**Seb Coe:**

At our closing ceremony, we can say that these were a Games by everyone.

**Narrator:**

We see the London Stadium most weeks on our screens with West Ham in action, the Velodrome staging world class cycling, World Cups and Commonwealth Games, and the spectacularly designed Aquatics Centre, where records were broken and now thousands of local kids learn to swim. As Seb Coe said at the closing ceremony, London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics was for everyone. 10 years on, that remains the case for the venues at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

**Jane Figueiredo, British Olympic Diving Coach:**

It is the most iconic, positive environment that I think I've ever worked in.

**Mark Clark, head coach of the London Lions women’s basketball team:**

The atmosphere generated with fans in there is second to none.

**Sam Bird, CEO, London Pulse Netball**

It's a very special place to be.

**Narrator:**

This is My London Legacy, a Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park podcast, highlighting everyone's roles, stories, and memories of London 2012. And in this episode, we delve deeper into the sporting legacy of the park and its venues, and some of them may surprise you. Designed for swimmers of all abilities, from absolute beginners to Olympic and Paralympic champions, the London Aquatics Centre's facilities are second to none. So much so, that the center has been the training venue for Olympic diving champion Tom Daley and his coach, Jane Figueiredo, who is back to lead a new team to the Paris 2024 Olympics.

**Jane Figueiredo:**

Since day one and every day thereafter, we're eight years into it now, it is the most iconic, positive environment that I think I've ever worked in. And it's very humbling too, because although it is a high-performance center, that's just one of the aspects of the whole center. Tom walks in the front gates of the pool and he's greeted by all of these kids who may or may not know him, all the public that go there, all the staff that work there. And so certainly, we feel quite normal. We feel like we are just like every other person that walks in there and is using the venue. I think there's a lot to be said for that, and it always reminds us of and keeps us a little bit more down to earth about what we actually do and the significance of how we impact those people's lives every day.

**Narrator:**

Now you mentioned the name Tom before I did. I guess that doesn't happen much in interviews with you Jane, but we're talking about Tom Daley. But do you find it kind of poetic that when we were building up to London 2012, he was one of the faces, and now that is still his workplace, essentially?

**Jane Figueiredo:**

Yeah. I think when I was recruited by him and Alexei Evangulov to consider coming to London, I had coached Olympic gold medalists and silver medalists, and we already had five medals in our repertoire. But Tom comes along and I think you're just automatically drawn to him. There's something very unique and special about him, and it's not that he's trying to be that way. His personality is a big personality, and he recruited me. And I always feel like I'm a pretty big personality, but the name Tom Daley, I don't think I really knew what significance that had until I actually started coaching him. Then I realized. And people here in the United States, when I came to London to coach Tom, one of my Russian divers who was also Olympic champion, she reminded me that this is going to be very different to something I've ever done before, and it's going to have challenges that will be far different than I've ever had before.

That statement was so true, and obviously it was phenomenal. It had its challenges, but Tom Daley is an icon in Great Britain as well as pretty much everywhere around the world. But you don't always know that because I just see him as Tom, and I love him like he's my own family. Yeah, I only notice it when we go to events or we're around people and then I sit back and I'm like, "Yeah, this is pretty big."

**Narrator:**

And that Olympic gold, made in London at the Aquatics Centre.

**Jane Figueiredo:**

Yeah, unbelievable. I mean, that was the goal. He recruited me to help him win a gold medal. I mean there's no if, ands or buts about what my job was to be, and he looked for somebody who had that experience to be able to take him to that level. Gosh, it was such a incredible, hard, challenging journey and I don't believe anybody that wins a gold medal, it's as easy as everybody thinks. And certainly, there are lots of things that come into that whole medal-winning journey.

**Narrator:**

And when I first met Tom, he was a Plymouth boy. He's still a Plymouth boy, but how important was the move to London, and maybe creating that different environment? Did that help as far as a performance advantage is concerned?

**Jane Figueiredo:**

Yeah. I think coming to London, he knew that I was going to build a team. What does that mean? That would be strength and conditioning, team member, nutritionist, sports psych, physio, gymnastics coach, lifestyle coach, and then of course different people we added along the way. And that's what he was looking for. And I don't think he really understood what a professional environment and athlete was going to look like, but that's what he was looking for. And fortunately, we provided that.

**Narrator:**

And the bigger picture for you, coming to London, coming to work with Tom and the Aquatics Centre has made you understand better what the word legacy means?

