

- When did you begin wheelchair racing and sports in general?

**“I got started with a local sports program called the Bennett Blazers. They’re out of Baltimore, Maryland, and I started with them when I was two years old. They’re a multi-sport program so I’ve done swimming, basketball, hockey, track, and a number of other sports as well. So I started with them when I was two years old and continued with them up until college.”**

- So how did that change your life? How has it helped you break barriers? What has it done for you?

**“I’d say sports in general have taught me to push what I perceive as my limits. And to just push the boundaries and see how far I can push myself.”**

- Do you think seeing these para-athletes is important and breaks barriers for people with disabilities who aren’t necessarily para-athletes?

**“I would say yes. I’d say that whenever games are held at a location, not only going to watch and see those events actually happen has an impact, but also just how games change the general infrastructure of a location because they have to change everything to be accessible. So I think it really does have a lasting impact in multiple ways. At first when you’re there watching it, you see people in wheelchairs or whatever the disability is. You see that they aren’t just fragile.”**

- How have sports changed your life? Would you say that sports have been a huge factor in your life? Without sports and the Paralympics, would your life be totally different?

**“I would say yes. Sports in general have changed my life, but my life would be very different without the Paralympics. It has taught me not only to push myself, but also it has opened up so many opportunities. I’m able to be financially independent, for example. It has just opened up so many doors.”**

- Are you competing in any events soon? And what events are you doing at the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo?

**“So far I have qualified for the marathon for the games. The Paralympics are usually held from late August into September. So I’ve qualified for the marathon, and our track qualification events will be held in I believe June or July. So we’ll figure out what track events we’ll be doing a little bit later.”**

- Do you feel like disabled athletes receive the full recognition they deserve? Doing a marathon in a wheelchair is amazing. You see professional athletes receive so much

attention, pay, and people always focus on them. But do you think people focus enough on para-athletes?

**“I think in recent years it has certainly come a long way. People who have been well before me, individuals like Tatyana McFadden and Bob Hall and just so many other people have pushed for not only inclusion in sports, but equality as well. So things have come a long way in recent years; I think they still have a little bit to go, but they’ve certainly been coming along.”**

- Is there anything else you would like the people looking at this website to know?

**“When you see an individual with a disability, they are really just another person. I think a lot of people kind of focus on the disability, but they are just another person. There is a lot of unknown when you see a person with a disability; you’re wondering ‘Why are they in a wheelchair?’ and a lot of other questions. That, I think, leads to fear, but with more exposure, that fear can begin to become alleviated. At the London Paralympic Games (2012) I think there was around a two hour special in the U.S. featuring the games, whereas in the Rio games (2016) I think there were around 60 hours of coverage featuring the games. So I think just getting more coverage will help remove those unknowns and lead to more of a common understanding and common experiences as well, which can certainly remove a lot of fear. If it’s a shared experience, there’s really no unknown. You’ve been through the same exact thing, and a good example of this was at the New York Marathon. One of the title sponsors of the marathon actually had a booth where you could get in a racing wheelchair and put on a VR Headset and you would push through the last 100 meters of the race. And so shared experiences like that really help remove unknowns and fear.”**