



EHC NOW!

International basketball camp for people with haemophilia 2018

By Egidijus Sliuzys, President, EHC Lithuanian NMO

As you know the European Haemophilia Consortium (EHC) has been trying to promote physical activity through its #thisway campaign, which has mainly featured cycling as an activity to stay fit. Now, there are of course many other ways to safely practice sport and stay fit, even when affected by a rare bleeding disorder. This is why we are particularly excited to feature this week's EHC Now! story on the Lithuanian basketball camp. This activity has now become a bit of a tradition going on for several years and including not only young people from Lithuania but an increasing number of international participants coming from neighbouring countries and from across Europe. We hope you will enjoy this article!

For the third year already, the EHC Lithuanian National Member Organisation (NMO), LŽSHA, held an international sports and fitness camp during which many people with haemophilia had the opportunity to enjoy freedom of movement, exercise and wellbeing while learning new basketball techniques. The camp was held from July 16-22 in Birštonas at the "Tulpė" sanatorium haemophilia rehabilitation centre, a place specialised in the treatment of haemophilia. This year we were delighted to welcome to our camp people with haemophilia from Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, France, Slovenia and Bulgaria. The camp, as always, was a great opportunity to prove to the world and to ourselves that contrary to common misconceptions, people with haemophilia can also partake in physical activities. In fact, anyone who is getting the right treatment may sometimes even be able to do more than a healthy person. This was proved once again by our LŽSHA team, which this year also included international guests. For me, it's always great to watch everyone playing together with their blood brothers!



Participants at the basketball camp

Through this camp, we really demonstrate that our common 'problem,' haemophilia, really unites us and that united we can achieve a lot! Professional trainers and clinicians helped our participants to strengthen their physical condition. In fact, some of the participants of this year's camp came from countries with very limited access to treatment and were, therefore, in pretty bad

physical condition. But even in this short time they managed to improve their physical condition through a series of physical trainings specifically designed for them and including exercises in the gym and swimming pool, training on the basketball court and morning exercises on the grass.

A week is a fairly short period of time to learn the basics of basketball, but everyone has worked hard to prove that they can really dribble, shoot and score. I'm glad that this year a lot of young people from our NMO participated in the camp. Seeing them working hard in the gym and basketball court really gives us hope that the association's basketball team has a beautiful future ahead and that it will soon be filled with many new members.

Naturally, during the camp we held friendly matches between the Lithuanian and the visiting team and I am pleased to report that the LŽSHA team defeated our guests 64 to 42. Once again, we proved we are a basketball nation and that the lack of coagulation factor does not matter when you have basketball flowing in your veins since birth! Guests from abroad were thankful to participate in the camp and enjoyed meeting new people, doing some exercise and sharing experiences. During this camp we also started to film a documentary to showcase to the public and to people affected by haemophilia in Lithuania that sport and haemophilia go hand in hand when adequate treatment is available.



A participant ready to shoot

After all of this everyone felt considerably better and, in fact, we are proud to report that nobody got injured during this week and that there were no bleeds into joints or muscles and for this, I would like to thank our doctors and trainers who took such good care of our participants! These include: the sanatorium "Tulpė" team comprising clinicians, physiotherapists and nurse Onutė Malinauskienė, who helped participants with factor infusions. Our thanks also go to haematologist Rasa Kariniauskienė, who supervised our patients throughout the camp. Many thanks to physiotherapists Greta Baronaitė and Viktorija Jušinskaite for their exercises, kinesio taping and massages. Finally, a very big thanks to basketball coach Justas Ališauskas, who worked with the guys on the basketball court.

Last but not least, I would like to leave you with some comments from our international guests about the camp:

Gaétan from France said: "I used to play basketball when I was a child and in my teenage years but due to an ankle injury I stopped playing basketball ten years ago. For me being able to play basketball again with people affected by haemophilia felt incredibly lucky. It was a true honour to be invited to the camp, to meet new people from all over Europe and to better understand the importance and level of physical activity in different countries. The workouts during the basketball camp were quite intense and they really helped me to understand how loaded exercises and heavy practice could be performed without injuries. This really showed that anyone can play basketball and I wish to sincerely thank LŽSHA and its members for their

kindness and the time invested in this activity. I came back home having made new friends and with a strong willingness to promote physical activity for people with bleeding disorders.”

Bartek from Poland said: “It was my third time attending this basketball camp and, as always, it was an amazing experience. The LŽSHA basketball camp gives us the opportunity to feel like ‘normal people.’ The everyday practices were not that easy but they showed us that we can really improve our basketball skills, stability and muscle strength through tailored exercises. The camp was attended by people from all over the Europe and sometimes even further. The beautiful thing about this event is that we all like each other and we feel some kind of unity. We can discuss our health problems with friends from other countries and find new ways to deal with them. We can also discuss how the health care system is working in our countries. The camp ends with two friendly matches between the two teams and after each match everyone is a winner and the atmosphere is incredible. This camp is one of the greatest experiences in my life.”



Great atmosphere following a match!