

Paralympic Post

IN KOOPERATION MIT DER



Stronger than ever
301 athletes compete for Britain

Faster than ever
Peacock challenges Pistorius

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The Teachers' Union

Contents

Two games, one set-up 08

Most of the Olympic venues are also being used in the Paralympics

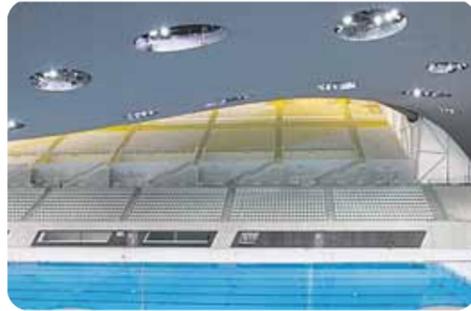


photo: Steven Bates

Blade runners 11

Jonnie Peacock competes against one of his heroes: Oscar Pistorius



photo: Frauke John

Girl power 13

Great Britain's wheelchair basketball-team go for gold



photo: AFP

04 Paralympics GB



photo: ddp

301 athletes from Britain are competing in all 20 paralympic sports

09 Time to say hello



photo: Reuters

The opening ceremony was one in a long line of events that opened the Games

12 News round up



photo: David Poulney

A stamp for each winning athlete, The oldest, the youngest and more news

15 Ade Adepitan's Paralympics



photo: Kelly Hill

He played wheelchair basketball for the UK – now he is a TV presenter

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Cover picture

Sarah Storey won Great Britain's first gold medal of the Games at the London Velodrome. On Thursday she was roared on by a crowd of 6,000 as she stormed to victory in the 3km C5 individual pursuit. The 34 year old cyclist, who was born without a left hand, triumphed on a spectacular first day for Paralympics GB who picked up a total of seven medals.

photo: Thilo Rückeis

Hello!



Photo: promo

Hello!



Photo: Evening Standard

A few days ago the Evening Standard carried a picture of a pretty little girl who lost her leg when a bus ploughed into her, injuring her mother and killing her grandmother. It was a freak accident after which her family had to teach themselves to look to the future rather than dwell on their misfortune. The little girl has now taken up ballet. Her mother carried the torch to the Paralympic Games. Londoners have embraced these Games with all our hearts. The athletes are not merely excellent in their fields, they have overcome terrible adversity. Behind every winner is a story of courage. London is a tough city, as hectic as New York and, we like to think, even more economically and culturally exciting. It is where people come to make their fortunes or their mark. The city is on display at the moment, full of flags and there is a carnival atmosphere. We welcome especially young people seeing the capital through fresh eyes. Make the most of your time here and I look forward to reading your vivid accounts. The Paralympics are all about stories and that is what you are here to write. Londoners have shown already that we make a good audience – the roar in the Olympic Stadium for team GB was louder than a plane taking off. That was then. As the television advertisements for the Paralympics put it: "Thanks for the warm up."

SARAH SANDS,
Editor-in-Chief, London Evening Standard

As the largest teachers' union in the UK, the NASUWT is delighted to be supporting the Paralympic Post and playing its part in bringing the extraordinary spectacle of these games to readers across the UK and Germany. The talent and enthusiasm demonstrated by the young people selected to take part in this exciting project is only matched by that displayed by the athletes competing here in London. I have no doubt the Paralympic Post team will do an excellent job in bringing the intensity of competition and the scale of human achievement being witnessed at these games to life in these pages.

The NASUWT has a long record of support for and involvement with the Paralympic movement and has worked hard to promote sporting opportunities which are open to all young people in schools. The Union is proud to be able to offer this amazing opportunity for young people to develop their skills and work with their international compatriots in a project which truly represents the ideal of the Paralympic spirit.

CHRIS KEATES, General Secretary,
NASUWT, the largest teachers' union in the UK

Hello!



Photo: promo

It is a great pleasure to welcome the world to London and showcase the amazing event the 2012 Paralympic Games are. We are pleased to say that this year's Games are the largest yet, involving 4,200 athletes from 166 nations across the globe. We are delighted to say that everyone interested in the Games – who was lucky enough to get a ticket – can soak up the atmosphere in the venues and be part of the Paralympic community. We are delighted that, through our broadcast deals, in the UK and around the world, Paralympic sport will now be accessible to hundreds of millions of new spectators. We welcome the ever-increasing media coverage these Games are receiving. It is delightful to see that the public is increasingly interested in experiencing sport like never before, enthralled by the world class performances of the Paralympians.

We are keen for young people to learn about Paralympic values, the Paralympians and the London 2012 Paralympic Games: Games of the possible. As a former Paralympian myself, I very much appreciate projects such as the Paralympic Post. I welcome the fact that students from all over Europe – with and without disabilities – are working together to create the Paralympic Post. This provides the Paralympians and their performances with an excellent platform and reaches out to the next generation.

