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# Paralympic Post

IN COOPERATION WITH



## Victorious at the Games

Gold rush for ParalympicsGB

## Pistorius the ambassador

"Sport is a valuable tool"

**SecEd**  
The GNVU weekly voice for secondary schools

**NASUWT**  
The Teachers' Union



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### Cover picture

Hannah Cockroft won the gold medal in the T34 100m wheelchair race for ParalympicsGB at the Games. The woman from Halifax won her heat by over two seconds and broke the eight-year-old world record by one and a half seconds in the London Olympic Stadium. The 20-year-old Paralympian personalises her racing companion, she named it "Sally".

photo: Helene Wiesenhaan / Getty Images

# Hello!



photo: Mousetrap Media

The skill, strength and amazing athletic ability demonstrated during the Paralympics have held the world spellbound and it is an honour for the NASUWT to be able to support the Paralympic Post 2012 team in being at the

heart of it.

As expected, the young people selected to take part in this project have thrown themselves into this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and their enthusiasm and hard work is evident in every page of this publication.

Giving young people the opportunity to examine and report on the Paralympics and communicate their views and experiences to the wider world is an important stepping stone in breaking down many of the prejudices about disability.

The NASUWT hopes that the reports and stories in the Paralympic Post, along with the achievements of the top class athletes competing at these games, will help to tackle misconceptions and disability discrimination and demonstrate that prejudice has no place in our society.

**CHRIS KEATES,**  
General Secretary of the NASUWT,  
the largest teachers' union

# Hello!



photo: LOCOG

On behalf of every Briton and every lover of sport, it has been my great honour to welcome everyone home to the Paralympic Games. The movement that has led us here, to this exhilarating moment, to these incredible Games,

begin here in Britain on the day London opened the 1948 Olympic Games.

The Paralympic movement shows what sport is all about. Sport is about what you can do, what you can achieve, the limits you can reach, the barriers you can break. And everything sport stands for we witness at these Paralympic Games.

The enthusiasm for these Paralympics has been extraordinary – our venues full of passionate fans, cheering on our athletes from around the world. I am delighted that so many people have taken the chance to be there. We want to inspire a generation and these Games will help us go forward with this vision.

The Paralympic Post has been a great champion of these and previous Games and I am delighted that they are helping to bring the Paralympic spirit to an even wider public.

**LORD SEBASTIAN COE,**  
Chair of the London Organising Committee  
of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG)

# Hello!



photo: Steve Lindridge/ideal images

The entire Paralympics GB Team was most excited to compete on home soil. We were pleased to welcome the world to London and compete against world class athletes with the support of our home crowd. It was a pleasure

to see that the Paralympic Games have finally come home again and are being covered by projects such as the Paralympic Post.

The whole Paralympic movement began with a British-German cooperation: Sir Ludwig Guttman, a German doctor, started the first competitions for disabled athletes in Stoke Mandeville. This is seen as the birthplace of the Paralympic movement. We are delighted to see that this special partnership was continued with the Paralympic Post. Students from Germany and the United Kingdom were working together as a team to produce one of the only papers focusing exclusively on Paralympic sports. Their enthusiastic attitude and authentic coverage was welcomed by spectators and athletes alike.

It was a pleasure to have our Team's performance showcased by the Paralympic Post reporters.

**TIM REDDISH,**  
President of the British Paralympic Association



photo: Thilo Ruckes

## PARALYMPIC POST - THE TEAM

The Paralympic Post/Paralympics Zeitung has been a remarkable and unforgettable experience for all those that have been involved in it and it is something they will remember for the rest of their life. Twenty talented young people from the UK, Germany and Switzerland were given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and they have grasped it firmly with both hands. As part of an innovative project they have been able to report on the hugely successful Paralympic Games, alongside thousands of journalists from around the world who have descended on London. The reporters have interviewed all kinds of athletes, right through to the coaching staff behind the scenes and all the way up to the German President himself. In producing five different editions of the Paralympic Post newspaper, they have shown that they are more than capable of producing a fantastic-looking, entertaining and well-informing newspaper. As you will see it is packed with insightful reporting, interesting features and sharp news writing that is a pleasure to read. Not only have they shown a tremendous writing flair and a keen eye for their subjects, they have also demonstrated their ability to look behind the action. This project has taught them the importance of meticulous research, writing to style, length and of course deadlines. But above all it has shown them how to approach different types of people, when to be tactful, compassionate and sensitive and when to be firm and assertive, all valuable skills for a journalist.

**BEN PADLEY, journalist NASUWT**



# Golden girl of the pool

Ellie **Simmonds** has been the face of the Games. With the expectations of the nation upon her, she delivered a series of incredible performances

CARINA CANAVAN, 18 YEARS

**T**wo days, two gold medals, two world records. Ellie Simmonds is not your average teenager. This young woman has achieved more in a week than many people will in their lifetime. At only 17 she is the face of ParalympicsGB and smiles from numerous billboards all over the country.

After her amazing gold medal win at the last Games in Beijing, pressure was on Ellie to repeat her success. With her tearful joy after her amazing win at just 13, she touched the hearts of the British public.

Well aware of the high expectations placed on the ParalympicsGB swimming squad and especially on

herself, at the London 2012 Games, she still remained calm and focused. Ellie knows what she wants and she has the self-belief to achieve it: "Personally I believed I was going to get that gold medal."

After winning gold and smashing a new world record in the first week of the Paralympics, she was overwhelmed by the crowd's support and the amazing atmosphere in the Aquatics Center: "I think I'm just running on adrenaline really. I'm really on a high, but I've just got to focus on my races." Ellie does not let the expectations or her fellow competitors unsettle her: "I have my own race that I race. I control myself." The swimming star, who is the youngest person to ever receive an MBE, recognizes the incredible support she gets and is thrilled by her performance at the Games: "It's great to be in form in the biggest race of my life." Although she is still an A-level student dealing with the difficulties of everyday life, Ellie appears to be unstoppable in the pool. She manages to juggle the pressures of being a teenager and a Paralympic swimmer very well and believes that her parents have a huge role to play in that: "My parents are great at keeping me on the ground and supporting me, as well as my coach."

Her great backup and support group stop Simmonds from being intimidated by the pressure and expectations: "I just focus on myself. I try to keep myself in a bubble to the outside world. To be competing in a home Games and to be competing in a crowd that is from my country I think is amazing."

Simmonds is not the only inspiring competitor at this year's Games. Team mate Jonathan Fox is another young British talent. The 21-year-old fished the first gold medal out of the pool for ParalympicsGB when he won the S7 100m backstroke. After his debut in the Beijing Games, where he won silver, he is delighted to be on the squad competing in London and thinks the atmosphere at the Games is "ecstatic."

Four-time Paralympian Sascha Kindred OBE, who has been competing for ParalympicsGB since the Atlanta Games is another star in the swimming squad. The 34-year-old has been swimming for almost 20 years and held the world record in the SM6 200m individual medley. Although he is one of ParalympicsGB's most successful swimmers with numerous medals to his name, he is not as well known as fellow swimmer Ellie. A gold medal on home soil might have changed his fate. But although he managed to improve his personal best by almost half a second at these Games, it was only enough for silver. For the first time in this century, gold in the men's 200m individual medley didn't go to ParalympicsGB but China's amazing Xu Qing. The other half of swimming's 'golden couple', as Sascha and Nyree Kindred are called, has also added to the family's medal collection. Nyree won silver in the women's S6 100m backstroke.



Winning is fun. Great Britain's Ellie Simmonds celebrates as she wins the Women's 200 metres IM Final SM6 category.

# Fighting spirit

Although Paralympics GB's **judo** stars went into the Games with injuries, the squad hasn't been this successful since the Atlanta 1996 Games

LUCY MICHAELLOUDIS, 17 YEARS

**T**he ParalympicsGB's judokas have bagged one silver and one bronze medal which is their biggest haul since 1996. But with expectations higher than ever this year, the team found it difficult to console themselves about not picking up any golds. "In Beijing I won the bronze medal and in London I lost the gold, that's how I see it," said a somewhat downhearted Samuel Ingram, the team's silver medallist.

Despite their hard work, the team suffered some setbacks before the Games. Team captain Ben Quilter was injured during the test matches around the 50 day mark before the Games, where he snapped the cruciate ligament in his knee. Winning bronze felt like "a relief as much as it is a real achievement and something I'm going to be extremely proud of". Quilter went into the fight with the injury he'd sustained seven weeks prior and said: "I wasn't really sure what I would be capable of." He admits he was "struggling to think positive" before heading into the match.

Ingram too has been out of action recently due to injury which dashed his gold-medal chances. "The Paralympics are the second time I've fought in 23 months," he said. The optimum would be every two to three months." Ingram needs more fighting practice in order to be at his peak and he will look to reach that in four years in Rio 2016.

Quilter explains that going into a match injured is very difficult psychologically. But it seemed the home crowd were the perfect remedy as they cheered on the ParalympicsGB judo squad to the most success since Atlanta. "The crowd were out of this world," said Quilter.