**Jane Figueiredo:**

When you come to the London Aquatics Centre, you understand legacy because you have to give back. You have to leave something so that when people come, Jane just didn't come and blow through here like a tumbleweed and just take all the glory with Tom Daley's medals, and then she just blew the popsicle stand and off she went. And that's what it means to me. I want to leave something where people will go, "Wow, look what they built. Look what they built." We started with Tom Daley eight years ago, one funded diver, and we now have 12 in the space of eight years. And that was my goal from the very beginning, to build, to create the best diving program in the United Kingdom, and possibly in the world. And that's all relative because what does the best diving program actually mean? But for me, the best diving program was to place as many of the top juniors and senior divers onto the top British diving teams competing for Great Britain.

Whether that be the number of Olympic members on an Olympic team, which is very significant for us. We had six Olympians this past Japan, Tokyo Olympics, starting with one in 2016 with Tom. And we believe in two years, we're going to place probably more than that on a team. So yes, the legacy, it is a big deal now because I think it's important to leave something significant, something that's going to hopefully have a sustainability, that's a big word in our program. Are we going to be able to sustain it? Are we going to be able to continue to produce these great divers and great people? We lost one of our amazing coaches, David Jenkins, who was my assistant coach at London Aquatics Center. He has been with me for seven years, and so I have a different purpose now. I'm going back for different reasons. I'm going back because there's something special about taking David's legacy and pushing it to somewhere different and somewhere more special, and just making sure that his legacy is remembered and valued and appreciated. That's just something I have to do.

**Narrator:**

Jane Figueiredo. Just outside the Aquatics Centre on the River Lea, as we heard from three-time Olympic gold medalist Pete Reed in the last episode of My London Legacy, London Youth Rowing are now based on the park, while another Olympic and Paralympic sport that took place elsewhere in London in 2012 is now also using Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

**Mark Proctor, Academy Coach at British Canoeing:**

I'm Mark Proctor. I am an Academy Coach at British Canoeing, an ex-athlete turned coach five years ago, and I'm based at Lee Valley White Water Centre in Lee Valley. Off the back of COVID, we had to think a little bit differently and we couldn't travel, and a lot of our athletes get a lot of stimulus from traveling. Canoe slalom is a sport that gets people involved who need change frequently. They're the kind of people who want to jump off waterfalls. That's why they turn up every day. It's not because they want to run in a straight line, fast, every day. They actually need that stimulus. We were trying to think a little bit outside the box as a program, and how could we stimulate them? Because we were at a period of time when you could only travel to the canoe course and the gates would shut behind us. It was totally isolated to us, no public were allowed in. How could we get them out a bit?

And so we reached out to the Olympic pool down in Stratford to see if we could do our flatwater testing within the pool, because it's conditions that they are not variable. What I mean by that is if we do it on the flatwater lake at Lee Valley in February, the temperatures could be five degrees. You do the same test in June, the water could be 19, 20 degrees. And if you weren't aware, water temperature massively impacts boat speed. Actually, what you want from these flatwater testings is you want a consistent variable. You want the same temperature each time. What a pool does, it has that. Actually, you get more of a understanding of where the athlete is because you're not having to deal with these other factors that could be impacting on their performance.

And it was great to go down there in that time because we got to see the divers there as well. We killed two birds with one stone because we got them out, got the athletes out, got the staff out, which is also important, to a new environment. We got them in this pool, but we also got to see other sport work. And in that period of time, we were probably again a bit lost, and seeing people was a really good stimulus for us. That was really good. And off the back of that, athletes requested to do the same again this year. Yeah, there was more people in the pool this year and there were more people swimming around and stuff, which was really different to the year before, but it was just really great to be part of that. And we'll be going back again, I'm sure.

I don't know anyone that wouldn't get a buzz from seeing the word Olympic pool before you walk into it. And you've got young adults here and you've got athletes here that have been involved for a long time, who have been to Olympic Games, but it's like it's a carrot in front of them. Could go to any pool and you probably know you're about to do a physical session and it's going to hurt. But when you walk under the entrance and you've got an Olympic pool, pretty easy to get motivated, and it's so good that we've got it on the doorstep, and it's so good that there's a bit of a clear line of sight between the two centers as well. That really helps. That legacy is still there, 10 years on. I think it's a really healthy place to be as a country, not just canoe slalom.

