

Low Cost Sport Wheelchairs One Step Closer to Mass Market

An exciting new initiative to design a low cost sport wheelchair for Basketball and Tennis is underway through a partnership between Motivation Charitable Trust, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) and the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF). The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) was instrumental in bringing the partners together to address a major gap in low cost high quality equipment currently available for athletes worldwide.

Last week, the first prototypes of the wheelchair were trialled by athletes from Motivation Romania during a sport camp in Bucharest delivered by ITF Wheelchair Tennis Development Officer Mark Bullock and IWBF Europe Wheelchair Basketball Development Officer Maurice Hammerton. After the camp, athletes met with Motivation UK's representative, Paralympic gold medalist in Wheelchair Basketball Jennifer Howitt and provided detailed feedback about the prototypes which will be used to produce the final design.

This project marks the first time that the ITF and IWBF have collaborated on a development initiative. Mr. Bullock commented on the progress of the initiative. "The trials are going well and it has been valuable to work alongside colleagues from Wheelchair Basketball", he said.

The trials and camp were followed by a wheelchair tennis and basketball demonstration and press conference to publicize the project. Howitt spoke to the media at this press conference about the benefits of the trials. "These low cost sport wheelchairs will be instrumental in supporting the development of wheelchair sport around the world. The work that has been done here will help to make Romania an example for how to develop effective sport programmes for people with a disability using well made, high quality, low cost equipment," she said.

Now that the trials have been completed, Motivation UK's design team will refine the design using the athlete feedback and produce a final prototype. Once that prototype has been tested locally and funds have been raised to purchase equipment for the factory in Romania, the wheelchair will be ready for production. Organizations such as the National Paralympic Committees, ITF and IWBF will then be able to order them. The price is currently being calculated based on the specific components used and will be announced once the design is finalized.

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