# Dead center

Archery star **Danielle Browne** was always on target for her second Paralympic gold

From the moment Danielle Browne's first arrow thudded into the centre of the 122cm sized target the crowd sensed it was going to be her day. "I told you she was going to win", said one little boy to his mother as they left the Royal Artillery Barracks patriotically draped in union jacks. Paralympic archery star Danielle Browne took up the sport in 2007 and was the first ever ParalympicsGB archer to compete and win team gold in the Commonwealth Games. Unlike training for other sports archers don't have to prepare physically as much as psychologically. Danielle says, learning to cope with the mental pressure "is probably the most important part of it." She was very well prepared and looked after by the great support team surrounding the Paralympic archers. At London 2012 the 24-year-old successfully defended her Paralympic gold in front of the cheering home crowd: "It was incredible, really, I had never experienced anything like it! I mean I have shot in front of crowds but mostly they are quite polite. But these guys were shouting their heads off!" **GEORGE SIMMONDS 16 years**



Silver and bronze. Samuel Ingram (left) and Ben Quilter fought for Britain's judo team.



BY KERI TRIGG, 17 YEARS

The rowing finals seemed certain to result in some podium finishes for ParalympicsGB after the heats and repechages saw all British rowers qualify for the medal events. With Britain's overall victory in rowing at the Beijing 2008 Games, and the added incentive of maintaining the high standard that GB's Olympic rowers set just a few weeks ago, the pressure was really on for a top performance by our Paralympians at Eton Dorney Lake.

Tom Aggar was a firm favourite in the men's single sculls, due to his gold medal finish in Beijing and the world champion status he had maintained since. He dominated his heat, finishing a comfortable five seconds ahead of the Republic of Korea's Jun-Ha Park with a personal best time of 4:56.65. With a place in the final secured, Aggar's confidence was then shaken when the top three rowers in the second heat all beat his time, though this could be partly attributed to a change in the conditions. It all came down to the final race. To the dismay of the thousands of spectators cheering for him, Tom narrowly missed out on a medal with his fourth place finish. Despite crossing the line in an impressive 4:58.08, Tom's five-year reign at the top of his game came to an end as the gold medal was given to China's Cheng Huang, who finished ahead of Australian Erik Horrie and Aleksey Chuvashv from Russia.

Moreover, Paralympic newcomers Samantha Scowen and Nick Beighton narrowly saw the Bronze slip through their fingers by 0.22 seconds in the Mixed Double Sculls. Despite their best efforts, China again claimed gold with a six second lead over France, who took second, and the USA, in third.

The fourth place curse was eventually lifted in the last final of the day, the Mixed Coxed Four. Hopes were high, as this was a crew that had never, and still have not, been beaten. Despite winning their heat with a five second lead, the team knew they would have to give it their all in the final, as the top three in the second heat all beat their finishing time. Coach Mary McLachlan said, "the times in the

# Fabulous five row to gold

The British **rowing** team worked hard all winter seven days a week. At Eton Dorney Lake only some were rewarded



Done! Britain's team rows off with their gold medals after winning the LTA mixed coxed four.

heat were so confusing because the conditions changed, and in rowing that can have a huge impact. Going into the final, we knew we were going to have to produce something pretty special to get across the line first."

As well as the joy of her crew emerging victorious, McLachlan also feels for the other rowers who weren't so lucky. "We know what an exceptional athlete Tom is," she said. "Today they had more than he had, and that's a real shame. I'm sure he'll be back to take on those guys another day."

The members of the mixed coxed four, James Roe, Pam Relph, Naomi Riches, David Smith and cox Lily van den Broecke, pulled out all the stops in the final stretch, finishing with a time of 3:19.38. Despite trailing for the first half of the race, the loud home crowd helped the crew secure a two-second lead over their German opponents, with Ukraine claiming bronze.

Naomi Riches, the only crew member with previous Paralympic experience and a bronze medal from Beijing, said: "Each person in this group has pushed themselves to as far as they could to reach their potential. We believed that we could put in our best performance. We know the Germans are really quick so it was a case of who can perform best, but we had the confidence from the results that we've had for the past two years."

Evidently exhausted from a busy day, the team's celebration plans were simply to "eat, sleep and catch up with friends and family that were neglected," according to James Roe.

Cox Lily van den Broecke described the rigorous training regime the crew underwent in order to make themselves medal contenders. "I just sit there and it's been hard for me," she said, before praising her teammates, "I know you guys have worked really hard."

David Smith said: "Rowing's a relentlessly hard sport and we've trained all winter seven days a week. It was all those long days, three to four hours a session, three to four sessions a day that made that difference."

"They raced brilliantly, and they all completely destroyed themselves trying to get over the line first," added coach McLachlan.

# Ladies first

"Gentleman" and his **rider** Lee Pearson step aside, while Natasha Baker and Sophie Christiansen collected gold medals for the British team

LUCY MICHAELLOUDIS, 17 YEARS / EMILY JAMISON, 18 YEARS

The golden nation of para-dressage reigned in the team competition retaining their hundred percent gold record from the past five Paralympic Games. However, in the individual classes they graciously accepted defeat. Lee Pearson, para-equestrian veteran, performed very well on his volatile horse, "Gentleman", but was piped to the post by Paralympic first-timer Joann Formosa, 51. It seems Gentleman, who will be reti-

ring after these Games, had been "struggling physically" with the demands of performing every other day over the six days of para-dressage and thus Lee was able to win bronze in the freestyle event and silver in the individual. Despite Pearson being tipped for surpassing Tanni Grey-Thompson's record of 11 golds to become one of Great Britain's most decorated Paralympians, the pressure of home Games and the strength of the new debutantes proved too much.

"Despite suffering with the worst nerves of my entire life, I rode the best test I could have done. I

will be as proud of this silver as I will be of the gold medals on the wall."

The challenge Lee Pearson faced from Joann Formosa was seemingly a tough one, with the competition not being over until the last rider's score had been confirmed. Exciting and nerve-wracking for both the audience and the competitors alike, the medals Pearson has won at his home Games mean just as much to him as his gold medals after facing very stiff competition from many of his rivals. "It would have been a dream come true to win gold, but that does not mean I am not pleased with silver."

However, gold success was waiting in the wings for Britain's equestrians, as Natasha Baker and Sophie Christiansen won six gold medals between them. Paralympic debutant Baker blew her rivals away, topping the leader board in every competition she entered. Riding Cabral, in all three of her tests Natasha Baker showed experience beyond her 22 years, improvising in the grade II freestyle when she had forgotten part of her test. Inspired by her teammate and friend Lee Pearson at the Sydney Games in 2000 at the age of 10, Natasha Baker shows that the Paralympic motto "inspire a generation" is certainly meaningful when it comes down to the world's most fantastic sporting event. "Watching Lee at the Sydney Games was a massive inspiration for me. That was when I announced that I was going to win a gold medal."

Sophie Christiansen riding Janerio 6 was miles ahead of her fellow competitors in all three grade 1a classes, proving her experience at top level para-dressage. Christiansen achieved a personal best and also a Paralympic record, and was seemingly delighted with her achievements in London. Christiansen says: "My family were in the audience watching and that was really special. Some had never seen me on a horse," never mind win a Paralympic gold medal!

It is obvious that all of these equestrian riders inspire their own and next generations, fitting in perfectly with what the Paralympics are all about. With the future of para-dressage safely in the hands of the future generation, double silver medallist Sophie Wells and double gold medallist Natasha Baker, we can look forward to a gold rush in Rio in 2016.

# A painful defeat

Britain's Will Bayley lost the **table tennis** final against his arch-enemy Jochen Wollmert

Will Bayley sinks to the floor, every drop of sweat brought him one step closer to the gold medal, but it wasn't enough. German Jochen Wollmert had defeated him in the Excel Arena. The current world number two lost 1-3 to the German player in the gold medal match of the men's class seven table tennis final. Wollmert, who plays only on the backhand, temporarily lost concentration, allowing Bayley to win the second set. "After the second set I told myself: 'Try to play the way you always do'," Wollmert said. But the slip was only temporary and he won the next two sets. Before London, Bayley had only lost once in ten games against Wollmert.

The players had the crowd on their feet throughout the match, the majority roaring the name of Britain's biggest table tennis prospect. Bayley said after the match: "I think I wanted it a bit too much for the spectators." Wollmert was encouraged by the people. "It was fantastic to play in front of this crowd with the special atmosphere," he said. "Bayley needs the crowd, but the crowd made him nervous at the same time." Wollmert is almost double Bayley's age at 47, but managed to successfully defend his Paralympic title.

The relationship between the two players before the match could be described as nothing less than hostile, with Wollmert admitting: "We're not close friends and I'd love to beat him in London." Bayley was in a state of disbelief after the match: "I can't believe he's won it again, it's ridiculous. I'm just so shocked he won it," he admitted. However, now Bayley has his sights set on Rio 2016, and is looking to avenge this defeat: "He won't beat me in Rio."

