Olympic Gold medallist Jason Kenny meets Manchester YMCA Sporting Heroes

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Bolton-born Jason, who won two Olympic Gold medals in the team sprint and the individual sprint track cycling at London 2012, adding to his inaugural gold won in Beijing four years earlier, was a special guest at the exhibition which celebrates the sporting heritage of the Manchester YMCA.

The club has trained numerous Olympians and sporting legends over the years and the Sporting Heroes exhibition was launched ahead of London 2012 to celebrate their achievements. It was made possible with a £34,100 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and involved volunteers from the YMCA, Manchester Metropolitan University and All Hallows School being trained to carry out interviews and record the experiences of the club's sporting stars.

Jason, who has benefited from Lottery-funding throughout his career, swapped stories with local stars such as Nick Kokotaylo, a judo champion who won 13 British titles between 1979 and 1996 and competed in the 1984 Olympics, and Olympic Wrestler Fitz Lloyd Walker, who competed in the 1980, 1984, 1988 Games.

Jason also shared his Olympic experiences with members of the YMCA who joined the event and led young members of the club in a cycling class.

The 24-year-old, said: "I have really enjoyed meeting the members of the Manchester YMCA today, I have loved listening to the former Olympians stories and it is really interesting to hear how much sport has evolved in this country since they were all competing. National Lottery funding changed my life and it has changed the way sport is today and meeting these athletes has really brought that home to me today. The funding I received has allowed me to train full-time at superb facilities and receive world-class coaching and medical support which resulted in success during the summer and in Beijing. The National Lottery has been changing lives for 18 years and it's not just athletes that benefit. National Lottery players should be proud that they are funding community projects like this and funding thousands of other good causes all over the UK."

Former Olympic Judoka, Nick Kokotaylo, said: "It has been fantastic to meet Jason, he is such a fantastic talent and sharing our different sporting experiences has been really interesting. When I was competing I had to find a balance between training and work, but now athletes can concentrate on training full time without worrying about paying the bills thanks to Lottery funding. Jason is a great example of what can be achieved and I hope he has inspired all the young people who are here today."

Sara Hilton, Head of HLF North West, added: "The Manchester YMCA is a much-loved organisation within the city and one of the forerunners of a wider global movement. Whilst sport and heritage might not always seem like natural bedfellows, this is a great example of how the two can come together to help share memories of sporting triumphs from the past. The Heritage Lottery Fund is proud to have supported this inspiring community project and it's a real credit to everyone involved in making it happen that Olympian Jason Kenny has taken time out of his busy training schedule to visit today."

Jason Kenny is one of 1,200 National Lottery funded elite athletes. The funding allows him to compete and train full time to the highest of international standards. The National Lottery invested up to £2.2 billion in London 2012, allowing our athletes, venues and volunteers to shine on the world stage.

The Manchester YMCA was established in 1846 and was one of the first YMCAs in what became a worldwide movement. It has a rich history in Manchester: it has occupied a number of sites, provided residential facilities, trained the young unemployed, provided a resettlement programme for demobilised personnel after World War II, and provided fitness provision, for which it is now known.

The Sporting Heroes exhibition is open to the public and can be viewed online on the YMCA Sporting Heroes website.

Notes to editors

The National Lottery has been changing lives for 18 years. National Lottery players have raised over £29 billion for Good Causes since the Lottery started in 1994. Over £6 billion of this has been invested in sport.

National Lottery funding enables 1,200 elite UK athletes to benefit from world class coaching, facilities and medical support.

National Lottery funding is also inspiring future generations by upgrading local sports clubs and facilities, and providing opportunities for thousands more people to enjoy sport.

Every week National Lottery players raise over £30 million to help change people's lives across the UK.

From funding our Olympic and Paralympic athletes, to supporting our war veterans, to investing in our museums, local parks, community groups and Oscar-winning films, Lottery funding has been changing people’s lives for 18 years.

Further information

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