

Matt Goodwin

Skill: Mechatronics (team competition)

From: Buxton
Competed in: WorldSkills 2005, Helsinki
Employer: Federal Mogul
Result: Certificate of Participation

Qualifications

- 10 GCSE's grades A-C
- HNC Electronics
- City & Guilds Licentiateship



Matt Goodwin developed an interest in Electronics at a young age. His father was an Electrician so he was introduced to the world of Electrical Engineering early on and his interest grew from there. Leaving school at 16, Matt initially started an Apprenticeship in Electronics working for Federal Mogul which makes brake pads. Whilst working there Matt was introduced to Mechatronics, a skill which combines engineering with electronics and so decided to make this his area of expertise.

How did he find out about skills competitions?

"I first found out about skills competitions from a former Apprentice who worked at Federal Mogul. Mechatronics is a team competition so you need a partner, and another guy from work and I thought that it sounded like it might be fun. I was doing my HNC at Tameside College in Manchester at the time and we got involved from there. It was after winning the National Mechatronics competition at Birmingham that I really got addicted!"

And how did he get selected to go to WorldSkills?

"After we won the national industry competition we went to Germany to take part in their national competition. Although we weren't actually competing with the German competitors we had to gain a certain score in order for us to qualify for the WorldSkills competition. Going to Germany in itself was a great experience and got us warmed to what it's like to be away from home in a different environment."

How did he find the training and preparation for WorldSkills?

"Looking back it was hard work and we sometimes questioned whether it was worth all the extra effort. We had to spend a lot of our days off training, practising and doing specific training for the competition and it was very wearing. However, having taken part in WorldSkills, I have to say it was an invaluable experience and I now realise just how lucky we were to have had this opportunity."

What kind of things did the training involve?

"Our training involved quite a lot of international preparation. As well as participating in the German competition we also went to the Dutch national competition for 4 or 5 days. The experience of being away from home and having to deal with language barriers and other cultural differences was a real eye opener and excellent preparation for WorldSkills. Its one thing to compete in the UK where everyone speaks the same language and enjoys the same comforts, but it's totally different when you're abroad mixed up with a lot of people who have very different lifestyles to you."

Did you receive a lot of support from your employer?

"In this respect we were really lucky. Our employers were brilliant – everything we could have asked for. They gave us time off to practice and covered us by paying overtime to other staff when we had to be away training. It can't have been easy, so we were really appreciative. I think it made all the difference in helping us feel prepared for the competition as we would have really struggled otherwise."

So what was WorldSkills like?

"Stressful! Going over to Finland was fine and I felt relatively calm. I must admit the nerves did kick in once we were at WorldSkills, the sheer size of it is daunting. During the competition we started off well but made one mistake which cost us dearly. I think we would definitely have stood a chance of medal success if we hadn't made this mistake so it was hard to recover and carry on feeling positive."

How did you cope when things went wrong?

"We had two Team Leaders who we had trained with before the competition on things like staying calm under pressure and managing situations when they go wrong. These Team Leaders supported us throughout WorldSkills and I found it really helpful to talk things through with them we messed up.

I also think having a partner really helped. We had a laugh together which relieved the pressure and helped each other when it got tough. I think we both didn't want to let each other down."

Was there anything you didn't expect?

"It was much bigger than I had anticipated. I know this is something that struck the whole team, we weren't prepared for the enormity of the event, and it was absolutely amazing. My parents came out to cheer us on and they also said they weren't expecting anything like it."

What benefits do you think taking part in WorldSkills has given you?

"The entire experience has given me loads of benefits. Thanks to WorldSkills I've got better skills at dealing with people, it's fast tracked my career progression and I've got a CV which really stands out. The fact that I've trained for and taken part in such a major international event also proves I am dedicated when I put my mind to something which sets me apart from the next person."

So what will be your lasting memory?

"For me the team experience is what comes to mind most. The whole thing was so fantastic and we went through it all together, the highs, the lows, the excitement, and became really close as a result. It was such a special time, one which the more I look back on it, the more I'm glad I did it."

Has WorldSkills changed anything for you?

"Definitely. I am much more confident and self assured since taking part in WorldSkills and all that it entailed. When I first got back from Finland my company agreed to fully fund me to undertake a degree course in Electronic Engineering and within 6 weeks I had been promoted to a Maintenance Manager where I managed 35 people. Since Christmas I've been promoted again to a Project Manager. I'm quite sure that if it hadn't been for WorldSkills I wouldn't have got so far so fast so it really has given me a great step up the ladder."

Any thoughts on your long-term plans?

"I'd quite like to be a Project Manager on something like Wembley Stadium. Overseeing the building of something like that would be amazing – but whatever I do I'm sure it will be Engineering focused."

What advice would you give to future competitors?

"Put everything you've got into the training and preparation for WorldSkills. The more you put into it the more you'll get out of it and give it your very best shot as you will reap the rewards in years to come."

And finally, what do you think will be the benefits of WorldSkills coming to London in 2011?

"I think it's fantastic that WorldSkills is coming to London in 2011 as it will raise the awareness of how great WorldSkills is. If more people could just see what it's all about and how inspiring it is, I'm sure more companies would get involved in supporting skills competitions as they would realise the benefits on offer to them as well."

For more information, please contact the PR Team, UK Skills: 020 7612 9260