

Hi, I'm David Follett, aged 23, and in April 2007, just after my 18th birthday, I suffered a road traffic accident in which I broke my neck at C6/C7 resulting in becoming spinally cord injured and becoming an incomplete tetraplegic. This meaning I would need to use a wheelchair for everyday mobility. I underwent 7 months of rehabilitation in the Duke of Cornwall Spinal Unit at Salisbury. Here I had to learn everything again from getting dressed to washing myself and simple everyday tasks in order to become independent again. In November 2007 I was discharged to my flat in central Exeter. I then went back to Clyst Vale Community College where I had been previously studying to finish off my A-levels as my accident had happened just before I was due to sit my exams. I also got back to driving and took up wheelchair badminton.

After trialling numerous different sports there was a demonstration of wheelchair badminton In Exeter in June 2008 which I attended and enjoyed - and I have been playing ever since. With the help of my Dad and doubles partner Rowan Crossman and head Coach Sharon Hawkins, we set up the Devon Raqueeters wheelchair badminton club at Broadclyst, which is now the largest in the country with 14 regular members. We have gone on to attend various different 4-nation competitions around Great Britain: in Glasgow, Dublin, Liverpool and Cardiff to name a few. I have won singles and doubles medals and have even competed at European and international level. In 2011 I went to Dortmund for the European championships, and Guatemala (Central America) for the World championships where the competition was very challenging, although I gained great experience and was able to see the standard that could be achieved and made me more determined to succeed at that level. Since the world championships I was actually confirmed number one in the world in my specific classification.



From 2009-2011 I also studied a Coaching and Fitness Foundation Degree at Exeter College in which I graduated with Merit. In this time I also completed my level 1 and level 2 Badminton coaching courses which I use regularly coaching children and disabled children at certain events and in primary schools. I am currently training to make the newly formed badminton England disabled team, as at the moment I am first reserve. I am playing 5 times a week as well as training in the gym.



Besides my badminton I am also currently training with Ekso Bionics. This is a company that has brought out a new piece of equipment that has come over from the USA called Ekso. This is a motorised suit that walks spinally cord injured people. It is state-of-the-art and new to the market. It allows great research into the effects of walking again after a spinal cord injury as well as being a great new rehabilitation tool. It's also just such an amazing feeling for myself to be walking again and as naturally as possible.

Recently I won *Express and Echo* Disabled Sports Person Award 2011, and in May this year I will also get the opportunity to carry the Olympic flame in Combe Martin which I am thrilled about and believe to be a great honour as I will also be going to watch Badminton at the Olympics his summer. I would not have been able to achieve the things in my life I have done and stayed so positive and upbeat without the support from my parents, family and friends and girlfriend.