BRADLEY NEEN, 17 YEARS

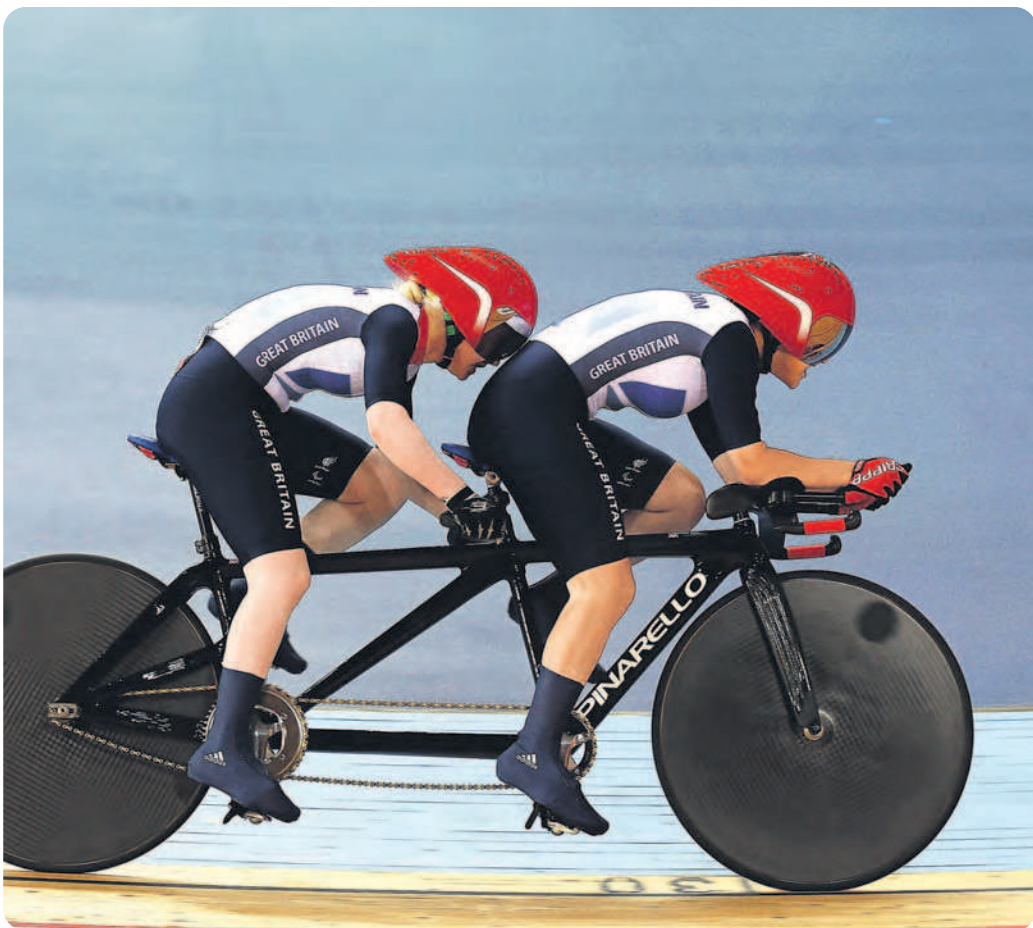


Equestrian newcomer Natasha Baker with her gold medal after winning at Greenwich Park.



# A bicycle built for two

Great Britain's tandem had double success. Overall it has been quite a successful Games for the **cyclists**, with lots of world records smashed



Synchronized. Aileen McGlynn (l.) and her pilot Helen Scott competed in the 1 kilometre time trial.

TAVISHI KANWAR, 16 YEARS

They struck around the velodrome in dizzying circles, feet pumping pedals in astonishing synchronisation. It was the culmination of the teamwork and dedication Aileen McGlynn and Helen Scott gave on the second day of the Paralympics in their Individual 1km time trial.

The velodrome hosted a multitude of achievements for GB cyclists, who emerged top of the track cycling tables with a host of world records smashed. With five gold medals, and three times as many in total, it seems the track cyclists are on the crest of a wave of success following the path of their Olympic counterparts with whom they train. Sarah Storey was particularly propelled by this momentum, winning two gold medals in both her track events. "I'm just over the moon and it's amazing," she said. No doubt, Britain's track cyclists were pretty successful in London.

It was not without drama, however, as Great Britain's athletes did not get to finish their races: Jody Cundy was given a DNF (did not finish) on tables in the one kilometre time trial, whilst Antony Kappes and pilot Craig Maclean were disqualified after two false starts in the one kilometre time trial for their classification. Overall though "it's been an amazing couple of days and a great experience," according to tandem cyclist Neil Fachie. "When we crossed the line in the velodrome it was just phenomenal, I'm really not going to forget the experience," he said in reference to his gold medal and world record he set in the men's one kilometre time trial.

Fachie did not achieve gold alone, however. Being in the B category for visually impaired athletes, he

competed on a tandem with an able-bodied athlete piloting. In the GB squad there are four such pairs, two men and two women: Neil Fachie and Barney Storey (Sarah's husband), Antony Kappes and Craig Maclean, Aileen McGlynn and Helen Scott, and finally Lora Turnham and Fiona Duncan.

Who are these pilots? They are athletes who initially trained with the able-bodied programme and were then given the chance to pilot. "I just jumped on and loved it from there," said Helen Scott, the 22-year-old pilot for Aileen McGlynn.

Travel back two decades and these tandem cyclists would have been the only ones to compete in the Paralympics. Para-cycling was initially developed by visually impaired athletes and in 1988, Seoul saw the first tandem cyclists to be incorporated in the Games.

It involves a slightly different training approach to riding on a solo bike. "It is all about the balance between too much time on the tandem and not enough - it is key. The athletes like to train on their solo bikes too. Being on a tandem is very stressful physically and there is a lot of pressure," said GB endurance coach Tom Stanton.

In the Stratford velodrome the tandem riders won two golds, two silvers and one bronze collectively. This was predominantly due to a strong relationship

## You need a strong relationship between pilot and stoker

onship between pilot and stoker. "I think it is important to know what each other are like and how you ride the bike; you don't want to be fighting each other and it's really important to know when people are going to do things and what they're going to do," said Neil Fachie who is piloted by Barney Storey. The pairings are decided by selectors from British Cycling on the basis of trial and error. "We've been switching around for a couple of years to find out which pairings are the best. We broke the world record so I guess the selectors did a good job!" said Neil Fachie.

JACOB JOY, 18 YEARS

The Paralympics is about the unexpected and in the past week or so we've definitely had our fair share of surprises on the athletics track.

The biggest surprise of them all perhaps came from Paralympic poster boy, Oscar Pistorius, labelled as the "fastest man with no legs." With a fair few Paralympic gold medals and world records to his name, the South African was expected to glide his way to the top step of the podium. In the first 100 metres of the 200 metres final, Pistorius looked certain to collect his first gold medal of the London Games but as the athletes drew onto the straight, the Brazilian Alan Oliveira closed the gap to clinch first place at the finishing line.

Whether Pistorius' claim to running an "unfair race" proves to be true or false, the shock of him coming second will be the lasting memory of that race.

With ParalympicsGB competing on home turf, the expectation placed on every single athlete was daunting. To represent your nation is an honour that not much can better, however, the pressure that is applied when wearing the ParalympicsGB emblem on your jacket is difficult to comprehend.

## Paralympians are not immune to the pressure of a nation

While Hannah Cockroft was expected to medal after her gold performances at the 2011 IPC Athletics World Championships, she still managed to astound spectators in London with a new Paralympic record of 18.06 seconds in the T34 100m sprint. The 20-year-old wheelchair-racer from Halifax, also known as "Rocketwomen", thus picked up the first athletic gold for Great Britain.

Many hoped Tracey Hinton, who at the age of 42 is captaining the women's athletics squad at her sixth Paralympic Games, would clinch a medal but Hinton fell just short of qualifying for the 200m final after finishing third in her semi-final. The Cardiffian, who has collected three silver medals and three bronze medals over her long career, was the perfect dark horse for a gold medal after delivering so much suc-

# Games of the unexpected

Some favourites like Oscar Pistorius struggled – and other **athletes** like Mickey Bushell of Team Great Britain surprised



Surprise. Brazilian sprinter Alan Oliveira defeated Oscar Pistorius over 200m.

cess for Great Britain over the last 20 years but it was not to be.

Another athlete who had the country's support in his sails was Derek Derenalagi. The ex-serviceman who lost both his legs and was pronounced dead after his vehicle hit a roadside bomb in Afghanistan, set out to clinch a medal in the F57/58 discus. Unfortunately, despite the crowd roaring behind every throw, he did not make it to the final of this event. The Fijian born athlete entered the Games off the back of winning a gold medal in the European Championships and had the nation hoping for a repeat of this success in London. Though he may not be standing on top of the podium, he has certainly fulfilled his main ambition to "inspire others". In many ways, it is amazing that he is competing in the Paralympics after waking up from a nine day coma in Selly Oak hospital, Birmingham, and finding the will to carry on and "put a smile on someone's face, especially someone who has lost a limb, who thinks they can't do anything. To inspire someone like that would be more rewarding to me than anything."

On the other end of the spectrum, the Paralympics 2012 certainly delivered unexpected golds for the ParalympicsGB athletics team. Mickey Bushell, who in Beijing claimed silver in the 100 metres event and again in the 2011 World Championships, entered the Games with a competitive field in his way to the top step of the podium. Narrowly missing out on the gold four years ago and still being only 22 years of age, he claimed gold while setting a Paralympic record of 14.75 seconds. After winning the event, he revealed: "It was all about winning tonight. Training has been going really well the past couple of weeks, so I knew I was a big contender for the gold. The conditions on the day were perfect."

