

## London 2012 Paralympics: Amazement is guaranteed.

Playing 'murderball' has transformed my view of the Paralympics



Here's something I discovered recently: it is not easy controlling a wheelchair. Certainly not the kind used in wheelchair rugby, which look as if they have been knocked up out of an old supermarket trolley and a couple of spare dustbin lids.

As it happens, wheelchair rugby chairs are sturdy, sophisticated vehicles, capable of withstanding the rigours of a sport formerly known as murderball. And there's a reason for the name: in this game, pumped-up, tattooed, muscular players hurtle around at speeds sufficient to alert the local constabulary, smacking their Mad Max chairs into their opponents'. For an uninitiated observer, it's as if you've stumbled across the local body-building club's annual outing on the dodgems.

No wonder wheelchair rugby is the hottest ticket at the Paralympic Games, which begin tomorrow. No wonder 12,000 paying customers will cram into the Stratford basketball centre to watch the world's best in metal-grinding action: this is some sport.

But, my, those chairs are tricky things to manipulate. When I was invited by the Canadian team to try out the tool of their trade, I expected to swish speedily into position to receive a pass. Instead, I found myself spinning uncontrollably in small circles, dizzy with my own uselessness. The Canadians were watching me from the sidelines, laughing themselves hoarse.

Then one of them wheeled over, stopped my attempt to screw myself through the gym floor and told me that I should sit further forward to stop the spinning. He was right. Armed with his advice, I proceeded to participate in a game – only to discover several other areas of fundamental incompetence. Such as not actually being able to wheel in a straight line. Or at anything approaching a useful speed.

The Telegraph - By Jim White