

00:00

Text

Disabled people make up almost a quarter of the UK population.
Up to 70% of disabilities are non-visible.

00:08

Text

Level Playing Field
For disabled Sports fans

00:12

Darren

People have said to me, you know, "Why do you go to the game if you're blind?"

00:16

Ellis

I think I went to my first game when I was 3 or 4 years old. My dad carried me up to the back of the Kop.

It was just indescribable.

00:24

Junior

I runned up and said "Come on Swindon" really loud.

00:31

Ryan

We can't hear the crowd, but we can feel it.

It's like electricity going through your body, it makes your skin tingle.

00:40

Jayne

It's just a lifeline, it really is a lifeline to me.

00:45

Interviewer

What's a typical matchday for you?

00:51

Jayne

Everyone has their own little rituals.

00:53

Millie

I have to wake up at 7 o'clock, and then I play some FIFA.

00:57

Ryan

If we won the last game I always wear the same top.

01:00

David

If there's three drains, I won't walk on them because that's bad luck.

01:04

Charlie

Bacon sandwich. Get that down me.

Go grab my audio description headset from the disability liaison officer.

01:10

Adam

Having that routine of the same stewards, the same seat, the same way of walking to the stadium can really help.

01:18

Millie

I like to have my ear defenders, my hand warmers and then my gloves if I need them.

01:25

Adam

If they do find it too much or do get overstimulated, there is a safe enclosed environment to kind of walk away from the pitch or watching the game.

01:33

Sam

Something as simple as that can completely change the experience for him, and when he's fully engaged, he's cheering, he's clapping, he's running down to the front.

01:44

Cath

No matter what the weather was. If we were cold; wet - we'd be there.

01:48

Ellis

If it rains, I get absolutely drenched.

I'm the kind of person who continues even when it's foolhardy.

01:54

Jayne

We're all there for the same reason. To stand with our friends and watch a beautiful game of football.

02:02

Interviewer

What does going to the match mean to you?

02:06

Ellis

Football is one of those unique opportunities for disabled people, really, to get out and be considered as equal to everybody else. It's a real mixing opportunity.

02:15

Darren

I've never really understood why people find it so confusing that I would go to a game.

02:20

Darren

And I think it's because they think from a really simplistic aspect of what they think my experience of the game is.

It's not just the game itself. It's the journey. It's the music, the atmosphere. It's that shared experience that you get with a group of people around you.

02:38

David

We know all the songs. We can sign along with the singing I love it. The feeling of the crowd, the flags, the vibrations.

All the cheering, jumping up and down together.

02:52

Jayne

Going the match, it's just like it's everything to us. It's everything to me

When I was told I had the brain tumour, "I will get through this" I said, because like, when the first relegation... It's just the way you are I think – you've got to have that fight.

03:10

Nick

I think going to the game can be a real source of strength and an absolute escape.

But there's a real, sort of, beauty and freedom in the game as well.

03:18

Jayne

Even when we're losing, it's my happy place.

03:25

Interviewer

What is a non-visible disability?

03:29

Ellis

There's a really broad range of non-visible disabilities out there.

So it can be hearing loss, it can be sight loss, it can be neurodiversity, it can be any manner of things that people can't perceive.

03:42

Cath

People look, "Oh, why are they parking in a blue badge space? They can walk. Why are they using an accessible toilet? They're walking in." But that's not the point. You can't see the invisible-ness of the disability.

But then if somebody is judging you, you can tell they haven't got the awareness, they haven't got the understanding.

03:59

Charlie

I've always lived my life as a sighted person who can't see,

04:03

Charlie

To the point where then if I didn't have my long cane, chances are that a lot of people wouldn't know.

Me having it isn't always just for me, but it is actually for other people as well, because then they know to be able to give me a little bit of extra support.

04:16

Alison

I think people can look at Millie and think she's just an everyday 18 year old girl going about life. But they don't see the difficulties. They don't see the routines, the planning.

04:29

Millie

It doesn't look like I have a disability, but I do. I see it as a superpower because I've been gifted it.

04:35

Ellis

There's a lot of work in the whole of society that's got to be done around improving attitudes towards disabled people and improving awareness of the barriers that disabled people face.

04:47

Adam

With autism, sometimes it's difficult to deal with your emotions and understand your emotions.

Football can bring about the highest of highs and the lowest of lows.

04:54

Sam

When we got to the point where Junior was really struggling - when we were having issues with the fans not understanding him. If it wasn't for Junior's idea of this YouTube channel we probably felt that we couldn't go.

And now fans will watch your channel and go, "Okay, Junior's got ADHD. He's not just a naughty kid."

05:16

Alyssa

It's having to do with the way we think. We think differently. We go in different directions but we reach the same destination eventually.

05:24

Cath

If somebody wants to go to a football match, they should be able to get to a football match, be included, be involved and have the best matchday experience they can.

05:37

Interviewer

How can we continue to remove barriers through football?

05:41

Nick

Football is naturally inclusive. You know, that seat that you're sat on, you can be anyone.

05:45

Darren

For most people, I'm the first blind person they've ever met.

I use that as an opportunity to inform them what I get out of out of the game and what I get out of life.

05:56

Ellis

Living as a disabled person in this society can actually be quite disabling; quite isolating.

06:01

Cath

Loneliness is a big thing. Sometimes it's the only place they go.

06:06

Ryan

We've got a different way of communication, so there are barriers there.

06:11

Ellis

Football clubs can have a role in integrating people into their communities.

06:16

Nick

There's so much that football does for the world.

It educates, it entertains.

Football touches every part of society.

06:24

Ellis

It's about solidarity amongst people from all different groups, from all different walks of life.

06:30

David

Everybody's different, we're all different people.

But we're all wearing the black and white stripes - we've all got the same clothes on and we're all cheering together in the crowd.

06:39

Cath

It's being there, it's being a part of it, being in the middle of it - you're part of the family. And there's nothing like that feeling.

06:47

Alison

I don't even want to imagine football not being in our life. It's her whole life.

06:54

Millie

Football's everything.

06:58

Text

Unite for your team

Unite for fans

Unite For Access

07:03

Text

Level Playing Field

For disabled sports fans

Levelplayingfield.org.uk