The London Paralympics 2012 have proven to be a phenomenal display of athletic ability but just like the Olympics have offered the thrills and spills of competition on the world stage. Paralympians are not immune to the pressure of a nation and they strive for success, despite their disability and the barriers that they have had to break through. This is what makes the Paralympics so fantastic: Athletes who have stunned the world with their abilities to overcome impairment provide entertainment with the same ferocity of any other sporting event in the world.



# World class – or not?

Paralympic athletes are classified according to the degree of their disability and compete against others in the same class. Is **fairness** possible?

GEORGE SIMONDS, 16 YEARS / KERI TRIGG, 17 YEARS

**W**ith a record 4250 athletes competing in the Paralympics, the task of classification was bigger than ever for London 2012. Classification means grouping together athletes with similar impairments who can fairly compete against each other. "The ultimate goal is to promote fair and equal competition," said Anne Hart, chair of the International Paralympic Classification Committee. "In Paralympic sport our purpose with classification is to minimise the impact of impairment on the outcome of competition." Some sports have fairly straightforward classification guidelines. For example, Goalball and 5-a-side Football only require the athlete to be visually impaired. The degree of visual impairment is irrelevant, as all athletes wear blackout eyeshades.

However, some sports require a more specific system. Athletics has events for visually, physically and intellectually impaired athletes. Visually impaired athletes are classified 11-13, with 11 meaning little or no visibility, and 13 representing those with better vision. Intellectually impaired athletes compete in the class 20, and the thirties represent athletes with Cerebral Palsy or other impairments affecting controlled movement. Physically impaired athletes with disabilities such as dwarfism, amputations, and others affecting the limbs compete in classes 40-46. Finally, the classes 51-58 represent athletes who compete in a wheelchair due to limited or no limb function, with lower numbers meaning their ability to compete is more affected.

Every athlete is classified before competing at the Paralympic Games. Each classification session is executed by a team of at least three classifiers. Every panel consists of a technical classifier, who is familiar with the rules and regulations, a medical classifier, and a director who oversees the test. Each athlete is classified individually. The tests involve the medical classifier testing an athlete's range of movement such as at a shoulder joint. Additionally, the medical classifier places their hand on a muscle to test its contraction such as on the abdominals to assess trunk movement.

However, this test is not the only part of the classification. The "touchy feely" part of the test, as Anne Hart puts it, equates to being one of the subsections of the classification; the Body Function test. Other subsections include environmental factors and perhaps most importantly the observation of an athlete in competition. The panel observes the athlete's ability to move, control each limb, and how their disability affects their performance. This part of the test is vital to prevent misclassification, as ex-wheelchair-rugby-player Alan Ash said: "It is nearly impossible to conceal the real range of your disability when competing."

Each new athlete is tested several times before he or she is cleared to compete. After the athlete's classification is 'confirmed', it cannot be questioned. An athlete will remain in this class unless his or her disability is, for example, degenerative. Despite the numerous measures in place to ensure that athletes are placed in the right class, inevitably some athletes end up in the wrong one, whether that is through mistakes by the classifier like Anne Hart; "I know I have made many" or by an exaggeration or faux disability. Even at these London Games classifications have been an issue. American swimmer Victoria Arlen is perhaps British star Ellie Simmonds' greatest rival. The fate of the former double world record holder seemed unclear after the degree of functionality in her legs was questioned. The American was deemed to be "non-eligible" said Craig Spence, head of media and communication for the IPC, after they received "a variety of evidence" from different sources. This evidence contradicted their S6 classification which meant that

## In London, Victoria Arlen's classification has been an issue

the 17-year-olds' impairment was not deemed severe enough to justify her inclusion in the S6 class. She appealed against this verdict and was subsequently cleared to compete in that class for the free-style, backstroke and butterfly disciplines. However, others have been accused of feigning a disability, like the former Dutch hand cyclist Monique van der Vorst who competed in the Beijing Games. The silver medalist retired in 2010 after a collision with a car in training. Since retiring, she has become a professional cyclist. She claims that after her crash the movement in her legs returned, which many doctors have deemed very unlikely. As Michael Boninger from the University of Pittsburgh said: "The fundamental truth is that accidents don't cause damaged nerve cells to regenerate."

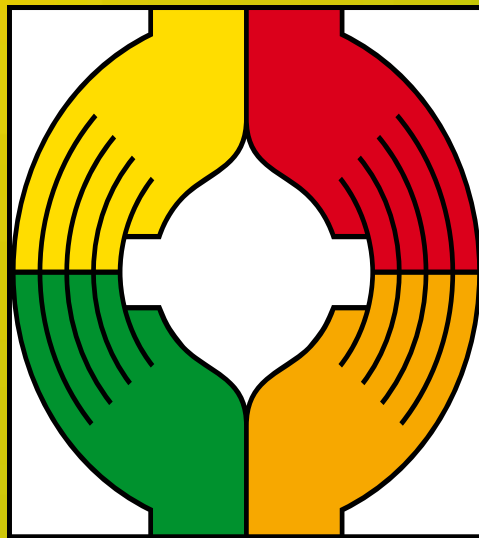
The IPC has still not made a statement on the incident and so her many successes both as a Paralympian and a professional cyclist still stand.



Stand up champ. Monique van der Vorst has completed a remarkable transformation: from a Paralympian (r., with her silver medal in the Beijing 2008 Games) to road racing cyclist with a top team.



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## Who's next?

The Games are over - now it's up to **Sochi and Rio** to deliver

Chief Executive Leonardo Gryner of the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Organising Committee ensures that everybody hopes that the message of the London 2012 Paralympics continues: "With Rio 2016 we aim to maintain the legacy of the previous Games and we will surely do that."

At the marketing summit held by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) during the Paralympics in London, the next two host cities presented their plans to an international audience of journalists and guests. Sochi in Russia will host the next Paralympic Winter Games in 2014 and the Brazilian city Rio de Janeiro will follow in London's footsteps in 2016.

The pressure clearly was on the Brazilians to explain how the spirit of the London Games could be continued. According to Gryner, the two major Brazilian TV-channels are currently fighting over the broadcasting rights for Rio 2016. He also emphasised that the Paralympics will have an equal meaning for the people of Brazil as the Olympics.

"We are very keen towards 2016," Gryner says and adds "Already three months after winning the bid for the Games, 40,000 people had registered to volunteer in Rio." The Russians share the excitement about hosting the Olympics and Paralympics but as Sochi is only a medium sized city by the Black Sea, they are not in the center of everyone's attention. They are struggling to fill the volunteer opportunities. "Can I have some of your volunteers?" the CEO Igor Stolyarov from the Sochi Organising Committee jokingly asked his Brazilian counterpart.

AL MAATIN PEREIRA DOS SANTOS, 16 YEARS

## Speakers' Corner

Excited **spectators**, cheering crowds and a great atmosphere – thanks London

At the Paralympics in Athens eight years ago, entire classes of schoolchildren from the whole country were driven to the Olympic Stadium to fill up the stands. In Beijing 2008, excited housewives waved their flags to cheer on the disabled athletes. 90,000 spectators in the stadium rooted for the people who were previously excluded from society, but were now seen as heroes. At the London 2012 Games, there was no need to motivate people to watch the Paralympics. Inclusion is exemplified in Great Britain, and that extends to sport. The wonderful atmosphere of the Olympic Games stayed vibrant over the break before the Paralympic Games. If you talk to anybody in the restaurants, bars or trains in Great Britain, you will find that the Brits are up to date when it comes to the Paralympics. They are moved, fascinated, impressed, and they can talk about the more complicated rules and regulations. The newspapers do not just focus on the fates of the athletes, they provide pure sport reports. At the Olympics it was more about marketing and money, say the Londoners, but at the Paralympics it is more about spirit, values and life. We are proud to be a part of it - and we are looking forward to Sochi and Rio.



Foto: Thilo Rüdiger

ANNETTE KÖGEL

# European Superheroes

At the European Paralympic **Youth Games** in Brno new talents in sports for the disabled were identified. Two athletes were invited to London to receive a special award



Photo: EPC

A young race-running competitor at the first EPC Youth Games.

ALMAATIN PEREIRA DOS SANTOS, 16 YEARS

The Best of the Best? That's Andela Muzinic. But not because the Croatian class three table tennis player won a medal at the London 2012 Paralympic Games where she performed. Muzinic carries this title because she displayed her talent and spirit earlier this year at European Paralympic Committee (EPC) Youth Games. She was nominated by national coaches and se-

## The idea of the Super Heroes is: Forget about the dis in disabled

lected from 350 athletes from 14 different European countries who took part in the EPC Youth Games with her.

The Best of the Best award was initiated by the EPC on the occasion of the Games in Brno and honours young female and male athletes with a disability from Europe who have demonstrated outstanding talent and sportsmanship. The two winners, 19-year-old Andela Muzinic and Milan Mann (19) from the Czech Republic joined the EPC in London during the Paralympics. The awards were presented at a specially arranged reception at the Trinity House, which hosted the Austrian hospitality facilities during the Paralympic Games. The winners were handed a specially designed award and some most-wanted tickets for the Paralympics.

