



# VOX POP:

Do able-bodied athletes realise what they have?

Compiled and photographed by Julia Evans

I asked able-bodied athletes from various sporting backgrounds what privileges they thought they had as an able bodied athlete when compared to disabled athletes.

## Jabulile Nkuta



**Age:** 21  
**Sport:** Rowing  
**Occupation:** Student

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*The privileges of being an able-bodied athlete are that we have the freedom to pick whichever sport we want. Whereas if I'm disabled I have to look at sports which are already engineered for disabled athletes. Another privilege is that because we have more strength, we have more recognition and spectators than disabled athletes.*

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*The privileges we have as able-bodied athletes are that the sports are more designed for us. But I think a large thing is social perception; no one will pity you or look at your achievements differently - when you achieve something they won't be like, 'oh wow, that's good', they'll be like, 'oh wow, look what they overcame.' I think for able-bodied athletes our achievements are perceived for what they are and they aren't viewed in a different way because of a disability.*

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**Age:** 23

**Sport:** Cycling

**Occupation:** Student

## Abby May



**Age:** 21

**Sport:** Hockey

**Occupation:** Student

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*The biggest privilege that able-bodied athletes have is that we have a lot more voice in terms of how policies can change - how this sport can cater toward our needs as able-bodied athletes. Whereas there is a lack of representation for disabled athletes, and because of that, the policies aren't reflective of that representation. As a woman of colour, there are certain stigmas about our race that we have to carry. I think when it comes to the representation of disabled athletes, their stigmas are much more in your face and explicit. It's a conversation that's rarely ever had, especially in sports like hockey where disabled athletes are not really considered."*

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*Being an able-bodied player within the sport definitely has its advantages, there's a big pool and more opportunities for those players to compete within the sport. However, there are still adaptations to the game that allow players with disabilities to compete in it and enjoy it as well. South Africa's actually at the forefront internationally of wheelchair tennis. We had great success at Wimbledon 2019, as well as blind tennis making its way internationally. So there are more opportunities making way for players with disabilities to be able to compete in an environment alongside similar players with similar abilities and skill sets.*

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**Mathew Boyd**



**Age:** 29

**Sport:** Tennis

**Occupation:** Tennis Coach

**Lauren Nixon**



**Age:** 22

**Sport:** Waterpolo

**Occupation:** Student

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*When you are an able-bodied athlete... everything works - you just go to the pool, you don't have to worry about anything else. But as a disabled athlete, it must be so strenuous competing with able-bodied athletes or trying to relate to them because your life is just completely different. So there are a lot of privileges an able-bodied athlete has, but you have to just not take it for granted that you are able to play a sport I guess, and just be very grateful for what you have*

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## Micheal Alberts



“The privileges we have are a greater variety of sporting options, not having the extra hassle of having to, ‘gear’ oneself up for a sporting practice or match in order to account for one’s disability. I think that sponsorship opportunities for going professionals are easier to come by and more lucrative (from a money perspective) than that of disabled athletes. Greater participation and general support is given to abled bodies athletes and their sports, compared to disabled athletes. And not having the frustration of thinking that your disability is the reason that you haven’t been able to excel in the sport of your choice.”

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**Age:** 21

**Sport:** Waterpolo

**Occupation:** Student