Spotlight Session & Special Olympics #1

**Intro:** [00:00:00] What's your story? What does accessibility mean to you?

**Josh:** My name is Josh Basile and I'm your co-host today, on today's show, I'm a C 45 quadriplegic, paralyzed below my shoulders, and a power wheelchair. I'm the Community Relations Manager at accessiBe and a passionate disability rights advocate and trial attorney focused on breaking down barriers to access and inclusion for people with disabilities.

**Novie:** I'm Novie Craven. I'm the other co-host for the Today's Show. I'm a proud Special Olympics athlete and employee of Special Olympics International. I play boxing, basketball, and about any other sport you can think of. I love Special Olympics in the work our organization does to promote friendship, respect and of course inclusion. [00:01:00]

**Josh:** In collaboration with the Berlin local organizing committee, inclusion Revolution Radio and accessiBe have teamed up to release a podcast mini-series highlighting the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023.

Guests will include athletes, coaches, volunteers, ambassadors and technical delegates involved in the games. We believe it's important to showcase all of the amazing work that goes into the world games and how it serves as a catalyst for building a more inclusive world.

**Novie:** Today we'll be talking with Regan Hofley, who will be representing Team Canada, the special Olympic Olympic World Games in Berlin. Regan has been an athlete for 15 years and has collected some impressive awards during her career. She has dominated in her sports of athletics, winning a total of 75 [00:02:00] medals. Welcome Regan to the Inclusion Revolution Radio podcast.

We are so excited to have you here today.

**Josh:** Hi Regan, yeah we are absolutely excited and your 75 medals that's incredible, but before we, well, let's just dive right into it. Tell us a little bit more about yourself. Introduce yourself.

**Regan:** Oh, my name is Regan. I'm from a small town called La Salle, Manitoba, just outside of Winnipeg.

I'm in Canada. I've been in Special Olympics for 15 years now and I love it. And I'm part of an amazing club team in Winnipeg, and I've been on the team for 10 years.

**Josh:** That's awesome. And I know you have been with the World Games and everything, you love games. So let's play a quick game here. What comes to mind when I say the following words?

Inclusivity, accessibility, sports and determination.

**Regan:** Stength, because it takes strength to get to these levels and to get to our world [00:03:00] games.

**Josh:** And like with that strength, how much did you have to put into at training, at work. Tell us about kind of what went back into that to be a medalist.

**Regan:** Oh, it took a lot of training and mental work. When I wanted, when I wanted something bad enough, I knew what I had to do and I knew I had to keep fighting and not give up on myself and keep pushing forward and never give up.

**Josh:** I love that.

**Regan:** Until I achieved my goal.

**Novie:** I'd love to know more about your background with Special Olympics. How did you get, how did you get involved and what sports do you play?

**Regan:** In 2008, a coach from a club team approached me cuz he had found out that I had an intellectual disability when I was volunteering at a track meet Winnipeg. And of course I, when I got approached, I wanted to take up the opportunity. So that following fall, I joined my first Special O team. And then in 2012 I joined my first [00:04:00] track team. And I've been in track since 2011 slash 12 until today.

**Novie:** That is amazing. Totally amazing. Yeah. So keep up the good work.

**Regan:** Thank you.

**Novie:** Tell me more about your training process leading up to Berlin Games.

**Regan:** Well, right now I'm training three times a week. Sunday, Monday, no, Sunday, Thursday, Tuesdays. I will be getting a personal trainer in the coming weeks and I don't know what days a week I'll be training with that person, but I train three times a week right now. And, my training regimens like varies to every practice, some days I do longer runs, some days I do corners, and some days I do, like broken thousands.

**Novie:** Wow. Even a personal trainer that is. Wow.

**Josh:** Gotta get ready of the games.

**Novie:** Cool, cool, cool, cool.

**Josh:** I love that.

**Novie:** Can't wait. Can't wait to.

**Josh:** What was it like to have your dream come [00:05:00] true with participating at the World Games?

**Regan:** It's like, it's amazing, really. I'm like being able to experience these games is gonna be a like a life changing thing for me. Yes, this is my second games, but it doesn't matter if it's your your first or second games, it's still gonna be like a lifetime experience. Being able to experience a world stage, experiencing athletes from around the globe and meeting amazing people. I'm meeting amazing athletes.

**Josh:** Have you been to Germany before?

**Regan:** I have not. And I'm actually really excited to be going to Europe because I actually have ancestry from Germany.

**Josh:** There you go. So welcome back to the homeland and you're gonna be fighting for gold again. I expect that.

**Regan:** Yeah.

**Novie:** What would you tell other athletes who would want, who want to be where you are, where you're at?

**Regan:** I would tell them keep fighting, don't give up on yourself. If you believe you can do something, you will, but if you believe you can't, you will never achieve your goal. [00:06:00]

**Josh:** That is a great answer. And always putting yourself out there and showing what you can. You, you never know what's possible until you try.