And the selection of the two hadn't proved the EPC wrong: Muzinic has only been playing wheel-

chair table tennis for three years and was nominated for the Paralympics by Croatia shortly after the EPC Youth Games.

Both award-winning athletes collected multiple medals at the EPC Youth Games, which took place from 20th to 24th June 2012 in Brno. For the first time the EPC, which is the umbrella organisation for 48 national Paralympic committees in Europe, officially hosted this sporting event for aspiring athletes between 14 and 20 years. This provides young athletes with the opportunity to compete internationally in Paralympic sports such as swimming, athletics, sailing, boccia and table tennis. "We need to support young athletes in Europe. How are young talents supposed to fulfill their potential if there aren't any international competitions in Europe? The EPC Youth Games are a first step in the right direction to ensure our junior athletes can compete internationally on an elite level," EPC President John Petersson explains the initiation of the event for young Europeans. Petersson is a Paralympian himself and has collected 15 medals during five Games.

But creating opportunities to practice sports is not the only focus of the EPC. They also want to build up the next generation of athletes: A special educational programme, which included workshops on media and talks with former Paralympians, prepared the young athletes for a career in elite sports. The official EPC Superheroes received the biggest applause in Brno at their launch. The five colourful cartoon figures whose initials form the word POWER are all athletes with a disability. They have unique characters and interests. For example "O" is a volleyball player and a fashion

victim. Her typical move is to spray her hair. The idea of the Superheroes is: Forget about the dis in disabled. You are able to do what you enjoy doing and everyone has different interests anyway. This message came across clearly when the EPC Superheroes combined their individual moves to a group dance and everybody joined in.

Connie Hansen, a previous Paralympic medalist from Denmark, introduced RaceRunning to participants of the EPC Youth Games. This was the only competition where British athletes took part and even owned the stage. In other sports such as Boccia, athletes from Russia demonstrated their strength. However, the spirit of the EPC Youth Games was fun and cheerful.

When asked what he liked best about sports a Lithuanian swimmer replied: "To muscle up and get a model's body." A typical humorous teenager response. But serious criticism also became loud when it came to the media coverage of sport events for the disabled other than the Paralympic Games. All agreed that media attention had to improve especially on junior events.

The EPC will continue their work on grass root programs like the EPC Youth Games and aim to host the games every second year. "This is our gateway to the future. We need to keep promoting respect despite all differences amongst our members and especially when it comes to the young generation," Petersson explains.

Hopefully more youngsters from all European countries will use opportunities like the EPC Youth Games to compete and have fun together and maybe, like in Andela Muzinic's case, a call to the next Paralympics will follow.



# Raising the bar

The Games are finally receiving the public attention they deserve. Greg **Hartung**, Vice President of the IPC, is pleased they are no longer overshadowed by the Olympics



A fair go for all. For Greg Hartung the Paralympics are more than just a sport event.

CARINA CANAVAN, 18 YEARS

For many years, the Paralympic Games were not as highly regarded as the Olympic Games and it has been a long, hard road to try and change this perception. According to Brian Nugent, head coach of the Irish Paralympic cycling team, "it has always been a constant battle to get recognized." It was widely assumed that Paralympic athletes did not compete at the same level as Olympic athletes. This is a false assumption. Paralympians are "world class athletes and it is good to see they are finally getting the recognition they deserve," Nugent said. So why are the Paralympic Games so inspiring? The answer is quite simple: They prove that no matter what disability you may have in one area, you have the ability to excel in another. "Focus on what you can do, not what you can't," as Nugent says.

Greg Hartung, Vice President of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), has been involved with the Paralympic movement since 1998. The 64-year-old Australian already had a distinguished career in sport as Chairman of the Australian Sports Committee and President of the Confederation of Australian Sport. However, Hartung realised the powerful, lasting effect the Paralympic Games can have. "Paralympic Games are transformational, they help people redefine their lives." It

is clear to him that this is not just a sporting event; it is much more than that. They transform the lives of the athletes who are competing because they help them understand that life is about making the most of what you have, not focusing on what you haven't got.

Hartung also reinforced this positive, 'can-do' attitude when he recalled a well-known Australian saying that he believes sums up the Games: "A fair go for all." It is often suggested that life is a competition, that we must adapt the 'survival of the fittest' attitude to be successful and happy, but the Paralympic Games defy this suggestion. They teach us all that no matter what we do in life, as well as in sport, respect and love must always be present. Yet another priceless paralympic message.

Hartung proceeded to express how delighted he is with the amount of time and effort Lord Sebastian Coe and his team have put into the London 2012 Paralympic Games: "It is a benchmark, a watershed Games for the paralympic movement and for Great Britain."

When Lord Coe made his bid to have the 2012 Games in London he said to the IPC that there would be "equal attention paid to the Paralympics as well as the Olympics". He has certainly delivered this promise. Now people know what the Paralympic Games are. Now people are inspired.

# Why so few?

**India** has the second largest population in the world but only sent ten athletes to the London Games. The reasons are manifold. But there is hope for improvement

TAVISHI KANWAN, 16 YEARS

In a country where around 2.5 million people flocked to see the Paralympics, it is difficult to imagine another place where the word is not in the average person's vocabulary. In India, when you mention the Paralympics, people assume you are talking about the Olympics.

This is perhaps because of the lack of sporting success India has had in these Games: since its first appearance in 1968 the country has only won a total of seven medals. It seems strange that for the country with the second largest population in the world, India's contingent for the London 2012 Games consisted of ten athletes. What's going on?

Many Indian Paralympians are from small villages in rural India with poorer backgrounds. With the focus being on academia and successful careers, sport is generally overlooked as a career path unless, of course, it is cricket. Athletes have

**"There is so much potential here. It just needs to be channelled"**

therefore faced adversary both from within their family and externally. "My family wanted me to study and were worried anyway because of my disability. They wanted me to get a good job, hopefully in the government," said discus-thrower Jaideep Deswal.

Even athletes with a disability are often not aware of their opportunities. Athens bronze medallist Rajinder Singh Rahelu competed in able-bodied competitions until a chance encounter with India's first powerlifter and current coach Vijay Munishwar, who introduced him to the concept of para-sports.

However, athletes also have difficult training situations as there has been little support in the past. One javelin thrower practiced with a stick for years.

As ever, scandals and corruption also tainted the scenes. Around six months ago the Paralympics Committee of India (PCI) was dissolved by the government. The new one has had since December 2011 to prepare the team for the 2012 Games.

Some improvements by the new committee are already visible. Jaideep Deswal finally got a trainer and consequently improved his throwing distance in the discus from 36.45m to 40.48m. "When my family saw the improvement I had in such a short span of time they became supportive. Now my father is a very proud man," Jaideep Deswal said.

This improvement has coincided with the government becoming more involved. They introduced

new regulations that state able-bodied and disabled athletes should be treated equally; in practice this means the 2012 Paralympian medallists will be awarded a cash prize for the first time ever.

However, India is still "really lagging behind in terms of sport," according to Deswal. In theory, the government was to fund the entire trip to the Paralympics, however in practice not one rupee came through to the Indian team. Although there have been a few sponsors, costs are mostly being covered by personal accounts.

The small Indian team has little backing and support. Although the PCI approached media in India, there was no interest in covering the Paralympics.

The only attention they had was negative: When a few athletes complained their coaches had no accommodation in the Paralympic village the Indian media turned this into a small scandal.

It seems remarkable therefore that even these ten athletes, all of whom are male, have made the journey to London.

The newly formed PCI are hoping to triple the size of the team for the Rio 2016 Games.

Amrita Singh, assistant director of the PCI, said: "There is so much potential here. It just needs to be channelled." It should not only be down to chance encounters and lucky discoveries that India's potential Paralympians get the chance to compete.



One out of ten. India's Grisha Hosanagara Nagarajegowda competed in the men's high jump.



# Men in black

Whistling at work – **Referees** Scott Henry and Niels Haupt explain what it is like to officiate football at the Paralympics



Referee Alvaro Azeredo Quelhas (BRA) during a Football 7-a-side match between GB and USA.

BRADLEY NEEN, 17 YEARS

Wherever a sporting fixture is played, be it a Sunday league game on the local field or a Paralympic final, each and every competition needs an impartial judge. The people who make these decisions are balancing sporting success on a knife-edge. Defined by a split second judgement, their decisions can make the difference between success and failure.

Scott Henry hails from Cumbria and was selected to referee 7-a-side football at the Paralympic Games. The 26-year-old has worked alongside disabled children the majority of his life, and was excited to get the opportunity to referee at the Paralympics. "I was ecstatic, I was beaming," he confessed.

During the football season, Henry referees semi-professional matches, alongside his work assisting players with cerebral palsy. He took charge of the Brazil versus Ireland match at the BT Paralympic World Cup in May, earning himself a call up to the Paralympics proper.

Henry never expected to get to this level. "When I first started out I didn't expect too much from refereeing to be honest," he explained, "to be selected, to be part of an elite international competition... words can't describe it."

