

The following is an interview with Martin Beddis, who is the head coach of the Norwegian national team in Rugby League Wheelchair. Rugby League Wheelchair is a wheelchair sport that stays true to the running game. It is played with an oval ball for 2 periods of 40 minutes. The objective is to score a try, which awards 4 points. The defending team will try to stop you from doing this by “tackling” you, in this case done by ripping of a tag that is fastened with velcro to your shoulder.

So first off, who is Martin Beddis?

A: I am 48 years old and based out of Runcorn in England. I am the head coach of the Norwegian national Rugby League Wheelchair team, and tasked with developing Rugby League Wheelchair in Norway. I have been involved with wheelchair sports for the past 15 years. I played a lot of disability sports at various levels while I was at school. After leaving school I dropped out of it a little bit but have in later years tried a few different wheelchair sports. I initially tried wheelchair basketball, but that didn't really take as I wasn't particularly good at it. I have played the Paralympic version of wheelchair rugby, wheelchair 7s, and almost every version you can find.

I am still playing Rugby League Wheelchair, but I have also moved to coaching. I am currently coaching- and playing for the Runcorn Ravens and playing for the Warrington Wolves.



Who can play Rugby League Wheelchair?

A: The straightforward answer is absolutely anybody. We don't care about age, we don't care about gender, and we don't care if you are disabled or non-disabled. If you are good enough to play, then you will get picked. This allows for the opportunity to play along with siblings who may or may not have a disability, to play with your friends, or even play with your parents. In fact, when I was introduced to Rugby League Wheelchair, it allowed me to play sports with both my son and daughter., neither of which have a disability. I have played internationally for Scotland with my son, and my son also happens to be the first ever Rugby League Wheelchair try scorer for Scotland.

So people without any disabilities can also play?

A: Yes! Within a team you can have as many players with- or without disabilities as you'd like. When you're playing competitively there will be 5 players on the pitch, out of a squad consisting of 12 players. Of these 5 players, there needs to be a minimum of 3 disabled players. This means you can have 2 players without any disabilities on at any given time. This facilitates an unique opportunity to play sports with whoever you'd like, regardless of disabilities.

That's fantastic. So where is Rugby League Wheelchair Norway today, and where will you be in one year?

A: Rugby League Wheelchair Norway is currently in a development stage. We have a lot of enthusiasm and people who want to participate, but we have delayed kickoff until August due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Hopefully in the next year we will have two domestic clubs playing play Rugby League Wheelchair, which will also help to assist in development of the national team. The national team will also be participating in the Rugby League World Cup 2021 in November, held in England.



Martin Beddis playing Rugby League Wheelchair with his non-disabled daughter.

It is incredible that you are kicking off with the World Cup. To start the Norwegian domestic development and RLWC at the same time seems quite an impossible task. Do you see it as so?

A: Nothing is impossible. If there is a will and there is a belief then it can be done. The key will be to get clubs on board, clubs who want to participate in this journey with us.

Are you anticipating any good games in the World Cup?

A: In the World Cup I'd say we probably got the hardest pool, and the games get progressively harder. We start off with Spain, who is also a developing nation. Then we come up against Australia, who have played finals in previous cups, and our final game is against England on their home turf. The key would be good results against Spain, which might be entirely possible. Until tryouts have been held, we do not know which players the Norwegian team will consist of, so we might end up with some amazing players. Regardless, someone will go down in history as the first try scorer ever in Norwegian Rugby League Wheelchair. And that is all I am asking for from the players: to get some points on the board and join in creating Norwegian history.

So when is the first training camp for Rugby League Wheelchair?

A: We are hosting open days on the 21st of August at 12:00-16:00, and on the 22nd of August at 10:00-13:00. There will be several more camps throughout autumn as well.

And what would you need in terms of equipment or knowledge to show up?

A: Absolutely nothing. For equipment we will be using the wheelchairs that the federation bought. And for knowledge, you are in either of two camps: You've either got good wheelchair skills, which we will teach you the rugby league side of it. Or you've got rugby league skills, where we will teach you the wheelchair skills. Or if you have none, we will teach you both. At the end of the day, if you've got passion and you've got belief then we will teach you it all.

If there are any clubs out who want to get in on the action, how would they accomplish that?

A: The initial outlay will just be enthusiasm and getting a hall to play in. There will be possibilities of borrowing wheelchairs from Rugby League Norway, so that the players initially will not have to purchase their own chairs. We will have training courses for coaches, referees, and all of that will be in place. So, to tell you the truth, there will be very little needed to be done by the club, aside from starting up and showing up to practice. The federation will do as much as possible. There are already clubs in Norway playing Rugby League, which wheelchair teams can slot right into. They will be able to wear the same club colors and potentially wear the national jersey. They will get to represent the team they love, in the sport they love. They will be a part of the family that is Rugby League. So if a player of a running game club has to stop because of injuries, they could still compete for the same team in Rugby League, but in a wheelchair. If you are a wheelchair user, male, female, senior or youth, then you can play Rugby League.

This wraps up our interview with Martin Beddis for now. If you are interested in learning more about (or even better trying out!) Rugby League Wheelchair, please do not hesitate to reach out at rullestol@rugbyleague.no

Best regards,

Rugby League Norway