CHRIS HOLMES,
Director of Paralympic Integration LOCOG



Photo: Thilo Rückes

PARALYMPIC POST – THE TEAM

When you walk through London these days and you see young men and women in turquoise shirts - it may be our crew from the „Paralympics Zeitung / Paralympic Post“. These are our talented young reporters from Northern Ireland, Wales, England, Switzerland and Germany. You could meet one of the most inspired and best informed journalists of the Paralympic Games London 2012. They entered writing competitions and were selected out of nearly 400 applicants from all over the world. But they do not only have excellent writing skills but also super social skills. Have you seen a kitchen where 20 teenagers prepared pizza together, and that was cleaned up perfectly later? The editorial team is based in the Greater London Regional Center. The rooms are kindly provided by the Teachers' Union NASUWT. In the hallway you can find portrait pictures of the whole team, what a nice greeting! In addition to the students, we are grateful to have Joanna Bartlett on board. She was a young reporter herself during the Games in Beijing 2008 and is now part of the organizing staff. The young reporters all show unbelievable spirit - and are really able to gain experience as a journalist, working with deadlines, and nonstop day and night during the Games. Without the support of SecEd, the London Evening Standard, NASUWT and especially the „Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung“, the German Social Accident Insurance, we could not be working so passionately in London.

ANNETTE KÖGEL

The British Team 2012

The Paralympic Games have finally come home again. The **301 athletes** in the biggest Paralympics GB Team ever are excited to be competing on home soil.

With the **amazing support** of the British public, the team is looking to win more medals than the 102 it took home from Beijing.

Most events were sold out in weeks. In the 2012 Paralympics, GB is represented in all 20 Paralympic sports, new addition like the sitting volleyball.

The most experienced member of the team is target shooter Di Coates, who will be taking part in her eighth Games



Rowing

Making only its second Paralympic appearance, Rowing is one sport that is dominated by Great Britain. This is due down to Tom Aggar, who took to the water again at Eton Dorney this summer to defend his World Champion status in the Men's Single Sculls.

Firm favourite Tom Aggar will be joined by two new teams in the Mixed Double Sculls and Mixed Coxed Four.



Football 7-a-side

Captain Matt Dimbylow is ready to lead his football 7-a-side team to their dreams of winning a medal at the 2012 Paralympic Games. Ibrahima Diallo (photo) is making his Paralympic debut this year. Great Britain's is pitched into a group that includes Ukraine, Brazil and USA. There are 12 athletes in each of the 8 teams competing.



Swimming

ParalympicsGB has assembled its largest ever swim team. Some of the famous faces include the highly experienced athlete Sascha Kindred OBE, who won gold at the Sydney, Athens, and Beijing Games.

Another one to watch is Ellie Simmonds, who is looking to repeat the success of her amazing Paralympic debut where she won gold at age 13.



Wheelchair rugby

After a handful of fourth places at recent Paralympic Games and the World Championships, the youthful ParalympicsGB rugby team led by Steve Brown (photo), hopes to stand on top of the podium in London.

Kent Crusaders' Kylie Grimes is the team's only female player whilst high-scorer Aaron Philips is a real strength for ParalympicsGB.



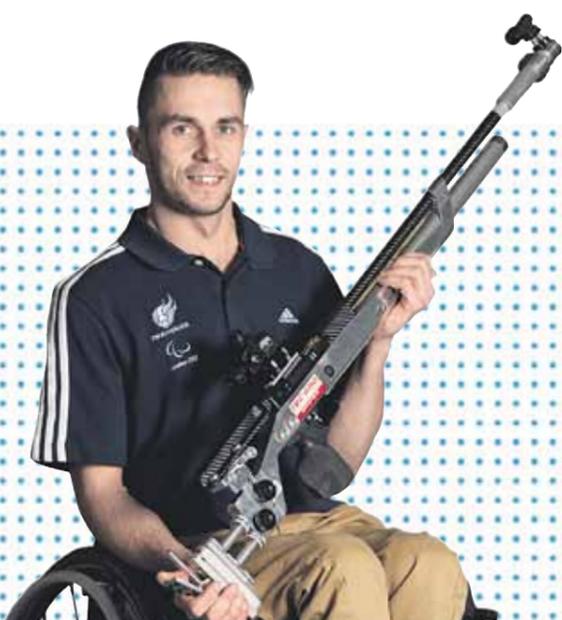
Athletics

With a record breaking number of athletes in every classification competing in London, a grand total of 170 medal events are set to be held (96 track, 70 field, and 4 road). Nathan Stephens (photo) is hoping to sustain his amazing performances of late and exceed his world record distance of 41.37 metres. Other athletes to watch are David Weir (T54) and Hannah Cockroft (T34).