And I think you're a testament to that.

**Regan:** Thank you.

**Josh:** And why is it so important for the Special Olympics and really other organizations to host large scale events like the World Games?

**Regan:** Because it shows athletes like us that we do fit in and that we do deserve the spotlight just like any other para or mainstream Olympic athlete out there. It shows us that we have a place in sport too, or just as good.

**Josh:** And so it's like, it's a teaching moment at the same time of having competition, but it kind of paints a picture to the world of what's possible.

**Regan:** It shows people like that are normal, that people like us can do what they can do. Nothing can hold us back.

**Josh:** It's all, it's all about inclusion. Let us participate, let us, let's have a fighting chance to, to dance. Win a medal and I just, I'm still in [00:07:00] awe, 75 medals. That's, it's an incredible feat.

**Novie:** I need to definitely catch up with that. I definitely need to catch up with that one.

What has been your favorite experience with Best Olympics?

**Regan:** Oh, I have a lot of favorite experiences. I have really good experiences from nationals I've been to in the past, like in Nova Scotia. I got to go to the Atlantic Ocean for the first time and I got a gold medal in a pentathlon and I made some new friends out there.

And then my, number one favorite experience was, has to be my first World Games in Dubai. Cuz that experience was like amazing. Like that's a once in a lifetime trip and a once in a lifetime experience where you get to go to a country that is very diverse and very good, like hospitable, and very good to people who aren't from there, and it's an amazing experience.

**Josh:** What was, I wanted to ask this to, what was it like winning that first gold medal?

**Regan:** Oh wow. Very like [00:08:00] fulfilling, like when I got up on that podium with the gold, I got emotional. I was very happy and my coach from home was there to see me compete. So seeing her standing in front of me on the gold medal podium was very special moment for me cuz I got to share that experience with my coach from home.

**Josh:** Yeah. Over the years, have you made a lot of friendships through the games?

**Regan:** I have. I have a whole variety of friends from across the country. I even have friends in your guys' country, in different states in the US.

**Novie:** Sweet. Well, we're friends now definitely. You know, definitely. Yeah. It's amazing to, you know, be able to, you know, be on that podium, you know, and have my mother watching me too, and when I found out, I found out we got the gold medal in the, for the teams one.

I literally, I ran to my coach of course, but after I ran into my coach, I literally ran to my mother and was like, gave her her the [00:09:00] biggest hug and she was like, had tears welling in her eyes and definitely it was just amazing to just have, you know, that person there to be there when you win that one special medal and just definitely, it was just amazing. And it definitely, I bet you both were crying like crazy and it was just amazing too.

**Regan:** My coach and I, there's a picture of her hugging me and in the photo it looks like she's crying. She was so proud of me.

**Novie:** Absolutely.

**Josh:** I can feel it. I feel like I'm there with you talking about it.

**Regan:** Yeah.

**Josh:** And what are, what do you think are some of the biggest gaps currently for businesses prioritizing kind of access and inclusion for people with disabilities?

**Regan:** Like sponsors?

**Josh:** Sponsors, businesses. You go out to, on the internet, you go to stores, you go anywhere, do you feel like businesses are [00:10:00] welcoming enough of athletes in the Special Olympics or people with disabilities to be a part of this world.

**Regan:** Yes. Sponsors and stuff like that are extremely important because they help sponsor for us athletes feel to go to a games or to be able to go on our trips to nationals and all that. We wouldn't be any, we wouldn't have an organization without our sponsors.

**Josh:** And do, what do you think businesses could do better at to continue doing, to include people.

**Regan:** Doing more like in, like interviews with athletes in Special Olympics and promoting it more.

**Josh:** So keeping the conversation going.

**Regan:** Yeah. Keep promoting it.

**Josh:** Breaking stereotypes, right?

**Regan:** Yeah.

**Novie:** Like did, when you went to, where's the last, when's the last last competition place you went to? .

**Regan:** My last major competition I competed at was in Niagara Falls in Ontario. I was at the Canada Summer games.

I got a gold and a silver and the gold in the 200 and a [00:11:00] silver in the 100 meter dash. Those were the last major competition I was, I took part in.

**Novie:** Did they like, did they sponsor like shoes or a hat and stuff?

**Regan:** Oh I'm trying to think of what their sponsor was. They had a variety. Canada games is a different organization. They're not solely Special O, it's also generic athletes in there too. I'm trying to think. Oh my God, I'm trying to think of who the sponsor was. Pretty sure Tech was one of their sponsors.

**Novie:** Okay. Okay.

**Regan:** And sports Canada. And the Canada games obviously organization sponsor.

**Novie:** Like, Brooks sponsored shoes for, when we went to Seattle, Brooks sponsored shoes and, you know, they, yeah I'm actually wearing my shoes today actually. It was just, I have like two pairs of them and definitely.

