

ED and Sport - definitely

I am sure that many of you, like me, had never heard of Ectodermal Dysplasia before having a child born with it, let alone know what it is all about, I found it very difficult to accept the diagnosis initially and decided that I did not want my child to be treated any differently because of it. Of course there are some common sense precautions that we all have to take to ensure the safety of our children, but I decided to share them with James' carers on a need to know basis.

I realize that compared to some, James is very lucky. He has very fine hair, which is typically hard to manage, three teeth of his own and doesn't really sweat. However he only struggles with the heat on particularly hot days and doesn't require the assistance of a fan or air conditioning for most of the year. We are also supported by a wonderful dentist, who in fact made the initial diagnosis for us when James was about 18 months old.

One of my many things I wondered about when he was young, was how James would get on with sport, I need not have worried however, as James joined a local football team when he was 7 and the only problems we had were on hot days, particularly when they were losing! He was always a fast runner and won his school races on sports day. When he was 11, James joined a local cricket club. I was worried about how he would stand fielding on a hot day, but with hats and bottles of water, so far it has not been a problem. He ended up playing for the Northampton town's district squad in the summer of 2007.

When he started secondary school in September 2007, James was put in for a cross country race. This proved to be the beginning of a whole new world for him. He won his race and was put into a squad for a local town schools competition. In each of the five races that followed, James finished in 2nd or 3rd place. He was immediately approached by a local running club and joined them at the beginning of 2008. Since then, James has represented his club and school at county level for the last two years and continues to do so as I write. Through the summer months, he runs the 800m and occasionally the 1500m at track meetings for his club. By keeping him cool until the last minute, with ice, water and shade, James produced his fastest time for the 800m on the hottest day he ran last summer and earned himself a bronze medal in the County Championships.

I was always inspired by the articles I read about ED sufferers and what they had achieved, and I write this in the hope that any of you who are wondering how your children will get on with sport will realize that there are no boundaries to what they can achieve. The difficulties they have to overcome make them all the more I'm sure you will agree.