Wheelchair tennis

Wheelchair tennis made its Paralympic debut 20 years ago in Barcelona. The ball is allowed to bounce twice, otherwise the rules are no different to non-disabled tennis. Flagbearer Peter Norfolk, nicknamed the Quadfather (photo), is ParalympicsGB's most experienced and successful player. He will partner with Andy Lapthorne in the doubles, who said "I'm not going to London for a tracksuit, I'm going to win."



Shooting

ParalympicsGB's 12-man shooting team has proved to be very successful. Matt Skelhon (photo) remains a major medal hope after his brilliant victory in the Beijing Games. Paralympic veteran Di Coates narrowly missed out on a medal at her eighth Paralympics. She is the only British athlete with the previous experience of a home Games, having made her Paralympic debut at Stoke Mandeville.



Judo

Judo is a sport of mental alertness and physical prowess for visually impaired athletes. Captain Ben Quilter, World Champion in his classification, is hoping to secure the medal he narrowly missed last time. ParalympicsGB boasts two sets of brothers; the Powell's (photo) are making their debut along with first-timer Joe Ingram and his brother Sam, who was part of the team in Beijing.



Table tennis

Paralympic table tennis has the same rules as the non-disabled game, but with a slight tweak: Each serve must cross the back of the table. It has been part of the Paralympic Games since 1960. Will Bayley (photo) is Britain's best player and current world number 2. Bayley once said that "table tennis is not a Mickey Mouse sport, it's blood, sweat, and tears every day".



Sitting volleyball

ParalympicsGB sitting volleyball pioneers look ready to steal the stage in their debut. All eyes will be on the team when they make GB history. Sitting volleyball has the same basic rules as standing volleyball. The differences include: the smaller court, lower net, and seated players. To captain Claire Harvey (photo) the key advantage is that it allows you time outside of your wheelchair, acting as "a place where you don't feel disabled".



Cycling

Cycling needs tactics for pursuits and relays, speed for time trials and sprints, and a measure of stamina for the road race. "There's no buzz like it," says Jody Cundy. He was on the GB team, that won 17 golds in Beijing. The 18-strong squad for London is studded with stars like Sarah Storey and David Stone. Athletes compete using handcycles, tricycles, tandems, or bicycles.



Fencing

With six new recruits like Gemma Collis (photo), and seasoned professional David Heaton leading the way at his fifth Paralympics, GB's wheelchair fencers are certainly a team to watch. GB's squad is comprised of a Men's Foil Team, Women's Epée Team, and Craig McCann in the Men's Individual Sabre. Will this mix of experience and new talent be enough to secure the first ParalympicsGB fencing medals since 1992?



Sailing

Athletes have to master the ever changing conditions on the open waters of Weymouth at the London 2012 Games. ParalympicsGB hopes to win the first sailing medal since the introduction of the sport in 2000 but the team is up against fierce competition from the Spanish, French, and New Zealand. Medal hopefuls are Alexandra Rickham and Niki Birrell (photo), in the SKUD 18 class.



Goalball

With no Olympic equivalent, Goalball, played by visually impaired athletes, is a unique sport. With two sets of siblings on the team of 12, ParalympicsGB's squad is even more so. The men's team includes brothers Adam and David Knott, as well as Michael Sharke, whose sister Anna competes on the women's squad. ParalympicsGB goalball teams have qualified for the first time in 12 years.



Boccia

Boccia is similar to boules and has no Olympic counterpart. It is an inclusive sport as "all disabilities can do it," says Dan Bentley of ParalympicsGB. The "fantastic achievement" of winning gold in Beijing means the team is set for success. Team captain Nigel Murray and experienced players David Smith and Zoe Robinson will be competing next to the McGuire brothers, who are making their debuts.



Wheelchair basketball

Wheelchair basketball is one of the most exciting, fast paced and grueling sports at the Paralympic Games, with Team GB being one of the most successful nations competing. Spearheading the women's team is experienced player Helen Freeman while youngster Maddie Thompson is making her Paralympic debut. The strong men's team with Jon Hall (photo) is headed by Jon Pollock at his fourth Games.



Archery

In Beijing ParalympicsGB's archery team was brilliant, finishing second to China, with 4 medals, including 2 golds. Danielle Brown, a gold medallist from Beijing, remains a firm favourite in her class. John Stubbs and John Cavanagh are both also medal hopes from the 13-man squad. Kate Murray (photo) is the oldest athlete in the entire ParalympicsGB team.