**Regan:** I own Brooks as well, actually. I have a pair for [00:12:00] regular shoes that I wear all the time. And then I have my other ones that are more expensive, that I wear solely for training.

**Novie:** Right, yeah. These are just, I mean they're so comfortable. It's unbelievable. Yeah.

**Josh:** And why is it so important, as a Special Olympics athlete to have access and inclusion on social media and on websites.

**Regan:** So that people can see our journey and follow our journey along the way.

**Josh:** I mean, how long have you been doing your journey media?

**Novie:** That is definitely, that's amazing that I just, I don't have words to, you know, piggyback on that one because definitely, you know, promoting Special Olympics on social media and just, you know, this podcast, you know, I've put, a lot of people have reached out, like, you know, we've put it on Facebook, we put ads on Facebook and people have just reached out and like not knowing we haven't reached out to them they reach out to us and it's like wow, you know really.

**Regan:** How do I [00:13:00] get involved all that and how do I join.

**Novie:** Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. And it's just amazing.

**Regan:** I actually got one of my schoolmates when I was in the 10th or 11th grade, 11th grade, to join Special O with me cuz he was so intrigued by my experience with it. So he wanted to join and he did. So he did.

**Novie:** Absolutely. That's amazing.

**Josh:** And if somebody wanted to follow you on social media, where could they go to learn more.

**Regan:** My Facebook account and my Instagram, those are the two major platforms that I mostly post on.

**Josh:** I love that. And I'm guessing just if they search your name, it'll pop up.

**Regan:** My Instagram is Regan Elizabeth at underslash 22, and my Facebook is my first and last name.

**Novie:** Okay.

**Josh:** Beautiful.

**Novie:** Sweet. In a few words could you answer the question, what does accessibility and inclusion mean to you?

**Regan:** It means, well, like, it [00:14:00] means basically to have everyone united. It means no one discriminates anyone. No one treats anyone any different than any other person. We all treat each other as unequal.

**Josh:** I love that.

**Novie:** Excellent answer. I love that too.

**Josh:** And thank you Regan for joining todays episode on Inclusion Revolution Podcast and spotlight session collaboration. We are beyond impressed with your dedication and commitment to not only becoming a better athlete each day, but a leader in the movement for a more inclusive world. We are both rooting for you to bring back some medals for Team Canada and just thank you so much for joining us today.

**Regan:** Thank you for having me.

**Novie:** I can't say enough how much this really has been. I'm telling like you will blossom. You know, people have been, now when I talk about Special Olympic [00:15:00] people are like, Special Olympics, isn't that where people Paralympic and stuff. I'm like, no it's a different Special Olympics. It's Special Olympics that have people have, that are wheelchair bound. They put blind.

**Regan:** People are deaf. I actually have an athlete on my club team this year. His name is Christian Garrow. He is deaf and he talks with American Sign Language. He doesn't, he's nonverbal. He has a cochlear implant so he can hear sounds, but he can't understand what they are. So we write things down for him cuz he can write and then talk in sign language, but he can't speak our language. He can't talk.

**Novie:** Right. I have a colleague of mine who does power lifting and he's blind and it's like Ben, I mean he can lift. I haven't seen him left, but he's got several gold medals and it's like, wow. You know, just to. Definitely. But, [00:16:00] definitely you know, can't wait to, you know, see that, you know, and definitely, you have my permission to definitely post this podcast everywhere you like and definitely just tell your friends about this podcast and definitely, you know, maybe we can get more collaboration with Canada.

And definitely, you know, just been amazing to talk to you about how you're so excited about World Games and I know you're just gonna throw it of the park. I'm just like with a track, you're definitely gonna send me a video or something like

**Regan:** Yeah. If you add me on social media, you can follow my journey and you can reach out to me so that you can get to know me more and I can tell you more about my experience.

**Novie:** Yeah, just have your person send us your social media account and definitely I will definitely hit your follow and definitely.

**Josh:** We'll all be posting together and.

**Novie:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, definitely. Definitely.

**Regan:** You guys, even [00:17:00] after this, if you guys add me on social media, you can follow see me, like follow my journey between now and June. Cause I'll be posting my journey about how well I do at my regional meets leading up to the games.

**Novie:** Oh wait, it's Regan.

**Regan:** Stuff is going all through.

**Novie:** You said it's Regan, it's Regan.

**Regan:** Regan Elizabeth underslash 23. Facebook is Regan, my first and last name.

**Novie:** R A R E G A N.

**Josh:** Novie we'll definitely get it to you.

**Novie:** Oh, yeah, yeah, definitely, definitely, definitely.

**Josh:** After the recording. Thank you so much Regan, for being our first on the podcast, and it's just wonderful having you. And thank you for all of our guests for staying till the end. Take care everyone.

**Novie:** You too.

**Josh:** Bye.

**Regan:** You too.[00:18:00]