

# GETTING THE WORLD OFF THE COUCH ONE SPORT AT A TIME

Toni Krasicki chats with our resident exercise adherence expert Paul Brown, as he and his family round the final bend in their 50 Sports in 50 Weeks campaign.

**W**ith just a few months left of the 50 Sports in 50 Weeks campaign, Paul Brown, his wife Jacqui and ten-year old son Ben, will return from their whirlwind journey through 25+ countries. Their mission, to learn 50 sports in 50 weeks and at the same time inspire and educate youngsters to get off the couch and try a sport, has been 'one heck of a ride!' according to patriarch, Paul.

When I catch up with Paul via Skype, Team Brown are in Scotland training for the Highland Games, and he's waxing lyrical about his surrounds. However, I am also duly reminded that they aren't on a family fun trip around the world or a bucket list break. 'We are busting our butts, almost going door-to-door sharing our message that we all need to get off the couch, to regularly do something active,' he says.

The Browns started their campaign in mid-October 2014 and are spreading the word through 'Get it Right' presentations for school-aged children and adults from Chile to Canada, from Russia to Taiwan, and so many other countries in between including Australia and New Zealand. 'We are worried about how inactive and unwell the current generation is. Someone has to stand up and say that this has to change,' explains Paul.

The whole project from the initial idea to

learning the first sport took about four years of long hours and tedious organising.

'There are no two ways about it – it has consumed our lives!' he says. 'We have many great supporters and partners out there but are still self-funding the majority of this, so it is a big commitment, but we are making a difference, so it's worth it. The year was mostly planned ahead but as with any long term plan, things can change. So we are still constantly confirming events, schools, media interviews and booking flights as we go, especially as new opportunities arise.'

On a typical week the Browns arrive, meet their sporting mentor, take in some of the local culture, deliver a school talk, undertake several training sessions and often also compete, then move onto the next sport.

A camera crew are following the Browns to capture footage of each sport for individual mini documentaries ([see 50 Sports in 50 Weeks on YouTube](#)) and eventually this footage will be used to create a made for television documentary about their mission. 'We have captured some amazing footage in many of the world's most iconic locations and with each sports' greatest champions, coaches and most passionate enthusiasts so the editors will be able to make some top quality TV with a positive message,' says Paul.

**In his own words, here is what Paul has to say about 50 Sports in 50 Weeks.**

## The highlights so far

Every week has been a highlight and everyone we've worked with has gone out of his or her way to accommodate us. We played Golf with Kari Webb at the LPGA Founders Cup in Arizona and it was amazing.

We learned Nordic Walking in the south of England, and it was gorgeous. Landing off the 20m Ski Jump at the home of the World Championships at Garmisch Partenkirchen was highly empowering.

We played Wheelchair Rugby in London with people who mostly through accidents have lost the ability to walk. Considering their attitude to life their positiveness and aggressiveness in sport, you would never have suspected any of them as having any sense of loss. It was a slap-in-the-face wake up call for those who are sitting on their butts, but don't have to!

## What I've learned

I've been really impressed with the incredible coaches we've met and have been humbled by their teaching skills and approaches. I've had a whole schooling in mentoring and coaching, which has been a massive honour and learning curve.



TONI KRASICKI

www.tonikrasicki.com.au



### It's made me realise

Every week we start as a beginner in the presence of masters, and every week we try to achieve some degree of competency at a new sport. It's a reminder of what new members at fitness clubs go through every day as they try to 'fit in' with those who are already fit. This entire journey has reinforced why I started the Face-to-Face Fitness Program back in 1995. I now understand, more than ever, the importance of receiving ongoing mentoring, advice and feedback, to ensure that new participants (in any pursuit) won't quit and will have their best chance at achieving their true potential.

### My expectations

Much of the experience has been even better than any of us expected, particularly in regards to our task of filming the journey.

We've had media accreditation at many major sporting events, so have been up close to the action and the players, getting their real perspective on how and why they love their sport. That's been very cool and the kids we are here to inspire really like that aspect to our story.

It's how we get their attention, allowing us to then share our message of how

important sports, exercise and smart food choices are to being healthy and happy.

### The unusual sports we've tried

There are a lot of sports that fit in to this category! There was Hurling in Ireland, Dog Sledding in Russia and a gruelling Eco Challenge in Chile's Patagonia.

Have you heard of Floorball? We hadn't, so we went to Finland and played with European Champions SSV Helsinki. From that we were invited to participate at the Australian Floorball Championships, just five minutes from our Gold Coast home.

Canoe polo is also big in Europe but again, we'd never hear of it, now we love it. We did Parkour, which is a French sport where you run through the city and leap from buildings. It was one of Ben's favourites but it's really tough, in fact I broke my big toe doing one of the jumps but that's an occasional part of playing hard, so no complaints from me. At the RUHR games in Germany we also played Wheelchair Table Tennis and we tried Sports (Cup) Stacking.

Not all sports are so physical or risky, there is something for everyone on our list of 50 great ways to get off the couch.

### How the family have fared

We've really got travelling down pat and Jacqui and Ben have become incredibly resilient to the kind of schedule we've kept. I'm very proud of how my wife and son have stepped up to each and every challenge, showing amazing resolve and courage, time and time again. The amount of work we have done has been hugely intense. It's probably a bit less fun for Ben, simply because he's missing his mates back home.

### The impact of 50 Sports in 50 Weeks

The direct measurable impact is evident in every school we've visited. We've got a following on social media and people are regularly hitting 50sports.org to watch our videos; but the real impact is the absolute change in the kids. You can see it. Last month we entered an auditorium full of high school kids whose body language suggested they'd rather be in a math exam! But by the end of the hour, we had them eating out of our hands – you could tell the message we shared really got through to them.

That one-hour will hopefully influence their choices for the rest of their lives; and that is exactly what 50 Sports in 50 Weeks is all about! **OH!**