Equestrian

The five strong Para-equestrian team, who won gold in Beijing is spearheaded by gold medalist Lee Pearson. Alongside Pearson are experienced athletes Sophie Christiansen (photo) and Debbie Criddle. Making their Paralympic debuts this year are Sophie Wells and Natasha Baker, last year's European gold medalist.



Powerlifting

Powerlifting is pure competition. Athletes are only classified by weight and not disability. Using upper-body strength alone, they lift about three times their bodyweight. With a rapid two minutes per attempt, it is gripping. ParalympicsGB powerlifter Anthony Peddle was in the first powerlifting event for men in 1988. He is now in his seventh Games: "The achievement this time for me is that I'm actually here."

photos: Thilo Rückes, Kit Houghton, onEdition, dapid, pa/dpa



Football 5-a-side

The riverbank arena in the Olympic park will host the football 5-a-side events. Football 5-a-side events are for athletes with a visual impairment. The five man strong squads play 50 minutes per game on a smaller field. This is different to Football 7-a-side, with players like Richard Fox (photo), where 7 players with cerebral palsy play on a regular sized field.

Two Games, one set-up

Taking advantage of the existing infrastructure, most of the Olympic **venues** are being used in the Paralympics, or have been converted to house Paralympic sports

BRADLEY NEEN, 17 years

The curtain has set over the Olympic Games, and nine years of planning came to fruition in spectacular style. Now, it is the turn of the Paralympics. Chris Holmes was the man handed the task of delivering the most exciting spectacle disabled sport has ever witnessed. Holmes was given the role as Director of Paralympic Integration, in a set-up using a single Organising Committee for both the Olympics and Paralympics.

"My role is essentially to be in charge of all things concerning the Paralympics and to make sure that they are integrated throughout the Organising Committee," Holmes said. The word 'integration' is key. Many of the venues used for the Olympics are also being used in the Paralympics, or have been converted to house Paralympic sports. Holmes believes this will be an advantage during the Games. "We're using the same Olympic Park, the same stadia, the same transport so it is all about maximising the benefits of using the same stuff."

The Olympic Park and various infrastructure have undergone a quick-fire transformation, with only a two-week time slot between the Games. One of the most important transformations is the conversion of 300 vehicles, enabling them to accommodate up to six wheelchair users. "We're converting them so that teams can travel as a team and get on and off independently without any assistance,"

Holmes said. The organisers are also making sure the Games are fully accessible for spectators. This includes adding wheelchair spaces in the Paralympic venues to provide an accessible and enjoyable experience.

Organising an event such as the Paralympics is guaranteed to bring trials and tribulations, however Holmes strived to ensure all the small parts of the jigsaw were put together correctly. "The greatest challenge is ensuring that you focus on every single detail," he admits. "All [the spectators] want is a smooth, seamless paralympic experience."

Almost 2.5 million people will gain a paralympic experience in London. The 2012 Paralympics will be the first Games that will completely sell out. Great Britain's success at the Olympic Games sparked an influx in sales and organisers were forced to re-release new batches of tickets every day to meet the demand.

All the Olympic commercial sponsors are also involved with the Paralympics, marking a rise in the commercial value of the Games. As well as this, London 2012 saw the top British broadcasters vying for the television rights. Channel 4 provides the most substantial coverage Paralympic Games have ever seen.

World-class athletes, top-level accessibility, packed out venues and unparalleled broadcasting should provide us with the best Paralympics yet. And Chris Holmes thinks no differently, "this should be a sensational Paralympic Games."



Back on the track. The new Velodrome track (above) and the Aquatics centre (below) passed their tests in the Olympic Games.

Lighting the way to London

The Paralympic **torch relay** had a unique start at the birthplace of the Games in Stoke-Mandeville. The 580 torchbearers were selected for their inspiring life stories



Burn! Claire Lomas lights the cauldron at Trafalgar Square as part of the Flame visit to London.

Amidst the hectic and excitement surrounding the London 2012 Paralympic Games, it can be easy to forget that it was only 50 miles away in Stoke Mandeville that the paralympic movement began in 1948. With the Games 'coming home' for the first time, a torch relay took place from Stoke Mandeville to London on the day of the Opening Ceremony to recognise Stoke Mandeville as the birthplace of the modern Paralympic Games.

To create the flame, four national flames were first formed at the highest summits of the four British host nations. Groups of disabled and non-disabled scouts climbed Scafell Pike (England), Mount Snowdon (Wales), Ben Nevis (Scotland) and Slieve Donard (Northern Ireland) and carried it to the capital cities: London, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast where cauldrons were lit to begin a day of paralympic celebrations at flame festivals.

From the capitals, the flames were then carried to Stoke Mandeville where the paralympic flame was created at the 'Paralympic Flame Lighting Ceremony' on August 28th to begin the relay to the Opening Ceremony.

