenses		2,700
Sussex Sharks VICC	2013 season expenses and juniors		3,500
Tandeming Together	Tandem maintenance & transport		3,040
Taunton Deane VI Bowls	Season expenses & equipment		3,500
VI-Ability	Summer camp 2012		3,000
VIB Somerset	Bowling club season expenses		4,000
Visibility	GO Active project		2,800
Waltham Forest Low Vision Forum	Monthly sporting activities		4,000
Warwickshire VICC	2013 season expenses		3,000
Yorkshire VICC	2013 season expenses		3,000
			£198,803

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Changing society

BBC sports reporter Adam Parsons looks back on why the Paralympics was such a special event

It is a little like being asked to pick which of your children you prefer. Last summer, I had the job of reporting on both the Olympic Games and the Paralympics, and pretty much everyone always asks me which one I preferred.

It's a very natural question. It's the one I'd ask, and it's one I've pondered on numerous occasions. But an answer doesn't come easily.

The Olympics, after all, is the biggest show in sport. It was fantastic, wonderful, spectacular, cheering and moving. But I just wonder if the Paralympics was all those things too – but just even more so.

Why? Well, maybe it was because I wasn't expecting it to be quite so wonderful. I knew the Olympics would be great – we all knew that, didn't we? – but the Paralympics were more of an unknown quantity.

I'd been in both Athens and Beijing, where the huge Olympic crowds had been followed by dispiritingly small collections for the Paras. Vast stadiums echoing to a smattering of applause. London, I hoped, would not allow that to happen.

As a family, we'd bought our tickets in the opening ballot. Having missed out on seats for the Olympic athletics, we ended up with a haul of them for the Paras. It was a stroke of sublime good fortune, not least for my sport-mad teenage daughter.

She watched both of these huge sporting events with intent and a wide-ranging, open-eyed fascination, and her analysis and enthusiasm informed my own opinion. She had adored the Olympics, but palpably preferred the Paralympics that followed "because they seem more like real people – who've lived lives" . I remember that turn of phrase because it summed up so much, and because she was right.

As a journalist, I was spoiled rotten. I interviewed a vast number of the Olympians and then the Paralympians, and saw athletes from both at the best and worst of times – full of excited expectation, fresh from triumph or sometimes crushed by bad-luck or ill-fortune. They were almost all good and engaging talkers, but when I reflect now on the best of those interviewees, so many of them came in the Paras.

Mark Colbourne, who fell from the sky in a paragliding accident and suffered lower-leg paralysis, for instance. A man of extraordinary charm and determination, eloquent and friendly and now a multiple gold-medal winning cyclist. The equestrian team who steamrollered the opposition and then lit up our studio with their banter. Peter Norfolk – the wheelchair tennis star known as the Quadfather – who carried the British flag at the Opening Ceremony. Peter wheeled his way through the crowds every morning on the way to practice, signing autographs and eulogising about his sport. At the age of 51, and with a cabinet full of trophies, he deserved a bit of celebrity time.

But really it was the atmosphere that made it remarkable – the support and the tone. This wasn't an event built on sympathy or compassion for disabled sportsmen and women. It was devoid of those well-meaning, but patronising, comments that have trailed disabled sport for decades. We didn't come to see people who were brave or plucky – we came in our droves to see athletes push themselves to the very limit.

And so they did. If there is a fitter person in this country than David Weir, the winner of four titanic gold medals, I'd like to meet him. We were there as a family one night, screaming to the rafters and the stadium shuddered and reverberated just as loudly as it did for Mo Farah or Jessica Ennis. Nobody was seeing a wheelchair – everybody was just trying to cheer home a British athlete who was beating the world. I'm welling up now just remembering that victory. Magic.

So if you ask me to make choice – I'll tell you. They were the two greatest sporting events I've ever been to. The Olympics were spectacular and inspiring. They showcased the greatest runners, fencers, swimmer, riders and all the rest in the world. They raised the standard. But the Paralympics did all that – and may have done more. They changed the way British society saw itself, and it changed for the better. And you can't ask for more than that.

HOW DO THEY DO IT?

The first question I am asked when people realise that I umpire in VI cricket is "How do they do it?", *writes Bob Southward*. I try and explain as best as I can but there is nothing that can beat seeing a game to understand the enthusiasm and skill that the players possess despite their disability.

If you cannot get to a game, have a look at the following video clips on YouTube and you will pleasantly surprised... as well as understanding "How do they do it?"

http://bit.ly/howone

http://bit.ly/howtwo

http://bit.ly/howthree

If you think that it looks easy, see how a first class cricketer – Michael Lumb from Nottinghamshire – fared when he met the England VI Cricket team during a nets session.

http://bit.ly/howlumb

If you've looked at the above clips, you will have seen that the ball used in the UK game is different to that faced by Michael Lumb in the nets; this is because the England team were preparing for the 2012 Ashes series against Australia and a smaller, harder ball is used in the rest of the world.

To see more about the Ashes series, follow the link below.

http://bit.ly/howashes

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