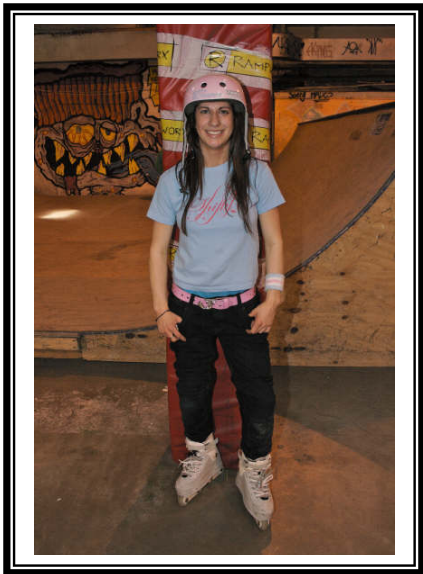


PERSONAL TESTIMONIES OF WOMEN & GIRLS INVOLVED IN SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

[Includes those involved in Advocacy, Leadership,
Administration, Coaching and Participation roles]



SPORT: *Extreme – In-line Skating*

NAME: *Jenna Downing*

D.O.B: *4th March 1988*

INFO: *Professional aggressive in-line skater
British Champion and World Number 2
Volunteer Coach at Rampworx*

MAIN INVOLVEMENT IN SPORT:

[Tick more than one if appropriate]:

- Advocate Leader/Manager Administrator Coach Participant
 Volunteer Paid Staff Other [Please state]_____

HOW I BECAME INVOLVED IN SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

I always loved taking part in as many different sports as possible and my local community sports centre allowed me to do this. I used to go there several times a week where I took part in trampolining, athletics, swimming and netball. Therefore one night when I heard they were to hold a roller disco I had to give it a go! Not only was it really fun but I also found that I was quite good at it, and at the end of the night I met three brothers who told me about a skatepark they owned nearby which happened to be one of the best in the country. I started going there and gradually got in to competing and it all went from there!

PARTICIPATION/VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT:

- Used to play netball on a regular basis. Captain of High School team for 5 years and played for South Yorkshire. Took part in the Young Netball Organiser Course in 2005 and attained Level 1, enabling me to coach netball in primary schools.
- Ran cross-country for South Yorkshire whilst at high school.
- Skied for several years and won the UK Sheffield Freeze competition in 2002.
- Volunteer coach at Rampworx - I coach on a regular basis, with one of my most rewarding roles being working with the skatepark to establish the first and only 'all girls' inline coaching academy in an attempt to get young disadvantaged girls into sport and to encourage higher participation in sport in general since sports participation for girls is incredibly low, particularly in deprived areas, for reasons such as teenage pregnancies. I am now involved in running Summer Clinics and coaching sessions.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- 2006 to present: BA Law – University of Sheffield
- 2004 – 2006: A - levels: English, Law, French, General Studies. AS level: Sports Science
- 1999 – 2004: GCSEs: English lit, English Language, Science, Maths, French, German, Sports Science, Art, R.E.
- I have also started working on my Level 3 coaching course in order to teach aggressive inline skating for the British Roller Sports Federation (BRSF). However, this has currently been put on hold due to University commitments!

CAREER PATH:

- 2008 to present: Sky Living for Sport Youth Volunteering Project – Youth Sport Trust. This project is designed to inspire 16 – 25 year olds to get involved in community sports initiatives. As an athlete mentor my role is to work with young people at certain PGL activity centres across the country in order to equip them with the practical resources, tips and motivation to take forward their interest in volunteering.
- 2007 to present: 'Sporting Champion' for Sport England – Sporting Champions is a Sport England initiative. Brings world-class athletes face-to-face with young people to inspire and motivate them to participate in sport. My role as a sporting champion is to visit local schools and communities and share with the young people what I have achieved throughout my sporting career and what I have learnt from my experiences on the road to success, and to prove that anyone can achieve their dreams, just like I did.
- 2007: Athlete mentor on the Respect Athlete Mentor Programme (RAMP) for the Youth Sports Trust. As an athlete mentor on RAMP my role was to challenge and assist young people in education and local communities to find positive ways to improve their lives through the power of sport.

REASONS FOR CHOOSING THIS ACTIVITY: Sport, in my eyes, and in particular extreme sports like inline skating, is a fantastic way of releasing aggression and overcoming personal challenges. It is a very enjoyable and sociable sport so it's easy to make new friends and training is fun! Also, it was something different to try out, something new to learn, and I was getting bored of taking part in the usual school sports, so I wanted to give something else a go!

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- British Champion for the 9th year in a row
- World Number 2 – Achieved at the LG Action Sports World Championships in Texas November 2007
- Former X-Games Silver Medallist
- 3 year NASS champion (National Adventure Sports Show)
- Youngest female inline skater in the world to ever turn pro (at the age of 12)
- Only female in Europe and 2nd in the world to perform the 900 degree spin
- Appeared on TV including music videos and commercials
- Is a character in the video game, 'Rolling' (Playstation2/X-Box)
- Sport England 'Sporting Champion'
- UK Freesport Athlete of the Year Award 2005
- Sports Ambassador Award 2004

WHAT MOTIVATES AND INSPIRES YOU?

