

## Amanda Worne – Women & Girls Ambassador

*Theme: Women & Girls / Physical wellbeing / Mental Wellbeing / Individual Development / Social and community development*

“ I am a Level one table tennis coach as I am so passionate about the sport, I want to be able to bring that enjoyment to others too ”

### Background Information

Seven years ago, whilst out training on my bike for a triathlon, I suffered a near fatal cycling accident in which I snapped my back in half, punctured my lung and broke 11 bones. Luckily, I survived but due to my broken back I became paralysed from the hips down and needed to use a wheelchair for the rest of my life. I spent 6 months at Stoke Mandeville Spinal Hospital, learning to adjust to life in a wheelchair. It was here that I discovered table tennis and found it helped me so much to take out any frustrations I was feeling from my day-to-day challenges living with my new disability. Once home I concentrated on becoming a mum again to my 4 children and table tennis took a back seat but last year, I started playing again with an old school friend and love it more than ever!

I now play at Worthing Table Tennis Club and although I participate in handcycling and I also horse ride, I find table tennis is the most social of them all and I try and play as much as I can

Playing competitively, even only at a local level, is much different to playing just for fun and I felt so nervous especially being female and being a wheelchair user as I was the only one in the league to play like this. I felt quite out of my comfort zone, but I personally think its good to feel like this sometimes as it helps me to overcome my fears and makes me mentally stronger.



I also believe it is good to set yourself dreams and goals and I would love to play in the Paralympics. Setting myself this goal has encouraged me to try and be the best I can be and helps me focus on improving my game and pushing myself. I may never get to compete in the Paralympics but whatever happens I will enjoy all the table tennis experiences and opportunities I have and know that I have done my best to reach my full potential.

I am the only female wheelchair table tennis player I know locally so I play with able bodied people mostly. Recently I went to a summer training camp in Sheffield which is the home of paralympic table tennis, and I got to play against another female wheelchair user who plays at an international level. It helped me to see how much I need to improve and the only way to do that is practice, so I bought myself a robot and a table tennis tabletop that sits on top of my dining room table and I try and practice at home.

I currently coach on a Sunday morning in an under-13 session followed by a 50+ session and in November we are starting up an accessible table tennis session for anyone with a disability to come along and enjoy the sport too. This Summer I volunteered at the Interspinal Games which was an amazing experience. I helped coach and guide newly injured men and umpired on the last day when we held a tournament for everyone who had played throughout the week.

I am also looking to gain my umpiring qualification because I want to improve my all round knowledge of the game as it will help to improve my own game.



I took part in the first all-female tournament this summer which was brilliant, and I certainly noticed a more relaxed and friendly atmosphere amongst the women than I have found when there is a more male dominant situation.



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