**TRANSCRIPT OF Caz Walton and Victoria Austin, taken from Disability Live from Tokyo: From 1964 to 2020: A journey of Disability Innovation**

**MONDAY, AUGUST 23RD 2021:**

VICKI: I have the honour and pleasure of now handing over to a conversation, or to beginning a conversation with the legend that is Caz Walton. For those who are Paralympic nerds like me, this is a special moment indeed. Maybe we can spotlight Caz for this, because it would be great to see her talk rather than the slides, because I just would love to ask you a couple of questions, Caz and thank you so much for joining us today. Firstly, I guess an introduction, so Caz was/is retired wheelchair athlete, she was in numerous Paralympic Games between 1964 and 76. She won a host of medals in a series of sports and took a break before coming back to support athletes. This is her second Tokyo Paralympics. To that point alone we have that honour our opportunity here to ask what was your experience of the first Tokyo Paralympics? Giulia, maybe we can see Caz?

CAZ: It was an extraordinary Games for me, but I guess everybody's first Games is extraordinary. I was just so fortunate to be here, because I had only been competing internationally for about a year. I was still pretty young and I wasn't originally selected. Someone went sick with about three weeks to go.

VICKI: I didn't know that.

CAZ: Yes, I got hauled in. I turned up in Tokyo not even really knowing what I was going to be competing in. So it was a very pleasant experience for me and an extremely exciting one. I had never been out of the country before. So to come to Tokyo and have that experience and differences in culture it was just phenomenal for me. It began a lifelong addiction, it's the only way of describing it I think. It was a very different world in those days. So, because places weren't particularly accessible then we weren't able to get out and about and see things outside of competition very much. It's a bit like Covid today.

VICKI: It's quite similar your experience of Tokyo during the Paralympics?

CAZ: In that respect. Which is a shame because the accessibility has changed so much of course. But I do have an endearing memory of the warmth and the willingness of the people, the volunteers to help to do everything that they could and to put on what turned out, certainly for me, to be an absolutely fantastic Games.

VICKI: Perfect. I guess that is really interesting because the accessibility in Tokyo has changed. I know that the city have been works and the cities have been working so hard to try and make a difference.

CAZ: Yes they certainly have. The public transport is very accessible. I came out about three years ago to do an access survey for Paralympics GB. I was amazed, because things weren't so accessible, the transport was accessible. I am talking from a wheelchair perspective, but in actual fact it was just a better experience all around for any type of disability. I mean what a joy and delight to be able to find accessible toilets in every station and to be able to get on and off of trains and buses with ease. It was just, well, it was something I like to experience for the rest of my life.

VICKI: That is amazing to hear and while we are talking about technology and using a wheelchair and being able to get around the place, it's a good time to reflect on, how do you think the technology has changed? Thinking about the experience of athletes in 1964 and then now in Tokyo 2020/21. It must be a really different experience in terms of the tech that people are using, whether it's to compete or to help training, what do you think?

CAZ: I think technology has given a huge degree of independence to people with a disability. I don't know whether, it isn't always of course generated by sport, but there have been huge innovations in wheelchair design and the technology that they use for racing wheelchairs or for wheelchair basketball has been extended and disseminated down, so I hope that wheelchair users generally benefit from it, because you have lighter wheelchairs and wheelchairs that are more tailored to individual needs. The same goes with things like prosthetics. Who had ever heard of a blade back in the day? And the sort of blades that are used for racing and for field events for instance are used in everyday life now but not in the same form. So it's been beneficial from top to bottom. They used to call, I heard sport called a war without weapons, which is perhaps a little harsh, but it's true in a way. Because technology advances I think go at such speed during something like a war, because the impetus seems to be greater. So you get faster change. I think that is something that Paralympic sport, in the main has been able to generate because it's been needed at that level, but it has actually filtered down and benefitted, I hope, everyone.

VICKI: Caz, that is such an important point, because a war without weapons reminds me of the way that a lot of innovation and technology is driven with a mission, with a really clear mission that people need to drive the change. Whether it's winning the war or putting a person on the moon. Often times that is when we see the acceleration of a lot of technical innovation. I love that, a war without weapon, it's a nice way to think about it. Now we have Johnny's blade camp on the telly, so it's quite a different world to the one that you began in.

CAZ: It is indeed. Back in the day when I came to large competitions with other disabled people, it was the only time I felt normal. That, certainly for me is no longer the case. I can go pretty much anywhere and feel equal and have confidence that I am as good as anyone else which is not the way I started out.

VICKI: That is wonderful. Because of the change in societal attitudes?

CAZ: Yeah, I think there has been a huge shift in perception. I wouldn't say that we are there yet and some countries are further ahead than others but it's one of the gifts, I think, that the Paralympics can help to give you because it has the focus and the publicity to drive that.

VICKI: That is such a strong point, with the IPC and Loughborough University they are screening the Paralympics in 49 countries for the first time. We did that because we think, imagine if you had never seen the Paralympics, what would your perception be and how would it be different? I wonder, what do you think in terms of how the Games can impact the perception of disabilities?

CAZ: I think they do and I think you mentioned London earlier. I think London was a seismic shift in the way that disability sport was perceived and I can remember, I can't even talk about it without getting...

VICKI: I feel exactly the same way, I know how you feel.

CAZ: I can remember sitting in the stadium and the audience just concentrating on the performance rather than the disability. It's exactly what you would want, it's exactly what you would want as an athlete and as a disabled person.

VICKI: And we need to make that possible.

CAZ: We do indeed and I hope that every innovation, whether it be improving sporting equipment for people like cycling or archery or shooting can benefit people doing grassroots port. Once you get the costs of the development out of the way and it becomes more affordable than hopefully it will benefit everyone.

VICKI: I love that. I love that idea. What a wonderful way to leave our chat. I would love to talk to you all day, Caz, I am so grateful to you for spending the time. Before I move on what are you most looking forward to seeing? Give us your top tips?

CAZ: Top tips, well, I am certainly not going to pick any individuals out, but I hope that the Paralympics GB, being slightly biased on the British side, will do as well if not better than the Olympic team did because they showed us the way. We have a tremendous team and a huge team spirit. Just looking forward to showing the world what the rest of the world can do.

VICKI: Or a bit better, thank you for the warm up, Team Olympics. I will be coming to my Japanese colleagues to hear their top tips later on today. Thank you so much for your time today. It's been a pleasure to listen to your reapplications on an amazing journey, also slightly choked myself.