

Cerebral Palsy SportsStart event Ipswich 2/8/19

It started with a simple email to the Britannia TT Club inbox. Cerebral Palsy Sport were organising an event on August 2nd in Ipswich which would include table tennis: would the club or local league be able to send down a coach or two for the day, to help?

And so it came to pass. With a bucket of bats, a frying pan and a borrowed box of balls, Martin Tomes turned up at Gainsborough Sports Centre to muck in. Not a coach of course, but well qualified to give out bats and fetch balls from all corners. There were organisers, representatives from IBC, the NHS, along with other volunteers and parents, but the beneficiaries of the day were about 22 young people interested in any activity that would suit their varying degrees of mobility. Some were ambulant, some reliant on wheelchairs, not all able to grip a bat or control the movement of their arm, but show them a ball and ask them to hit it, and there were more than a few eyes lighting up before enthusiastic swatting commenced.

After the two tables were set up, out came the frying pan in knocking up with the helpers, in an attempt to stimulate interest. There was no need as the first 11 participants flooded the tables, needing little more assistance than the afore-mentioned bat distribution and frequent fetching. There was a little talent on show, and a few rallies, with some players needing parental assistance to wallop the ball when in range. At one point, a parent approached Martin and asked him to produce the frying pan again, as their son liked the noise - son in question having no apparent self mobility or speech to express himself, but once his hand was wrapped around the handle, with a helping hand underneath it was possible to do a bit of keepy-uppy with the fryer pinging away. Very poignant.

After half an hour the players swapped over from tennis on the other side of the hall and another 11 descended onto the tables, in much the same vein of enthusiasm. At one point 3 young lads chased a giant football around amongst the tables, but at no time did anyone worry or mind, sport for all went on regardless.

The session finished, tables packed away and the players moved on to the next sports. The parents and helpers all parented and helped in such a positive fashion, and the players made no complaints or grumbles despite any of their frustrations.