## Haupt was bombarded with praise and good wishes from family and friends

And an elite international competition it is. The athletes and teams involved are the best in the world of disabled sport, making the job at hand even tougher for the man in black.

Swearing and back-chat are commonplace in cerebral palsy football, and no complacency is shown by the referees. "It's just like refereeing any other game. I don't see them as different to any other footballers, whatever their background or disability," Scott Henry said.

The referees were chosen after a 10-month selection process. Some of the British referees, such as Henry, have experience in working with children and adults with disabilities. The British referees prepared by officiating in the FA National Cerebral Palsy Football League, giving them a taste for the sport.

Niels Haupt is a German referee from Hanover who officiated the 5-a-side Paralympic football competition, which is played by blind footballers. Haupt believes that this makes the job more difficult because the players cannot see the signals and hand movements a referee would use in a standard game of football.

"Mimics and gestures cannot be used to explain your decision. You can only do that by voice. Therefore, I learned to think about what I should say at the right time," said Haupt. However, this can prove to be quite difficult.

"Sometimes players have the impression that I spoke to them in an unfriendly way even though I did not want to do that."

The one thing which can assist the 5-a-side referees in the stadium is the fact that the crowd must be completely quiet whilst the ball is in play, so the players can hear the ball bearings inside. This can ensure the referees have a clear line of communication to the players, arguably clearer than in a 7-a-side or 11-a-side match.

When Haupt heard the news he had been selected to referee at the Games, he was immediately bombarded with praise and good wishes from family and friends. "There was an article about me going to London in the newspaper and I was on the first page. I guess I had this paper posted 50 times through my letter box."

Another British official is Perry Gascoine, who has also been refereeing the 5-a-side tournament. The official from Hertfordshire had the unique situation of staying in the same block as Olympic sprinter Usain Bolt did a month ago.

Gascoine has over 20 years of refereeing experience and admits it is more difficult to referee a blind football match. "If anything, it takes more concentration to referee a blind match," Gascoine said. "You've got to be aware of your own movement, but also the players' movement, bearing in mind that they obviously can't see you."

Understandably the referees cannot officiate a match in which their own country is involved. This leaves Gascoine with a dilemma; if ParalympicsGB does well, it will limit the opportunities for British referees. "It's just like any tournament. As a supporter I want GB to progress as far as they can, but as a referee – if GB leaves the competition early – there's a chance for me to progress," Gascoine said about the situation at Games time.

Although there is huge pressure, the referees are all honoured to be part of one of the biggest sporting competitions in the world. The Paralympics has provided one of the biggest possible stages for referees to showcase their talent.

"The Paralympics is the second largest sporting event in the world," said Gascoine. "Just like the Olympics, the nation will be talking about it, and I'm proud to have played a part in it."

## WWW

[tagesspiegel.de/paralympics](http://tagesspiegel.de/paralympics)

More information about the Paralympics  
[facebook.com/ParalympicPost2012](https://www.facebook.com/ParalympicPost2012)

KERI TRIGG, 17 YEARS

With a completely new system of qualification and classification for the athletes, they have been reintroduced to the Paralympic Games for the first time since Sydney in 2000.

Scandal erupted shortly after the closing of the Games 2000 when it was discovered that 10 of the 12 basketball players on the gold-winning Spanish team were not intellectually disabled at all. "As a consequence of that, the International Paralympic Committee had a closer look at the procedures in place to establish eligibility and found them to be severely lacking," said Professor Jan Burns, head of eligibility for Inas, the International Federation for para-athletes with Intellectual Disabilities, "so we've been working on the system since then to make it much more rigorous, much more robust, and a much higher quality."

The new system "involves the submission of a portfolio of evidence," she continued, "the evidence then comes to the International Eligibility Officer for that nation. They check all the information and then it comes into the Inas office. We then have an Eligibility Committee of a number of expert psychologists in this area. Each client's file will be examined by at least two – usually three – people from that panel. We will evaluate the evidence and then we will decide if it meets the criteria."

To remove bias, the panel members examining the file, "will be clearly independent of the country from which the file comes."

In order to qualify for the Paralympics as an intellectually impaired athlete, there are three sets of

# Opening up the games

The London 2012 Games have been a turning point for the **inclusion** of athletes with an intellectual impairment in the Paralympics



Athletes with intellectual impairments were accepted in athletics, swimming and table tennis.

criteria that must be met. The first of these is a maximum IQ of 75. This is to evaluate the level of "intellectual function," explained Professor Burns. Secondly, there must be "a significant deficit in terms of adaptive behaviour," meaning the individual lacks skills required to be capable of independent living. The third element sets the maximum age of onset for their disability as 18.

Professor Burns explained that this is "about trying to discriminate between people who might have acquired brain injury later in life when they have already got a lot of skills. This is talking about people who have had a developmental issue from either pre-birth or post-birth throughout their early developmental life."

It seems the main dilemma now is enforcing this strict new system globally. This can be particularly challenging in countries where the acceptable tests are not available. "We have to balance between try-

ing to be as inclusive and encouraging as we possibly can with being as rigorous as we possibly can. So what our criteria says is that the tests used must be validated on that population," she said. With some countries, some of the westernised tests that we use, legally and professionally you can't apply there. We work with psychologists to establish which of our tests are validated for which populations, and we will accept those tests. One of the big challenges for Inas is to try and get a consistent view, consistent definition, and consistent approach."

Athletes with intellectual impairments were accepted into the London Paralympics in just three sports: athletics, swimming and table tennis. "We worked particularly with athletics and swimming because they are IPC-governed," said Professor Burns, "we also have a good body of athletes with intellectual impairments competing in those events. And also we have a good relationship with International Table Tennis Federation, a lot of players with intellectual disabilities play table tennis and we had a good number of people who'd already done some research in that area. They were good foundations to start from. We certainly want to build up the profile of athletes and we're particularly looking at what extra events for swimming and athletics that we could build in."

With a total of 120 intellectually impaired athletes competing in this year's Games and such a refined system now in place, it would appear that they are here to stay. The move to re-introduce athletes with such disabilities has made the Paralympics even more inclusive and leaves plenty of scope for including more sports in the future.



# Road to Rio

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# Short!

## Whole family's hard work



photo: Thilo Ruckelshaus

The topic of every dinner table conversation in the Conroy household is basketball. To ensure the rigorous training schedule of 19-year-old wheelchair basketball star, Amy, can be kept, our family's schedule often revolves around her needs. Our father Chris and I have spent countless hours helping her train. "The sacrifices they made and encouragement they instilled is amazing," admits Amy. "It's the best feeling seeing them in the crowd. They're the first people I want to thank."

Being the culmination of the entire family's hard work, Chris described the tense Paralympic atmosphere as almost unbearable. "After witnessing Amy give everything to the sport, every game I watched was a nightmare in case something went wrong," he said. "I never expected it to be so emotionally draining." However when their game surged to victory, our proud father felt the euphoria of standing amongst the roaring crowd was invaluable. "No sacrifice of mine was too great to experience that!"

**ALICE CONROY, 17 YEARS**

# Short!

## Tweeting Paralympians

With their rigorous training and Games schedules, it's hard to imagine that the athletes of ParalympicsGB have had time for much else. However, many have spared a few minutes a day updating their fans on the latest happenings through networking sites such as Twitter. Neil Fachie (@neilfachie) shared his happiness with the world after claiming gold at track cycling: "I am completely overwhelmed by all the support," he tweeted. Swimmer Harriet Lee (@xharrietx1991) also took time to thank the hordes of fans: "Just wanted to thank everyone for the amazing support over the last couple of days!!! You are all amazing". After a busy day on the judo mat, Dan Powell (@DanPowell\_Judo) gave fans a chuckle with the tweet: "Tell u what, I feel like I've been scrapping with a load of big foreigners today... Oh wait."

**KERI TRIGG, 17 YEARS**

# Short!

## Silent cheers

The numerous celebrations in 2012 have provided the perfect opportunity for royalists and sport fanatics alike to fly the flag of Great Britain. The Paralympic Games is the final opportunity this year for Brits to be loud and proud but spectators of certain sports are restricted to waving and showing thumbs-up. In goalball the referees must remind the crowd to show their support quietly so the athletes can hear the bells inside the ball. The same applies to 5-a-side football, as visually impaired athletes must rely on hearing the ball in order to intercept it. Indeed, on the screens at such venues the crowds are encouraged by well-known faces such as Daniel Radcliffe and Emma Watson to show their support for ParalympicsGB without using the aptly named "boom sticks." In equestrian too, the crowd must be hushed as horses can be afraid and can react unpredictably to loud cheers. Although the supporters may feel restricted it is in the athletes' best interest to create prime conditions for medal winning.

**LUCY MICHAELLODIS, 17 YEARS**

## New prosthetics for Lao

The Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE) is a charity dedicated to providing rehabilitating services for disabled people in Lao PDR in Southeast Asia. It was established in 1997 and draws on a partnership between the National Rehabilitation Centre and Lao Ministry of Health to develop sustainable rehabilitation services and prosthetics for people in the community. This charity, where you can sponsor a leg for \$75 offers the victims of polio or unexploded ordnance in Lao PDR, a chance at prosthetic pride.