**Narrator:**

The Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centers played host to the women's hockey World Cup and wheelchair tennis Masters since staging the Paralympic tennis in 2012. All types of cycling is now available at the unrivaled Lee Valley Velo Park, road racing, BMX, mountain biking or track cycling. That famous Velodrome is also home to Bikeworks, that gives 3,000 people with disabilities regular access to cycling, and it hosts the final two rounds of this year's UCI Track Champions League in December. Other venues like the ArcelorMittal Orbit, Hackney Bridge, and the slightly newer ABBA theater are also playing their part, bringing people to the park and making it a real visitor destination. Two of London's leading netball and basketball clubs have also made the Copper Box Arena their home.

**Mark Clark:**

I'm Mark Clark, I'm the head coach of the London Lions WBBL women's team based out of the Copper Box.

**Sam Bird:**

Hello, my name is Sam Bird. I'm the CEO of London Pulse Netball Club, and I'm also the head coach of the Superleague team.

**Narrator:**

How prestigious is it to have that venue on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, that people will have such fond memories of modern pentathlon, handball at the Olympics, goalball at the Paralympics, and now it's your home court?

**Sam Bird:**

It's absolutely fantastic. It's a fantastic place to train, and we train there twice a week, and the athletes have access to use the gym every day of the week. But probably more importantly, we play our home matches at the Copper Box, and it really has become the home of netball nationally and internationally. And so, for us as a club, to be able to play at the Copper Box is just absolutely amazing.

**Mark Clark:**

Well, when you're working in a facility that size, that good, that quality, it obviously sets the level for the program, sets the level for the presentation of the game. And I mean I'd go as far as saying in terms of home venues, it's the biggest home venue in the WBBL/BBL, and the atmosphere generated with fans in there is second to none.

**Sam Bird:**

It's so good because you do still get a sense of the other users that have been in the venue at the Olympics, and those users that have used it, and now we make great use of it and we still drive large numbers of fans to our games, and we interact with those people in and around the Copper Box as well, those businesses. And you do really feel like you are on the Olympic Park and part of the Olympic Park. Even though we tend to stick to the Copper Box, we do use the outside spaces as well and we interact with a lot of the businesses near there. It's a very special place to be.

**Narrator:**

And how much do you feel part of the community on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park?

**Mark Clark:**

It's not easy, but it's straightforward to be successful on court. I mean, you recruit good players, you coach well, your organization is run well, and that's relatively straightforward. But to really multiply the impact of that, you need to be out in the community. And as you say, it's not just about playing basketball. Basketball itself has the reputation of being accessible to all, and that's a huge factor in this day and age, that there's a sport can be accessed by anybody and everybody.

**Sam Bird:**

I've been involved in netball most of my life, too many years to mention. And being in London and being able to inspire Londoners and young women and girls to be active, come and see role models, just come to the park to see what else there is, it's a real privilege to be part of that story. And we are very keen as a club to encourage that diversity. Netball is a cheap sport to take part in compared to lots of others. It is genuinely accessible to anybody to play. As you know, we run visually impaired netball as well, and we run a lot of junior netball camps from the Copper Box. And it's part of our philosophy and our ideology to share our sport and all the positive things it brings with health and mental wellbeing onto the park. At the top level, obviously we are doing our very best to compete to be the best team in the country. But on a community level, it's about accessing and providing pathways for people to engage themselves in sport and feel part of the London Pulse family on the Olympic Park.

**Mark Clark:**

If you've got the inspirational stuff of professional sport generating the interest, and then you've got programs such as the Lions going into schools, generating the opportunity for players to play. The Lions have an Academy Program that will take kids, pretty much you would hope like a football scenario, take kids from eight and nine and 10 in primary schools and let them have fun playing basketball, that you would hope there's a pathway there. But the base of the pyramid is pretty healthy. There are a lot more outdoor courts now. There are some great organizations doing tremendous work in regenerating some outdoor courts, which means you literally can just walk up the street and play basketball. From going in and organize sessions into primary schools, which is happening increasingly. Every club in the WBBL and the BBL will have school programs. They'll generate that interest. But most importantly, kid gets a session in a primary school, the ability to go out onto a street corner and onto an outdoor basketball court and just play whenever they want is going to give kids the chance to play even more.

**Narrator:**

Do the other teams, when they come to London, do they say to you they're a bit jealous of what you've got there at the Copper Box?

