

**GBR**

Gerard Dillon

I started playing volleyball in 1981 when I was approached by the GB National Coach at Stoke Mandeville Sports Centre in England where the British Amputee Sports Association held their national games and also their multi-disabled sports training weekends. The GB coach asked me if I would be interested in joining some training sessions with the GB volleyball team, which I did and quickly fell in love with volleyball. I felt it was a dynamic and exciting team sport, which fitted my own sporting profile.

I took up volleyball over many other sports I could have taken part in. I found volleyball to be high tempo with a high level of skill required to play. I needed to be very fit to play, as many of our matches lasted a long period of time with many over five sets. Furthermore, this experience allowed me to also play and train at a high level with national and local able-bodied volleyball clubs, which I was a member of and played regionally for.

In the early years, the greatest influence on my development in the sport was a gentleman called Pete Pina-Rosa who was an above knee amputee and was the GB team setter at the time. He used to take me to training sessions in London, playing and training for British Airways volleyball team. Later on in my volleyball career, it was the GB volleyball coach Jim McKenna. I was inspired by his eye for detail and the way he could breakdown a volleyball drill, which allowed me to understand the mechanics of what was required to improve my skill levels. As well as improving my physical playing, he also taught me the importance of the psychological side of any sport and by having a good mind set to your game. This I feel made me a better volleyball player and sportsman. Also, there was our GB Volleyball Manager Gordon Black which I learnt other general life skills from, both for general life and working in teams.

I had the great pleasure and honour to represent Great Britain over 100 times in standing volleyball competitions as the teams joint setter and also as an attacking player covering Paralympic Games, European and World Championships.





GBR

Gerard Dillon

I represented GB at 4 Paralympics games in standing volleyball:

- 1984 Paralympics New York USA
- 1988 Paralympics in Seoul Korea
- 1992 Paralympics in Barcelona Spain
- 1996 Paralympics in Atlanta USA

In between the Paralympics, I also represented GB at numerous world and European standing volleyball competitions from 1981 until my final international competition, which was at the Pan-AM Open in Montreal Canada in 1999.

I represented Great Britain in the following international tournaments:

- 1985 European and World Championships in Norway
- 1986 World Championships in Israel
- 1987 European Championships – Open France
- 1989 European Championships Poland
- 1989 World Championships Las Vegas
- 1990 World Championships France
- 1991 European Championships Great Britain
- 1993 European Championships France
- 1994 European Cup Slovakia
- 1995 European Championships Open Poland
- 1998 World Championships in Poland
- 1999 Pan-AM Open Canada

In addition to the above international tournaments, I also represented Great Britain in a number of friendly international standing volleyball matches against France, Slovakia, Czechoslovakia and the USA.



**GBR**

Gerard Dillon

The Great Britain Volleyball team also played in National volleyball tournaments every year against able-bodied volleyball teams at various indoor and outdoor tournaments in the UK. This was not only as preparation for up-and-coming international events, which we were due to compete, but also as a showcase to demonstrate to able-bodied teams what the GB disabled volleyball team could and did achieve and in many cases beating able-bodied volleyball teams.

I currently use my experience of my volleyball days by regularly giving motivational talks about my experiences in the competitions I took part in, visiting school children, businesses and individual organisations. I have recently become a visiting lecturer at the South Bank University in London where I give talks to new medical students every year about my life as an amputee and also about my life as an international standing volleyball player. This has been a great source of inspiration, not only to myself, but also to the students and people I have met. This is an opportunity for them to ask personal questions regarding my life as an amputee and also about being an International athlete. It is also an opportunity for them to see and feel the latest prosthetic legs first-hand.

Awards received:

Bronze Medal at the World Standing Volleyball Championships in Los Vegas in 1989.
I was widely recognised as one of the world's best volleyball players who had a joint disability as I am an above knee amputee and only have a thumb on my right hand.
Best GB Young player at the 1984 Paralympics.

Official posts held:

1985-1998

Administration (Governance) Committee member and eventually Vice Chairman of the British Amputee Sports Association

Head of the British Amputees Sports Association delegation at the Youth Disabled Games in Miami in 1989.