Sebastian Coe, Chair of the London 2012 Organising Committee, said: "The creation of the paralympic flame marks the start of a 24-hour unique relay which will see teams of torchbearers work through the night to light the way to fantastic Paralympic Games. Each and every one of them has achieved something remarkable."

The 580 torchbearers carried the flame in 116 groups of five. Each were selected for their stories of how they demonstrate the paralympic values of courage, determination, inspiration and equality. One torchbearer, Michael Watson, had to apply each of these traits after a boxing match in 1991 left him paralysed, ending his career.

Despite being told he would never walk again, Michael took his first steps in 1997 and in 2003 completed the London Marathon over six days. A year later he was awarded an MBE for his work in inspiring people. He said: "I am over the moon and very, very proud to have been selected to carry the flame. It is a great honour and I would like to wish Paralympics GB lots of success and medals."

KERI TRIGG, 17 years

Primed for the Games

Bath University hosted the paralympic athletes at their final training camp

Last week saw the official last day of Paralympics GB's pre-Games training camp as the last squad left their Bath University base and headed into the athletes village. "The aim of the camp was to prepare the athletes as best as possible for the London Games," said one deputy camp director. "And by running these camps we are not dropping the athletes in at the deep end." It is in the training areas where perhaps the most important lessons are worked. The sitting volleyball team's session, for example, could be heard all over the sports training village. Not due to coach Ian Legrand's loud voice but because while the volleyball squad was training, speakers were blasting out pre-recorded crowd sounds to try and replicate the distractions of the home Games.

One thing which became obvious is how important the volunteers were. They restocked fridges providing drinks to the athletes and staff and they helped in the camp headquarters printing off instructions, programming the mobile telephones and running errands. Despite not being paid the volunteers received several 'perks' from the job. Free drinks are provided by the corporate sponsors as are meals during the shifts; however the main perk gained from volunteering does not involve material possessions. "For me the best part of the camp is the chance to meet and interact with the athletes," said Alex. "There is a blind footballer from the five-a-side team called Darren Harris and he challenged me to a game of connect four. And he beat me three times. But the thing was he had to point out where he beat me. And he has not let me forget it since on twitter!"

GEORGE SIMONDS, 17 years

Fantastic opening

The ceremony in London was one of a series line of **events** that opened the Paralympic Games. One aspect of the performance was that it made the audience aware of existing preconceptions and prejudices about disability

TAVISHI KANWAR, 17, LUCY MICHAELOUDIS, 17 years

Arts and culture have always flourished alongside sports. Harking back to the ancient Games where gold medals were awarded for architecture, design, and sculpture, the Opening Ceremony is a celebration of discovery and creativity as well as sports. The Cultural Olympiad was built on this concept, too, and has been running since London won the bid, culminating in the London 2012 festival, which has been taking place all summer. As part of this festival, a body of work contributed by several artists called "Unlimited" has been commissioned to provide the same platform for artists as the Paralympics does for athletes. Unlimited is about welcoming everyone's imaginations whilst challenging preconceptions about disability. Artistic director of the Southbank centre, Jude Kelly, describes it as the "most significant piece of work in the London 2012 Festival." The Opening Ceremony is one in a long line of arts and cultural events representing the values of the Paralympics.

Since 1948 the Games have grown from a "revolutionary" idea of using sport to rehabilitate spinal cord injury patients to a sell-out celebration of sporting achievement. What better place to continue the journey started by Sir Ludwig Guttmann than in the country where science and our "insatiable appetite for sport" lead to the "first sparks that became the Paralympic spirit?" said Sir Philip Craven, President of the International Paralympic Committee in his speech at the Opening Ceremony.

Jenny Sealey, Co-artistic Director of the Opening Ceremony hoped everyone experienced the magnificent home-coming of the Paralympic Games as an "exquisite journey of discovery inspired by the wonder of science." The central character Miranda played by Nicola Miles Wildin, continued the theme of Shakespeare's "The Tempest" which appeared in both Olympic Ceremonies. Lead by the Big Bang Theory physicist Stephen Hawking, the ceremony paid homage to Sir Isaac Newton's theory of gravity and part-took in the largest collective apple bite to relive this ground-breaking discovery.

For us it was a brilliant show, but what did it feel like to actually perform on that stage in Stratford? Joseph Fletcher from Deafmen Dancing was one of 42 deaf and disabled aerial performers at the Ceremony. Indeed around 80% of the cast was deaf or

Arts and culture have always flourished alongside great sporting events

disabled in some way. As an aerial performer, Fletcher took part in a six-week training programme at Circus Space. He performed in the opening sequence and during "Bird Gherl".

After watching such a professional aerial performance, it is easy to forget the trials and tribulations of producing and choreographing such a unique sequence.

