

Talks at GS
With Nicolas Hamilton, racing driver
And Kene Ejikeme, head of Multi-Asset Platform Sales in EMEA
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Kene Ejikeme: Good morning, and welcome to today's Talks at GS. I'm Kene Ejikeme. I'm a managing director here at the firm. I'm absolutely delighted today to be joined by racing driver Nicholas Hamilton.

2015 he became the first disabled athlete to compete in the British Touring Car Championships against able-bodied competitors. And in February last year, scored his first ever BTCC points. Nicholas, thank you so much for being here today.

Nicholas Hamilton: The pleasure is all mine. Thank you so much for the opportunity.

Kene Ejikeme: So Nicholas, we have so much to cover. I guess maybe the best place to begin is at the start. Please, why don't you share with us a little bit more about your journey.

Nicholas Hamilton: When I was born, I wasn't breathing. Whisked away to an incubator. My mum always said how difficult that was. She wasn't able to actually hold me. I wasn't breathing when I was initially born, so they didn't know whether I was going to make it. And, yeah, I went home after six weeks. My parents didn't really see any progression that said they realized -- when I was crawling as a toddler, most able-bodied toddlers, they alternate their legs when they walk or crawl. I was just dragging my legs behind me. It's almost like my legs [UNINTEL].

They were pretty much like, "There's something wrong with our toddler. He's not really progressing how we would like him to." So they took me back to the hospital. That was when I was diagnosed with my condition.

The interesting thing about cerebral palsy is it's an [UNINTEL] different types of conditions. I got specified [UNINTEL] down both of my legs. Then there's heavy [UNINTEL] which is down one side. And then it can go to as severe as not being able to feed yourself, not being able to talk, being completely reliant on a wheelchair.

So I cast myself as one of the lucky ones. And, yeah, my parents made a collective decision, I would say, to make my life as tough as possible and to not wrap me up in a cotton ball. And it comes [UNINTEL].

Kene Ejikeme: So then how did you get into racing?

Nicholas Hamilton: I always loved motor sport. I ate, slept, and breathed it. It's all I knew. So I turned my attention to racing games and simulators. I got this game through the door. I got this 20-pound steering wheel from PC World. I put it on my desk. I couldn't use my legs, so I used buttons for the steering wheel, and I just practiced and practiced and practiced.

And I learned everything I needed to know about car setup and engineering to then just general race craft and qualifying laps and all those sort of things. And I got so good at it that I joined the British Chairmanship at 2009. And then I won the British Championship using buttons and a steering wheel.

And then after winning that championship, my brother was like, "Wow, you've clearly got what it takes. We should try and put you in a proper race car." But I didn't think that I would be able to drive one physically because my legs weren't [UNINTEL].

And so I went to my dad. I said, "Dad, would you put me in a race car?" So my dad eventually gave in and took me to this driving school in Bedford. I went in with the chief instructor. He said, "Just show Nick around. Just sort of give him the opportunity to drive."

They put me in a BMW M-3. And I went in with the chief instructor, and I was just as fast as him. I matched his time on my first day. So my dad almost kicked himself because, "Shoot, I might have shot myself in the foot a bit."

He took me back two weeks later to make sure it wasn't a fluke, and I did the same thing. He was super impressed. And then it was like, wow, maybe this is a direction that's fit for you to go into motor sport, which was, as I said, everything I always wanted to do.

Kene Ejikeme: Okay. So that's one little giant leap. Then there's another giant leap to actually making it happen. You've got the capabilities, but then getting the funding together, getting the sponsorship, getting the support together. How did you do that?

Nicholas Hamilton: So I really had to knuckle up and sort of chuck my ideas together. I know nothing about marketing or return on investment or branding or anything like that. So I was desperate to continue motor sport. After my first two years in racing, I didn't have enough money to race, so I didn't race in '14. Didn't race in '13.

I tried to reinvent myself and, yeah, I decided go to into the British Touring Car Championship, which is the pinnacle of British motor sport. And I thought, I don't want to be outside, out of mind, so I've got to try and get there. And so I was just desperate

to try and figure one-out how I could build my brand and get sponsorship, get people to invest in me as a person, be a part of my journey because there's a lot of people saying, "Oh, Nick, you're so inspiring," but getting them to actually part with money and realize that for me to continue to develop and continue my story, it's not like buying a pair of swimming trunks and going swimming. I have to raise a lot of money to be able to continue to do it.

As time's gone on, I've now tried to be as open as I can about raising funds. So I would say my target was always to go back into British Touring Car Championship because that's where I'm going to be the most valuable. British Touring Car Championship is, as I said, the pinnacle of British motor sport.

Before COVID, we were having 50,000 to 60,000 fans per weekend. I am the most funded driver in touring car palette. And so my value is getting strong and stronger, but getting there is the real big issue. So I just never give up. And every winter, November, I'm on the case. I'm talking to as many brands as possible, trying to get the right contact, marketing directors, CEOs. And I've basically had to learn how to be a marketing director, how to be a CEO.

Kene Ejikeme: How to sell.

Nicholas Hamilton: And how to be [UNINTEL]. So it's now a culmination of, I would say, the last six, seven years to where now I can say that I'm proudly, proudly, proudly a regular on the British Touring Car route.

Kene Ejikeme: I think it's just so amazing the amount of resilience that you've shown just to kind of go at it and just do it yourself. And now we can sort of see the wisdom your parents had to sort of give you a bit of tough love in the early days because I can guess you're leaning on a lot of that strength now. And it's phenomenal.

Nicholas Hamilton: Thank you so much. And just quickly, last thing for me, I just want to say thank you for the opportunity. I'm just [UNINTEL] millions of people [UNINTEL] story. Everyone here watching today has a story of themselves already achieving some fantastic, great things personally to themselves. It's all about going around your own direction, your own route regardless of what people say. But it doesn't mean that my story's any better than yours. I've just been fortunate to be able to tell you about it and share it with you. And if I can inspire just at least one person on this call then I've done my job.

And as I said, this is my purpose. This is what I do. I've realized that it's my motor sport that gives me the purpose, the reason to get up in the morning, overcome my condition, and then to be able to talk about it and share my journey, my story, my mentality, how I work with you guys is amazing.

I would say life is 90% mental, 10% physical. So I would say it doesn't matter how physically fit you are. If you're not mentally strong enough, you're never going to achieve your potential. So make sure you work on your mentality, especially in a time like this. There's always light at the end of the tunnel. Stay strong, and I hope that I get to meet you guys in person. Thank you once again for the opportunity. And I look

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