In many developing countries amputees must put up with bad quality or second-hand prosthetics. It is appalling, especially in the face of a thriving Paralympic movement, that many who have no choice but to accept second-hand limbs; Prosthetics are designed specifically for the individual and can be very harmful if worn once they begin to recede.

The work of COPE ensures that new prosthetic limbs are not only for Paralympic athletes but for everyone who has a disability, no matter their financial circumstance. If we are truly to live out the Paralympic value of equality, we need to see more enterprises like this and support them.

**LUCY MICHAELLODIS, 17 YEARS**



photo: Thilo Ruckelshaus

## The other end of the line

Elite-level performers say there is a fine line between winning and losing and for visually impaired sprinter Libby Clegg, that line is more real than it is for many. The only thing that connects the 22-year-old to her guide, the only guarantee that the Loughborough-based runner is running in the right direction, is some physiotherapy tubing held together by electrical tape. The device is held in Clegg's left hand whilst its end is held by her guide and close friend Mikail Huggins. "Everything has to be in sync when you run," Clegg told BBC Sport, with partners having "to run smooth and in time" to ensure a good race. To many it appears to be closely related to the primary school sports day favourite, the three-legged race. Apart from the perhaps jovial link, Huggins is vital not only in guiding Clegg around the bend but also keeping her updated on the race's and her rival's progress. Mikail "definitely has the harder job. All I have to do is run...He has to run and talk!"

There are strict rules about using a guide, during visually impaired sprinting. The guide is not allowed to finish before the athlete, or the pair risk disqualification. The guide receives a lane adjacent to the athlete and, like the sprinter, they are not allowed to leave their lanes. Despite these rules, in the two years since Clegg and Huggins have joined forces they have been almost untouchable, winning gold in last year's World Championships as well as the recent European Championships.

**GEORGE SIMONDS, 16 YEARS**



photo: dard

## A royal lucky charm

All eyes were on the ParalympicsGB women's goalball team as they faced Denmark in their last preliminary match. The visually impaired athletes, wearing blackout eyeshades in accordance with the rules of the game, were unaware that a Royal face was watching them from the crowd until they returned to the bench at half-time. Prince Harry, making only his second appearance at the Paralympics, joined British fans in the Copper Box to cheer on the squad. It seems that the Prince's presence was felt by the team, who played their best game and claimed a 5:0 victory over their Danish rivals. A royal performance.

**KERI TRIGG, 17 YEARS**



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# "Sport is a valuable tool"

Oscar **Pistorius** is not only a world class athlete – he is also an ambassador for International Inspiration, the LOCOG education programme

International Inspiration (II) is the London 2012 sports legacy programme. It has offered sporting opportunities to millions of children with disabilities all over the world. Oscar Pistorius, one of many prominent ambassadors, talks about his involvement:

**Oscar Pistorius, for what reasons did you want to become an ambassador for International Inspiration?**

Sport has enabled me to aspire to make the best of my physical talents that I can, and focus on living a life without restrictions, being the best I can possibly be. International Inspiration is offering this same opportunity to millions of children all over the world, and this really struck a chord with me.

**For you – what does the II stand for and what goals does the program aim to achieve?**

I think that sport is an extremely valuable tool for children. I have experienced first hand the power it has to change lives. It is also invaluable in encouraging learning, inclusion, and empowerment, and at promoting a sense of unity and pride. International

**"I have been blown away by the support the Paralympics have received"**

Inspiration's work is so important as it has the potential to reach those children most in need, offering them the chance to grow, through sport, and realise their full potential.

**What are your responsibilities as an ambassador?**

My role spans International Inspiration's advocacy, media, and fundraising work. The ways in which I support the programme may vary considerably, however, I am always actively involved in the programme, and committed to its aims – I'm not just a name on a letterhead! A lot of my work will involve communicating with supporters and different audiences, to bring International Inspiration to life for them and show them what an amazing programme it is. An important part of supporting International Inspiration is seeing its work for myself – I have the-

refore visited II Young Leaders in Tanzania, to see what International Inspiration means to them and how it impacts on their lives.

**What is your most vivid memory from your time as an International Inspiration ambassador?**

It was fantastic to interact with the kids on my trip to Tanzania – meeting and speaking to the young people who are benefiting from the programme in Tanzania showed me just how much of an impact it is having on their lives. We also managed to fit in a football match, which was great fun!

**What is the most shocking difference you have witnessed between your upbringing and other lives around the world, in your role as an International Inspiration ambassador?**

From when I was very young, I was supported and encouraged to engage in different types of sport. My family was sports-mad and promoted a very active lifestyle which saw me play waterpolo, rugby, cricket, wrestling, boxing, and tennis among many other sports. However, all over the world, there are children, whether able-bodied or not, who don't have this sort of opportunity - many might never even have engaged in sport before International Inspiration. This was quite shocking to me, and really brought home how vital the programme's work is.

**Who initially inspired you to take up sports and in what ways did this affect you when growing up?**

I think sport was all part my experience of growing up, and has been vital in forming my strong sense of identity and self-belief. It all began with my sports-mad, no-nonsense family, who encouraged it from the beginning, and showed that I was no different from my siblings and peers. My mother used to tell us in the mornings, 'Carl put on your shoes, Oscar you put on your legs' . . . So I grew up not really thinking I had a disability. I grew up thinking I had different shoes.

**Who or what inspires and drives you to do your best today?**

My family is a very strong inspiration for me – without them I wouldn't be where I am today, and they really drive me to do my best. Having them wat-



Meet and greet. Oscar Pistorius and adolescents from the International Inspiration programme.

ching me compete in the Olympics was such an important moment for me.

**Considering that you are competing in both the Olympic and the Paralympic Games in this summer, do you think the Paralympics should be encompassed in the Olympic Games?**

I am an extremely proud Paralympian, and have been blown away by the support and coverage the London 2012 Paralympics have received, in the run up to the event. This is setting a high watermark

for the Paralympic movement, and will hopefully constitute a precedent for even more progress from here. My ambition is to promote the Paralympic movement and educate and inspire people around the world about the Paralympic Games. I don't believe logistically the two events could take place at the same time and, as they say, the Olympics is the warm up to the Paralympics!

QUESTIONS: REPORTERS OF THE PARALYMPIC POST



Nearby. Joachim Gauck and bronze medalist Tobias Graf in the Velodrome.

JACOB JOY, 18 YEARS

German President, Joachim Gauck, admitted that he was inspired by the Opening Ceremony of the Paralympics last week. Flying over from Germany on the previous day, the President took his seat along with the other 80 000 spectators to enjoy the show in the Olympic Stadium.

Despite being only six months into his presidential term, the President has been kept busy with

# A visit from Berlin

German President Joachim **Gauck** was impressed by London's performance this year and is already thinking about the future of the Paralympics

showing his support for the German Olympic and Paralympic teams. "It was such an interesting, colorful, and emotional event, that it wasn't any less beautiful or less spectacular than the opening ceremony for the Olympic Games," Gauck said. "It was brave to combine topics like sport and handicaps with topics such as science and education. At first I wasn't quite sure if those topics would work together, but the spectators loved it, so it worked very well."

On the third day of the Paralympic Games, Gauck was to be found in the Velodrome supporting the German cyclists as they progressed through the preliminary rounds. When asked about his thoughts on the mental differences between Olympians and Paralympians he replied: "Disabled people have to motivate themselves even more than able-bodied people because they would have the right to say 'I have so many disadvantages and I feel so bad about my life, because I have that disability, but they don't think that.'"

He also said: "That is what amazes me when I come to the Paralympics - those athletes broke so many barriers in their lives to be able to compete here and to be active and fit".

An important topic which has been circling the Paralympic Games in London is the poor representation of certain countries in the Paralympics. The huge contrasts between the number of athletes sent by countries to the Olympics and the Paralympics have sparked up talks to put pressure on those nations who are guilty of favoring one event over the other. President Gauck commented on the subject saying: "One thing that I noticed is that some of the teams from the bigger countries are really small. They have about ten athletes in the Paralympics. This shows that the thought of inclusion is very different in other countries and not everyone is as open as Germany for example." He expanded on his concern stating: "Politicians will have to talk about that a lot in the future, so that disabled

people in countries that can't offer them as many possibilities get the chance to show what they can achieve."

The question of whether the Olympics and Paralympics will ever become a combined event is also causing debate. With Oscar Pistorius running in the Olympics earlier this summer there is an argument to be made in support of this idea. But it is unlikely to happen in the next 20 years.

President Joachim Gauck expressed his doubts in London: "I must say, I don't think the time is here yet. We have to work on including them completely in our society and our daily lives. I think every country still has so much to work on when it comes to that."

Nevertheless, the German President has obviously been touched by the meaning of the Games in London concluding that "these Paralympic Games show that it is worth taking challenges because you can succeed if you try hard enough."



# Inside the bubble

Paradise or pressure cooker? The Paralympic village was a gigantic area with a private cinema, a huge food hall, and much more. And it was a place to make **new friends**



A great place to be. 4,200 athletes had fun at the Paralympic Village.

