

JAMAL MCKENZIE

CLIMBING MOUNTAINS FOR YST INTERNATIONAL

The work of the Youth Sport Trust and Youth Sport Trust International would not be possible without the support of those who believe in our missions. Every year we see amazing people chose to run, bike, bake and test themselves in a host of other ways to raise money for our cause. We value these contributions more than words can say, and call on anybody that believes in our mission to join the cause. One person who did just that is Jamal Mckenzie, a member of the Youth Sport Trust's Youth Board, who chose to trek up a Moroccan mountain to raise money for Youth Sport Trust International. Read his story below, and if you feel like doing something amazing for the Youth Sport Trust, email connect@youthsporttrust.org



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“My first direct experience with the Youth Sport Trust was different to the usual. It was not through a YST camp, being a team leader or young ambassador; in fact, my first experience with the Youth Sport Trust was when my local School Sports Partnership gave me the position of co-ordinator for their Connecting Communities programme at the age of 18. A programme I used to inspire, engage and empower the young people in a neighbouring community to where I live In Nottingham, through taking part in regular sport and physical activity. I personally did not enjoy sport until the age of 13, so I wanted to ensure the children of this community got an early start in a number of sports and games that may not be on the curriculum at school. Ultimately helping them find what they enjoy before the get to secondary school like me. From there I successfully applied to be part of the Youth Sport Trust's Youth Board, which gives a voice to young people throughout the organisation.

This was exactly the reason why I chose to climb Mount Toubkal in Morocco to raise money for Youth Sport Trust International. YSTi uses the unique power of sport to inspire positive social development in some of the poorest parts of the world. For the last two decades they have helped hundreds of thousands of young people develop key life skills that will help their future prospects.

Much like the Youth Sport Trust, YSTi aims to ensure that every child gets a great start within PE, sport and physical activity, which, given my experience with sport, I believe is vital for every child. Not only to possibly achieve international honours in the future as I did, but also to enable them to grow as a person.

Lauren Asquith (a fellow member of the YST Youth Board), Helen Vost, Jancis Walker and Hayley Gelenon and I embarked on the 2-day climb on the 24th of July 2015, where we travelled from London to Marrakech, Morocco. We travelled from the airport to Imlil, the village where we would stay the night before we set off on the 2-day trek. However, my brand new Adidas walking boots did not make it this far. Typical me, I managed to leave my boots in the middle of Marrakech airport, never to see that £110 investment again. Looking back, I find losing my walking boots hilarious, but at the time, I could not have felt any worse!

Taking part in the climb, it is most definitely one of the highlights of my life so far. It took 5 to 6 hours for us all to reach the summit from base camp. The majority of that was in complete darkness and ridiculously challenging! I remember in the final 3 hours or so I had to stop every 20 minutes because the altitude was giving me pins and needles



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all over my body, but eventually I made it! All of the team felt an incredible sense of achievement once we reached to top. This is a very cliché phrase, but it honestly felt as if we were on top of the world once we reached the summit... then we remembered we had to make our way back down. Walking back down was by far the hardest part. We were all contently falling on our behinds. However, Hayley managing to fall asleep on a rock as we stopped for lunch about an hour down from the summit is an image I will never forget.

Climbing Toubkal and raising money for Youth Sport Trust International is an experience I will remember for the rest of my life. I never took part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award at school so had never been on a trek and I had never raised money for charity as an individual before. Nevertheless, raising money for Youth Sport Trust International was possibly the best first experience of a challenging fundraising task and I would happily do it again!"

Jamal managed to raise a total of £1,370 for Youth Sport Trust International through a number of sponsorships and fundraising events with local schools. The funds that he raised have helped YSTi to deliver programmes overseas, including the Beckwith International Leadership Development programme in St Lucia (BILD). The BILD programme has reached more than 370,000 young people in Ghana and Tanzania, helping to promote key life skills like employability, leadership and gender equality through sport. The programme is currently being delivered in the Caribbean island of St Lucia, and has already achieved island-wide status. None of this work, or any of Youth Sport Trust's International work would be possible without the fundraising efforts of our supporters like Jamal.

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