Fletcher says they had to be creative with the choreography: "of the four rope boys you've got Jack and Jay who've both got one leg, so that cut a lot of moves."

"It was interesting how four different people, two deaf and two one-legged, are going to make this work."

Another issue was "working out how we were all going to stay in time with each other", Fletcher explains. He had earplugs that help him to hear the music whereas Jacob was totally "reliant on visuals." So in the end "we're all kind of looking at each other and learning each other's choreography" in order to stay in time. During the first rehearsals it was a "nightmare" for the quartet to stay in time. When they practised in the stadium, difficulties arose as "you're that much further away and you've got the challenge of the wind."

It is through the eyes of Joe Fletcher that we see the resilience, creativity, and determination needed for such a celebration.

These dancers accompanied Miranda through her exploration of the central themes of "reason" and "rights", brought to life in a large open book displaying The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. With the inclusion of many talented deaf and disabled artists and the use of British Sign Language and audio description, we know we are on our way to the "inclusive society" Sir Craven speaks of.

As part of Unlimited, "In Water I am Weightless" is an illuminating play by Kaite O'Reilly. The play can be deceptive and brings to light the audience's preconceptions about disability. It is a collection of speeches and sketches from the "D" monologues, D standing for disabled and deaf. Incidentally the play is performed by an ensemble of actors who are deaf and disabled.

A group from South Africa embodied the paralympic value of determination

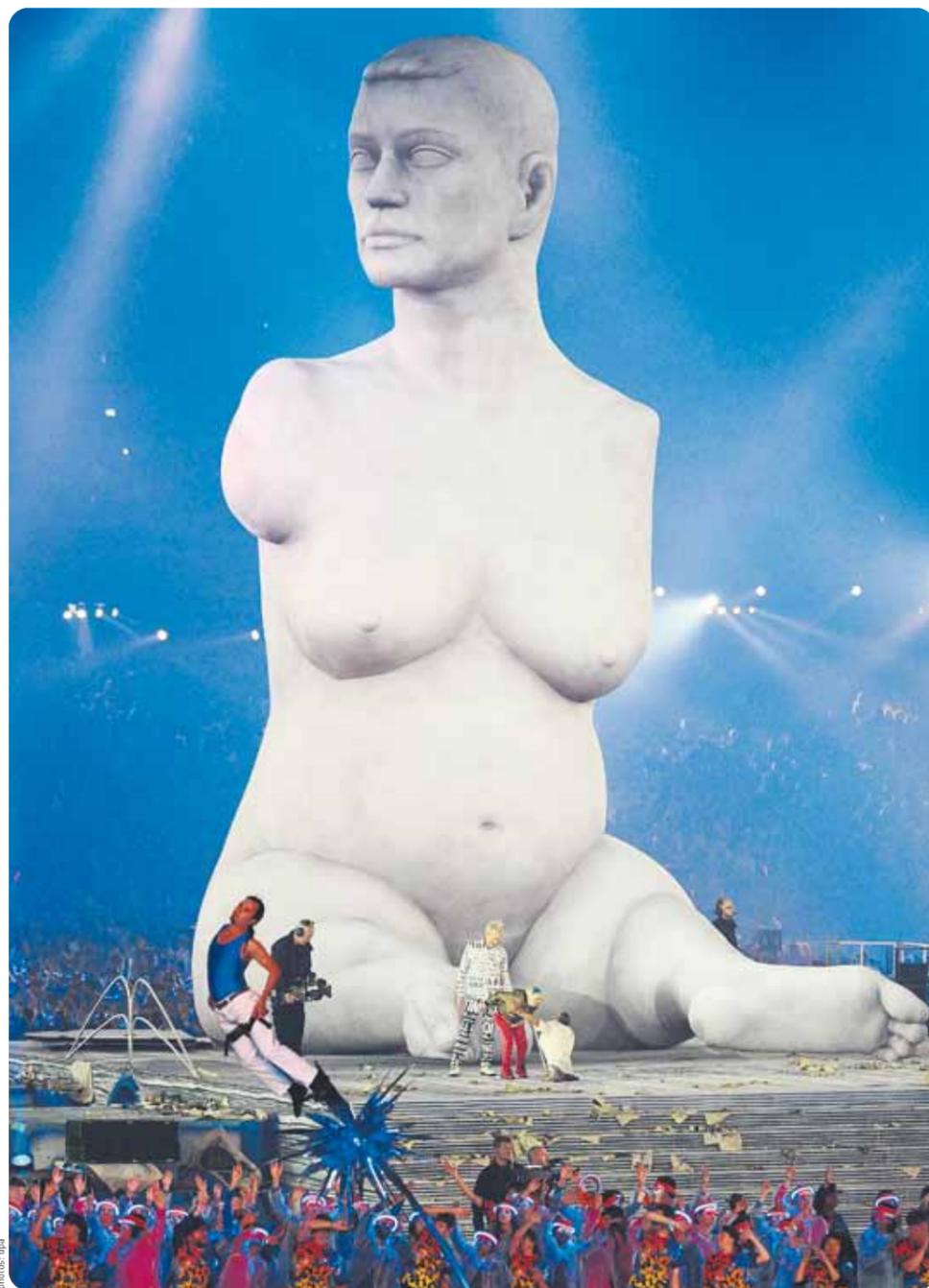
led. The play is a result of O'Reilly wanting to do something "dangerous and edgy" with plays rather than just "telling a nice story".