**Sam Bird:**

All the time. All the time, from the players. Again, I've tried to promote the accommodation to our opposing teams as well. They'll often come and stay at The Stratford, or the other end of the spectrum, there's the Snoozebox, which is brilliant for fans. And often, the players will say, "Oh, I just can't believe you've got this facility here. You've got this amazing Copper Box, you've got amazing accommodation, great food." Yeah, it definitely annoys all the athletes that are playing against us. But what we are doing, on a serious note, is setting the standard, and our game hopes to go fully professional in the next few years. And we are already operating at a professional level because of the facilities we have and the investment we've got, and the great sponsorship we've got.

**Mark Clark:**

The game day experience is not just about guys shooting points. It's about the entertainment. The sport is fast, it's exciting. There's not a moment where you're not engaged in the event, and every young kid, it's a family-friendly sport in that sense, because you've picked your own level in terms of what really what rocks your boat, so to speak, for the game. It makes you smile, watching London Lions play basketball because we play it with a smile. And at the moment, people need to do that. But you have fun, and I think that's the biggest deal. It's a high level, high tempo, high level sport. But you have fun watching it, and the players have fun playing it.

**Narrator:**

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is one of the most accessible places in the world, and the Paralympic legacy continues as the Wheelchair Rugby League World Cup is about to be staged in the Copper Box this autumn.

**Jon Dutton, Chief Executive of the Rugby League World Cup:**

Hello. My name's Jon Dutton. I am Chief Executive of the Rugby League World Cup 2021, being delivered this year in 2022.

**Narrator:**

It's going to be a huge event, the Rugby League World Cup. It's going to be right across the country. But how important is it that you are going to be in London, in the heart of London, on the Olympic Park, the venue we remember from the Olympics and the Paralympics, and being in the Copper Box?

**Jon Dutton:**

Oh, it's absolutely fundamental to us in the journey, in selecting our host venues. It was really important that we came to London, at the Olympic Park, to be at the Copper Box to start our wheelchair tournaments with England versus Australia there. First of all, very much looking forward to it, but secondly, so important to us that we have that footprint.

**Narrator:**

And tell us a bit about that wheelchair tournament, because this is pretty unique, that you're bringing the men's game, the women's game and the wheelchair game all together under one umbrella.

**Jon Dutton:**

Yeah, we've got quite a lot of Rugby League to look forward to, 61 games across 21 venues. But we decided way back 2015, 2016, that we wanted the three blue ribbon events of Rugby League, men, women, and wheelchair athletes, on the same platform, for the athletes to be treated with equality, and to really showcase Wheelchair Rugby League. Many people probably think they have seen it, and it's probably the Paralympic version. This is an opportunity to celebrate Rugby League, celebrate inclusivity, and see some absolutely amazing athletes delivering some unscripted drama. It's indoors, it's five players, but it's a mixture of non-disabled and disabled athletes, and a mixture of men and women. So going back to inclusivity, it has everything. We could play together with some disabled friends. And that really does, we think, set that apart. It gives that inclusive aspect for people to look forward to.

But it's 80 minutes. It's 80 minutes of physicality, some might say brutality. It has skill, it has dexterity, but it also has storytelling. We start with England-Australia. We've got a father and son playing for Australia in the same team. And I just think that's quite incredible. And James Simpson, who is a Wheelchair Ambassador, actually featured in the closing ceremony for 2012 for the Paralympics and will now represent England. But all of this is a celebration. It's a celebration of people, it's a celebration of pride, and it's a celebration of place. And I think that link between 2012 and 2022 absolutely works for us.

**Narrator:**

What is your call to action? What are you telling the people of the world about the Rugby League World Cup, and in particular, coming and seeing some games maybe on the Olympic Park?

**Jon Dutton:**

Absolutely. We want people to experience watching these amazing athletes in person. Come, see, witness. And I think particularly from a wheelchair perspective, if you've never seen the game before, I think you will go away a lifelong fan of the sport.

**Narrator:**

The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games were staged in what have become some of the most iconic sport venues in the UK. But like the park, they've grown and developed too with many more sports and local people using them for fun and fitness. And there's still plenty more to come. Don't forget, you can share your memories on social media, #London2012, #PassTheBaton, and sign up for the latest Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park updates on our website, QueenElizabethOlympicPark.co.uk. This is My London Legacy, a Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park podcast.