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Sheffield Sharks basketball team chairman awarded Lord Mayor Award

Chairman Yuri Matischen was awarded Outstanding Contribution to Local Sport after his years of helping provide Sheffield significant sporting events and opportunities.

The chairman of Sheffield Sharks was awarded a Lord Mayor Award by Lord Mayor Jayne Dunn on March 13 at Sheffield town hall.

Yuri Matischen received the award for Outstanding Contribution to Local Sport.

He helped stage the World University Games in 1991, an event which kickstarted development of major sports facilities in Sheffield such as the construction of Don Valley Stadium and improvements of Ponds Forge.

He is also the managing director of the Sheffield major sports events company founded during the games called MLS which has helped host over 30 world and national events in sports.

Matischen, aged 63, said: "I had a strong affinity with student sport and I think that stimulated the opportunity for this region to have new facilities.

"People think, 'Well, Ponds Forge has always been here,' but it's a ground-breaking swimming complex and it's still fantastic today, over 30 years old, people forget."

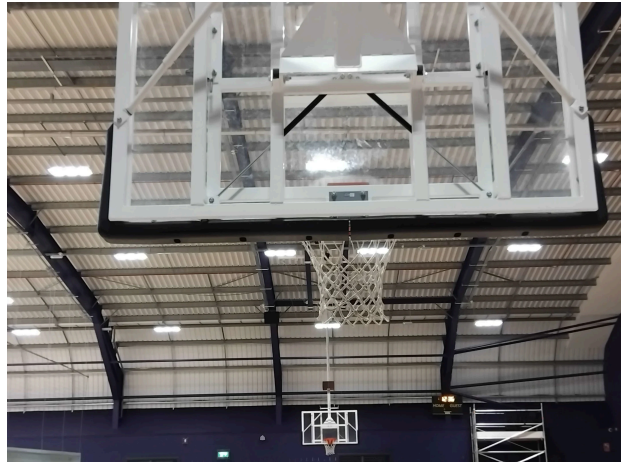
He has been involved heavily with student sport when his first job after Loughborough University was general secretary of British University Sport, now called British Universities and Colleges Sport.

He also helped work on the 2012 Olympic Games and, as a company, developed a plan for the Olympic Park when Don Valley Athletic Stadium was knocked down.

Matischen said: "But on top of that, we set up our professional basketball club called the Sheffield Sharks. When we started we were just an amateur club.

"I'd coach and drive the minibus, do all of those crazy things, and eventually we went from three years as an amateur club to semi-professional, then got investment and went professional.

"We're able to play in an arena which has been invested in by one of our big sponsors, Canon Medical, and we've also opened a multi-sport facility for use by the city, particularly by many young people."



Sheffield Sharks, now on their 30th season as a professional team, are based at the arena which also features a diagnostic and medical suite for the community, NHS patients and private athletes.

Matischen said: "When you peek through the window here at Canon Medical Arena you will see that we've got youngsters in here from all ages. What we're doing is inspiring young people to be healthy and think about improving their health and preventing disease.

"That's a big part of what we've done and whilst we were playing professionally as a sport, we had huge community programs that outreach to young people to improve the education about health, nutrition, smoking cessation and now vaping."

He has also worked to provide alternative provision for young people who are at risk of exclusion or have been excluded from school so they have a place they can come with teachers, get a different experience, and get back to thinking 'that education is a good thing.'

Matischen said: "We've used sport as a vehicle to help the community beyond sport."

His plans are to continue growing the Sheffield Sharks and Sheffield Hatters, the women's franchise, and create an academy for their own players.

Matischen said: "We've got a basketball academy, we want to sort of improve our homegrown talent opportunities and expand our community programmes even further.

"We're developing educational partnerships here where we'll be bringing overseas people to study here, but also play sports, football, basketball.

"We plan to use the vehicle of sport and the Sharks as a brand to develop more things for the community so we become ingrained in the city's DNA."

He also wishes to help create and be part of expanding the Olympic Legacy Park so it becomes a vibrant commercial, educational and research life sciences park.