One facet of the performance is that it perhaps unintentionally makes the audience "aware of their own preconceptions and prejudices." This became evident during Post-show audience - Q&A's, where many people seemed to assume that the stories being acted out reflected the performers' own experiences with disability. However O'Reilly stresses that it is "absolutely not their experiences, it is absolutely not from them". She admits it is very frustrating when audiences say "oh, but it was so believable." Indeed, she admits it can be "disrespectful" to the actors who are playing the parts of disabled people written by O'Reilly herself which no resemblance to their personal stories.

The play includes a speech performed in British Sign Language (BSL) without any translation for those of the audience who are unfamiliar with BSL. In this way, it by raising the play is promoting the value of equality as the play raises the profile of disability to that of ability. However, the inclusion of a speech in sign language runs far deeper than this. O'Reilly says it was included as "although 'In Water I am Weightless' is a mainstream production, I wanted to have a moment where the main dominant culture and language wasn't going to be hearing culture."

The story behind Gadsden's collaboration with Bamabanani arts group of South Africa embodies the Paralympic value of determination. It all began when Rachel Gadsden came across a painting "just by chance" which "spoke" to her. The work had touched her so deeply that she decided she "would find whoever that person was" who had painted it. And so began Gadsden's journey to meet the Bamabanani. Information about the artist was scarce and after weeks of googling Gadsden tracked down a second-hand catalogue of the exhibition in Australia, that would take her "nowhere". Six weeks later, after she had "blind googled every name in the book" a flicker of hope appeared. An email arrived saying, "I'm Nondumiso Hlwele and I believe you are looking for me". Fast forward to today and Rachel Gadsden-collaboration with the Bamabanani has led to a full-fledged exhibition and performance featured in the Unlimited festival.

On show today is a body of work which dramatises the visceral truth about living with debilitating illnesses. The material came from Gadsden's residency in the Khayelitsha township in South Africa where the group is based - a place where the battle



Arts and sports clash. Artists perform around a replica of the sculpture 'Alison Lapper Pregnant' in the Olympic Stadium during the opening ceremony (above) - the Queen is amused.

for survival must be fought and won every day. Gadsden explains the concept is to "celebrate the survival of both the Bamabanani group who were dying until they got HIV anti-retroviral drugs" and Gadsden herself who is kept alive by a "syringe driver" which injects her every minute to keep her breathing. However there is also an acute awareness of "the fragility that's around those issues when you are constantly trying to stay alive."

The works created during Gadsden's residency are primarily body maps, created as a "psychological process" to "express their Aids status". Essentially a body map is when you lie on the floor and someone draws round you. The silhouette then becomes a "vessel for you to be able to tell your story." It seems this exhibition has international potential, as it will appear in South Africa during the Women's Festival in 2013. It is very important to Gadsden that "the Bamabanani have an exhibition in their own country."

The performance element of the commission includes Gadsden creating "live artwork on stage" with a "contemporary dance element." The work is created and digitally projected. "So there become this relationship between the moving image I'm creating and him (the dancer.)" A medical doctor is also on stage and "intervenes at various times to do with injections and spreading the virus." The performance was borne out of Gadsden's experience in Africa so "there is an element of Khayelitsha within it" as well as an "element of western culture that impregnates the narrative as well."

This body of work has many features that challenge preconceptions on disability, whilst provoking imagination, in London and beyond.

Riding high at the Games

Man and beast - Para-equestrian veteran **Lee Pearson** and his steed Gentleman have a complicated but successful relationship

EMILY JAMISON, 18, and LUCY MICHAELOUDIS, 17 years

Lee Pearson, star of the ParalympicsGB Para-Equestrian team, had a clear goal for the Games: "Twelve gold medals by London 2012." Pearson has represented Britain at the Sydney, Athens, Beijing and now the London 2012 Games. The Paralympic veteran has been competing since soon after equestrian was first introduced at the 1996 Atlanta Paralympic Games.