Fulfilling goals and watching people (particularly other female rollerbladers) progress motivates me to try harder.

CHALLENGES I FACED AND HOW I OVERCAME THEM: Having been brought up in a single parent family at times things have been financially difficult for my mum and I, particularly when first starting out with my sport as travelling to competitions and events was rather expensive as well as buying the skates and protective equipment. However, with sheer dedication and hard work my mum managed to send me to almost every competition, often having to pay for herself as well as I was too young to travel on my own. I believe that sport is for everyone, no matter what background you are from, World Champions and Olympians have to come from somewhere, and I believe that with determination and effort you can achieve any goal you set yourself!

PEOPLE AND SYSTEMS THAT ENCOURAGED/HELPED ME AND HOW:

My mum has been a great inspiration for me, for always pushing me to be the best I can be and for always believing in me. I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for her.

Also, I don't really think I would be where I am today if it wasn't for Rampworx Skatepark in Aintree. As a world-class facility, I have been training at Rampworx and have built up some great friendships at the skatepark. It was when my local skatepark closed in Wakefield 10 years ago I realised that I had nowhere else to go – Rampworx was the next best thing so the 2 hours travelling distance was irrelevant to me, all I wanted to do was pursue my sporting passion and Rampworx gave me the incentive to do this. I was even privileged enough to open the skatepark with the rest of my team.

OTHER SUPPORT I WOULD HAVE APPRECIATED: Because aggressive inline skating is not a nationally recognised sport, i.e. it does not have a National Governing Body (NGB) it cannot receive the funding from sporting bodies such as Sport England, unlike other sports. Therefore it is struggling to progress and elite athletes like myself do struggle to fund themselves to international and national events. Therefore, I believe that more funding needs to be pumped into sports like aggressive inline skating, skateboarding and bmxing if the sports are to progress. After all, these are the sports that young people nowadays want to take part in so they need to become nationally recognised.

WHAT IS THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING INVOLVED IN SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Having the opportunity to travel the world and visit some amazing places and meet some amazing people. Also being able to encourage and inspire other youngsters is hugely rewarding and makes being a champion truly worthwhile!

COMMENTS/FUTURE PLANS/AMBITIONS: I feel that my extensive experience of working with young people from a variety of different backgrounds has enabled me to become more accomplished and has helped develop and enhance my teaching and interpersonal skills, both as an individual or when working as part of a team and supporting others. In addition, my coaching experiences at Rampworx have encouraged me to coach at an international level and now I train and coach every summer at Camp Woodward in the USA, which is the world's biggest extreme sports camp. I also provide regular coaching and demonstrations for Team Extreme, Haven Holiday camps and I'm currently working with the British Roller Sports Federation to try and establish aggressive inline skating as a nationally recognised sport. If this comes off our sport would be included in P.E lessons in schools across the country. With regards to competitions, my main ambition is to win the World Championships this year and hopefully one day I would love to represent my country at the Olympic Games.

ADVICE I WOULD GIVE TO WOMEN CONSIDERING OR CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN A BECOMING INVOLVED IN SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN ANY ROLE:

- Don't be scared to get involved! Just get out there and give it a go whatever the sport, you never know unless you try!!
- Believe in yourself and you will succeed – no matter what the boundaries. Your only limits are the ones you impose upon yourself.
- Above all, don't forget to have FUN! Because at the end of the day that is what sport is all about!

ANY OTHER COMMENT/ADVICE:

Overall, I think that because volunteers have played such an important role in helping me develop as an athlete I now really enjoy giving back into sport and contributing, even if it's only a tiny bit, because at the end of the day I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for volunteers, and especially Rampworx. Therefore to be a volunteer now myself is extremely rewarding, because as a determined young role model, I have been able to influence and inspire other people's lives, and that for me is the greatest achievement.

