

Young Welsh Athlete Secures Funding to Revolutionise Wheelchair Rugby League

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Trailblazing wheelchair rugby player and disability advocate Jessica Booth has secured vital funding to launch a groundbreaking new project aimed at transforming the face of Wheelchair Rugby League in the UK.

Jess, who represents Wales in the sport and is a decorated ambassador for inclusivity, is now setting their sights on creating the first youth-led Wheelchair Rugby League team. Their initiative, called Project Wheels, will flip the traditional model of sports team management, placing power in the hands of players under 25.

"I literally want to change a game! I want to turn Wheelchair Rugby League on its head and let the youth voice be heard in this diverse, equitable and inclusive community" says Jessica

Jess is one of 100 young changemakers across the UK to receive funding through the Young Gamechangers Fund, a partnership between Co-op Foundation, Co-op, the #iwill Fund, Restless Development, and Global Fund for Children. The fund empowers and funds grassroots, youth-led initiatives to address urgent challenges in their communities.

The funding will allow Jessica to purchase specialist sports wheelchairs and equipment, cover registration and insurance costs, and rent training facilities. Just as importantly, it provides access to expert mentoring, support that will help turn her bold vision into a lasting legacy.

Jess's motivation stems from lived experience. After losing their mobility at university, Jessica found hope, confidence, and community through wheelchair rugby. Their involvement grew beyond the pitch: Jess has advocated for disability rights on student councils and challenged the status quo in a sport where young voices and diverse perspectives are often overlooked.

Project Wheels will be built on democracy, inclusion, and empathy. Team decisions, from training plans to mental health support, will be made collectively by its members. While experienced mentors will offer guidance, they will not dominate the culture or direction of the team.

Jess's work marks a bold step forward in reshaping what leadership, inclusion, and empowerment look like in adaptive sports.

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