BY ALICE CONROY, 17 YEARS

Once through the uninviting military style entrance of electrified fences and sniffer dogs – the Paralympic village appeared to be a paradise. "It was a totally surreal experience," said Amy Conroy, who made her paralympic debut this summer in the British wheelchair basketball squad. "To live alongside the world's best athletes whilst being treated like a celebrity – it really hit home the sheer magnitude of the event." Costing over £1.1 billion, this four-year project accommodated 4200 athletes.

To fulfill world class training regimes, a 1200 square metre gym boasts over 750 pieces of specialised equipment, alongside a team of 100 personal trainers to cater for individual needs. In their downtime, 'The Globe' recreation centre hosted a wide range of activities, from the private cinema, stage and music studio to a non-alcoholic pub garden. Like many other Paralympians, when not representing her country on the world stage, tandem cyclist Helen Scott made the most of the luxurious facilities. "I've just been into the Village spa to get a manicure!" she admitted, whilst showing off her union jack printed nails.

Yet the pride of the village was the food hall, ominously claimed by designers to be the world's largest peacetime eating area. Large enough to accommodate 88,000 double decker busses, with 5,000 seats – it provided more menu options than any previous games. "It's impossible to understand just how big it is until you go there yourself," claimed the GB silver-medalling cyclist Darren Kenny.

From Mediterranean to Halal, 1300 different world dishes were on offer; and not to forget the favourite of many young paralympians – the free 24 hour McDonalds. With queues of athletes outside wanting their quick chicken nugget fix, McDonalds was the site of many post-event celebratory binges. "The thought of unlimited free burgers was definitely what kept us going throughout the competition," 19-year-old Conroy confessed.

Established in 2009 for the 2012 London Games, the LOCOG Athlete Committee prioritised meeting the needs and interests of competitors when design-

ing the Village. As part of this organisation, GB tandem cyclist Aileen McGlynn, 39, played an influential role in determining the facilities – personally testing out the mattresses and state of the furniture to ensure optimum comfort. "We felt it was really important to have internet connection and black-out blinds in every apartment, along with a TV," she explained. Unlike in Beijing, where the quality of facilities relied on the financial capability of each country, a key focus for London was to ensure all 250 000m<sup>2</sup> of apartment space was identical.

With such strict, institutionalised schedules; village life often caused paralympians to feel isolated from the outside world. Families were cut off to such an extent that the GB cyclist Rik Waddo was unable to see his wife, despite her also staying in the Village as a paralympian swimmer. "I have no idea what's been going on for the past two weeks," said the Lancashire based silver medallist, "but to be honest I don't know if I want to leave this bubble."

Composed of 67 blocks between 8-12 stories high, the village was more compact than at any previous Games. During such a pivotal time, to be so tightly enclosed whilst surrounded by the opposition, was the Village really paradise or a pressure cooker? Contrary to what one may assume, athletes unanimously ensured the atmosphere remained relaxed and friendly. "There are so many nations competing against one another, yet we all sit next to each other and eat together in the dining hall," claimed Jon-Allan Butterworth, 26, who joined the GB Paralympic cycling squad after losing his left arm in Iraq. "Making friends from around the world – it's all part of the experience!" Despite admitting a sense of claustrophobia at times, basketball star Amy Conroy felt living alongside the other athletes grounding, claiming that they're all now "friends on facebook."

Acting as the village figurehead was Eva Loeffler, daughter of Ludwig Guttman – the founder of the Paralympics. Eva was appointed Mayor of the 2012 village due to her longstanding association with the movement. When interviewed by the BBC, Eva said her father would be "immensely proud of what has happened. His dream has come true."

ALICE CONROY, 17 YEARS / TAVISHI KANWAR, 16 YEARS

The sounds of machinery pervade the bustling repair workshop in the paralympic village. There is a slightly surreal atmosphere with limbs, some plain and some emblazoned with Union Jacks or a shocking pink, being transported to and fro to be inspected by a cluster of athletes and technicians.

This is the Ottobock workshop. In the village, there was a frenzy of repairing – and occasionally replacing – of products athletes used to help achieve sporting greatness. At least five different countries' team shirts could be spotted in there at any one time due to the accessibility of this workshop: there were 78 technicians from 20 different countries who span most major languages. This pit stop dealt with everything from minor problems that could be fixed very quickly to more serious ones, which would be solved over a few meetings. "We tried to do it as fast as possible as athletes need their fittings for training or competitions," said Rüdiger Herzog, an employee of Ottobock in the corporate communications department. This swiftness was ensured by the workshop's bulging stock rooms. Ottobock brought 15,000 spare parts to London whilst the total weight of the workshop equipment brought over from the base in Germany was 13.7 tonnes. "You can't imagine how different the products are all over the world," said Rüdiger Herzog.

The quality of athletes' products was, of course, not always consistent either: athletes from developing countries tended to have less help in this area. The service for repairs was free for every athlete, however replacements were also necessary in some cases. "We've tried to repair things where we can but unfortunately there have been a couple of incidences where wheelchairs were beyond repair and we have had to offer them a new one," said technician Rachel Neilson as she recounted an anecdote of a woman who came into the workshop a few days earlier.

The woman was from Egypt and was sitting in a wheelchair that had been completely rebuilt from parts that were not for wheelchairs, for example, car parts that had been welded together. The unstable contraption had to be replaced in this case by

## Keep the wheels turning

The production of **prostheses** has developed fast in the recent years, with companies like Ottobock supporting paralympic athletes on location

the workshop for free. This service was necessary for the worldwide sporting event to be played on an equal level. "It should not be a matter of money whether you can take part," said Rüdiger Herzog.

Even less a matter of winning competitions, pro-

stheses are important for athletes' mindsets. "It's essential because you think about it all the time. If it hurts when walking across the room then that affects your quality of life. When it is fitting well then everything seems better just because you don't



In the Ottobock workshop. Technicians repairing a wheelchair.

have any pain and you can do whatever you want to," said GB wheelchair basketball player Amy Conroy.

Ottobock has held an important role in paralympic villages since the 1988 Seoul Games. Originally founded over 90 years ago, it currently spans 44 countries. Ottobock prides itself on its first-class equipment, with every feature planned to suit athletes' needs. However, the company does not exclusively provide a service for athletes. Indeed, their main focus is on the general market. Ottobock identifies with aspects of the Paralympic movement and supports it to broadcast its messages to a wider audience. Ottobock uses the vehicle of Paralympian ambassadors to do this. "We don't have ambassadors because they win medals. The most important thing for us is that they can tell a story, they can transport a way of thinking that is helpful for others too and helps people understand what Ottobock is all about," explained Rüdiger Herzog.

One ambassador, Australian recent gold medalist Kelly Cartwright, was the first woman to climb Mount Kilimanjaro with a C-Leg (a type of prosthetic leg). She is an inspiring ambassador, but Ottobock does not claim that all amputees must climb Mount Kilimanjaro. Rather, all paralympian athletes are good examples that help open people's minds. "I'm sure not only those disabled, but all people can learn a lot from paralympian athletes," said Rüdiger Herzog.

To educate the public about the Paralympic movement, Ottobock sponsored an exhibition that toured the U.K. in the build-up to the Games and settled in London for their duration. The exhibition had interactive features, where members of public could sample a handbike, for example. The purpose was to enable the public "to have the possibility to get a bit closer to the Paralympic movement" whilst understanding what was going on at the Games.

Recently, Ottobock signed a contract with the IPC, which extended Ottobock's involvement in the Paralympics until the Rio de Janeiro Games in 2016. This means that they will not only be able to deliver invaluable technical help to current and future Paralympians, but also transmit messages reflecting the Paralympian values into the future.



"It's been a great experience. I've met some incredible people and I loved every minute of reporting and going to the sporting venues"

CARINA CANAVAN  
18, UK STUDENT FROM BALLYGAWLEY

Ready for work. Nico Feit and Karla Imdahl followed the judo competition, while George Simonds and Benjamin Scholz gave an interview to a fellow journalist.



"The Paralympic Post project was such a unique and exciting opportunity for us. I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience of writing articles and interviewing many interesting athletes"

LUCY MICHAELOUDIS  
17, UK STUDENT FROM LONDON



Proud journalists. The student reporters of "Paralympics Zeitung/ Paralympic Post" presenting the first issue in the office at the NASUWT's London Regional Centre.

# A once in a lifetime project

Long days and nights. But not because the 20 Paralympic Post **reporters** were out and about in London. The 16 to 19-year-olds were busy finding great stories

"It's a wonderful opportunity for the young reporters of the Paralympic Post because you will gain experience in the journalism industry and experience is vital as being a journalist is very challenging"

DOUG WILLIS  
EVENING STANDARD - MANAGING EDITOR



Team Amy. GB wheelchair basketballer Amy Conroy and her sister Alice, who was a Paralympic Post reporter (left). George Simonds (right) smartens up for a reception at the German Embassy.

"It's been a wonderful experience, and working on the Paralympic Post has allowed me to develop my skills as a journalist. Also, the project has given me an insight on how student life really is. This has definitely been an unforgettable experience"

GEORGE SIMONDS  
16, UK STUDENT FROM BATH





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