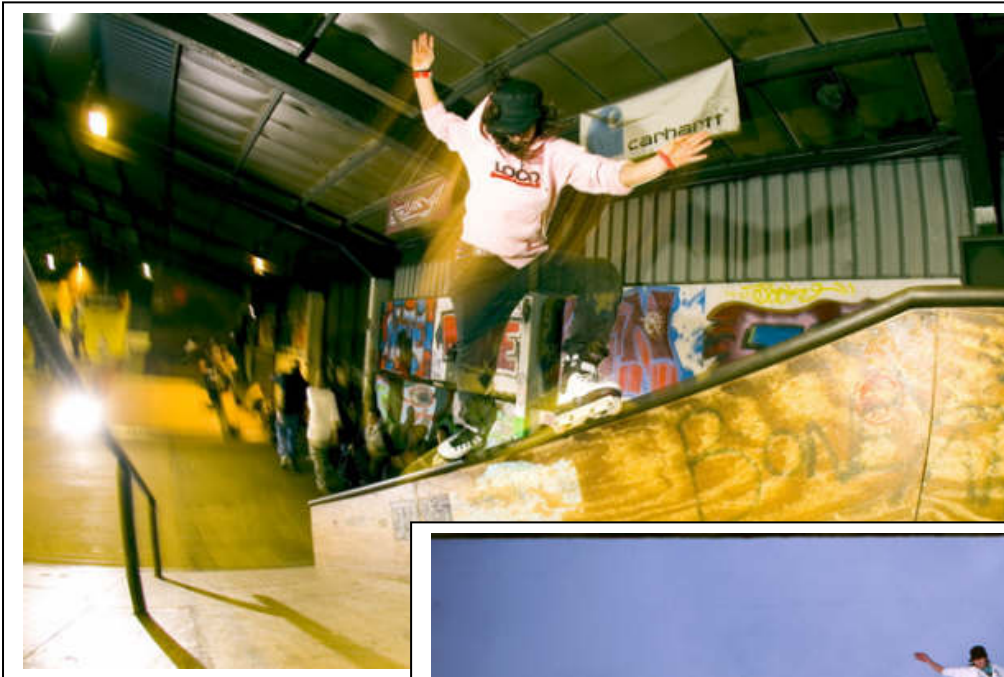
TESTIMONY COMPLETED: September 2008

If you know anyone who's story could inspire others to get involved in sport & physical activity please contact: Katie Crozier, Senior Development Officer (Marketing & Research), Merseyside Sports Partnership, LJMU – IM Marsh Campus, Barkhill Road, Aigburth, Liverpool L17 6BD. Telephone No: 0151 2315325 or K.Crozier@ljmu.ac.uk.

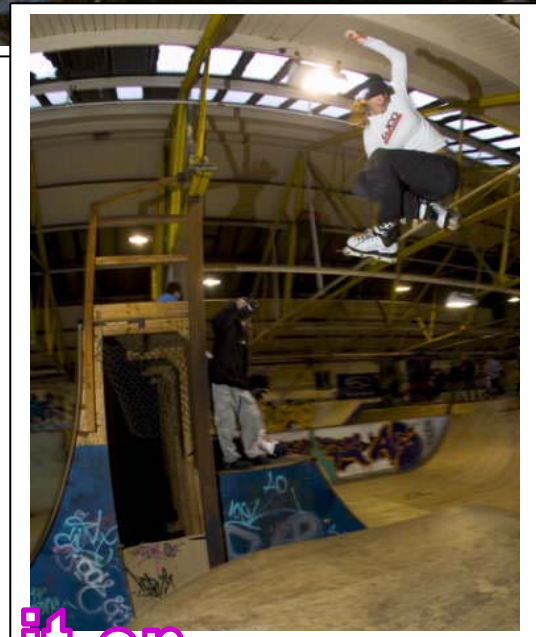
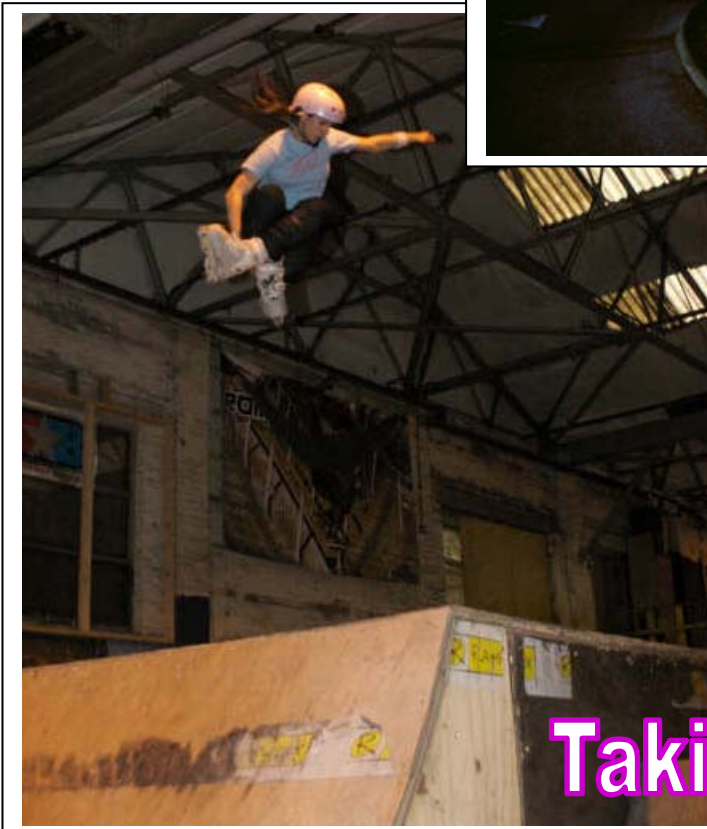
It is intended that Personal Testimonies will be promoted via the County Sport Partnership and other websites. We may contact you for further details so please include your name, an email address and phone number with the submission.

In Action...

Jenna Downing



R RAMPWORX



Taking it on...

North West