

2016 Rio Paralympic Games Coach Profile: Karen Ross



Karen is a highly effective, passionate, totally committed and inspirational coach on the world stage. Over the past decade she has honed her coaching craft to nurture players to the highest level of performance, with considerable international success.

Coaching Career and Background

In 2006 Karen was coaching Kevin Simpson towards the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing. At this time she was approached to coach the 14-year-old Gordon Reid. She continued to coach Kevin and Gordon in a voluntary capacity whilst in her day job she was Tennis Scotland's Performance Officer, then Talent Performance Co-ordinator and ultimately Tennis Performance Manager. In June 2014 she took up the full-time position of Head of Disability Performance Coaching and Talent with the Tennis Foundation.

Karen has always applied her tennis coaching skills to the wheelchair game, where she had to adapt and modify and work with the players to best understand their individual needs. Karen prioritises what all good coaches should concentrate on – the individual. A great example of Karen's coaching prowess was her need to learn to coach the backhand, which is an entirely different stroke in the wheelchair game. She did her research watching hours of footage and real-life tennis in order to have secure knowledge and understanding, and continually building round the individual preference of her players.

Paralympic and International Coaching

Karen Ross, in her voluntary capacity and now in a paid position, has demonstrated how a learning coach can produce Paralympic and world champions.

Successes

Prior to Kevin Simpson being selected for Beijing, he had one match to win which was to be played in Japan. Kevin Simpson winning the match meant he had qualified for Beijing which, as a coach, Karen found hugely rewarding, as Kevin was her first wheelchair tennis player she had worked with.

In January 2016, watching ten years of hard work and dedication pay off when Gordon Reid beat the world's number one, Japanese Shingo Kunieda, at the Australian Open. Gordon then carried on notably to win the inaugural wheelchair singles and doubles titles at Wimbledon alongside further Grand Slam singles and doubles successes.