The sport has developed since then, in 2006 the sport moved from being governed by the Internatio-



Spearhead of the Para-Dressage team.

nal Paralympic Committee to the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), this made the FEI the first international sporting federation in the world to regulate and govern a sport for both able-bodied and disabled athletes, drawing a parallel between the Olympic and the Paralympic Games.

However, unlike its Olympic counterpart para-equestrian at the Paralympics includes only dressage (where the Germans remain Britain's biggest threat) and not jumping. But Britain remains the nation to beat due to the astounding 10 medals won at the Beijing Games alone, five of those being Gold.

As in other Paralympic sports, each athlete is classified according to their disability. The grades for equestrian are Ia, Ib, II, III or IV, with grade IV being the least disabled.

Para-equestrian sport is different to the other sports that are headlining the Games as it's not one athlete competing but a partnership between man and beast. Pearson expresses the uncertainty riders face: "In athletics you know how fit you are, you know how fast you're running or how high you can jump, but with horses you can train and train everyday of your life and something could still go wrong in the arena. You can never predict how animals are going to behave, especially horses."

When asked to comment about competing on home turf Pearson said: "It's very nerve-racking going into a Paralympic Arena. I think it changes my awareness that, when we go in, we're going to have more supporters than we have ever had, which adds an extra pressure." The pressure isn't helped by the tricky relationship Pearson has with Gentleman, his steed for the Games. "He is a very, very awkward character! We actually don't like each other very much,"



Para-equestrian star Lee Pearson relies on his moody horse Gentleman

Pearson laughs. "Sometimes he is really angry or happy, or refuses to go into the arena!"

But the experienced veteran Lee Pearson keeps calm and focused by repeating to himself: "I can only do my best. I can only do my best." And so far his best has been good enough. Which is also thanks to Gentleman. "He generally knows his job, and the judges like his way of going, but he is not a horse who has the same character every day."

Pearson also has his fellow team members to thank for his extensive medal collection. As Sophie Christiansen who was part of the gold medal winning team in Beijing says it is "phenomenal" to compete on such a "grand scale" in London. Rising to the challenge of their previous successes Christiansen says of the para-equestrian team: "we always want to better our performance."

Inspire the world

Young people from Azerbaijan to Zambia benefit from the **International Inspiration** programme and learn about the values of the Games

TAVISHI KANWAR, 17 years

A 10-year old Jordanian boy is being pushed around in a pram. Due to his disability, he is ostracised by the community. His brother is disabled too, but he has the advantage of the one wheelchair the family can afford. Over time however both boys participate in sport activities, and the community sees how it is possible for them to integrate. The community extrapolates this integration to everyday life, and slowly the family begins to be included. This is the work of International Inspiration.

International Inspiration (II) is a programme which embodies the promise made by Lord Seb Coe at the Singapore bid in 2005 to "reach young people all around the world and connect them to the inspirational power of the Games so they are inspired to choose sport". The programme has reached 20 countries and around 12 million young people. It aims to teach the values of the Games and qualities to help communities, such as leadership and inclusion, through sport.

"The best part of II is it uses the universal and easily understandable language to convey its message - the language of sports", said a New Delhi student involved in the programme. As part of International Inspiration, young people around the world learn about different countries, cultures and tradi-

tions through the school links programme. With over 500 schools getting involved worldwide, one way of achieving this has been to share traditional games from their home country.

From Azerbaijan to Zambia, II has been working through the British Council, UK Sport and UNICEF to deliver inclusive and educational sport. In India, II has run a project to train volunteers to teach sports to young people with disabilities. They have also targeted the curriculum with a set of cards to supplement physical education. With learning at the centre of the sport activities, country programme manager Manish Singh said "to bring education and sport closer together and to get people to realise they are part of each other has been a key achievement."

The London 2012 Paralympic Games have been a focal point for II. A key aspect has been partnerships with the schools in the 20 countries to UK schools. This has seen an atmosphere of sharing culture as a way of teaching and broadening perspectives. A 17-year old Indian student learnt both sport and culture from his stay in the UK. "Rounders is a game I'd never heard of and learnt it from II in our partner school in Essex, UK. I enjoyed it the most."

In places where Olympic and Paralympic sports are not focused on and there are few national champions, these sports were particularly promoted. In India "we deliberately chose to focus on Olympics and London 2012," said Mr. Singh. "We were surprised our-

selves about the uptake because when we introduced games and activities they all took to it very easily."

One way these sports were promoted worldwide was through II ambassadors. With the likes of Oscar Pistorius and Denise Lewis, the ambassadors visited countries as inspiration whilst raising the profile of the project. Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson visited Jordan: "It was a real privilege to go there."

The key purpose is to leave a legacy, being a "short-term programme that needed to have

long-term effects". This was ensured through volunteers and young leaders, who were trained both in the UK and abroad to teach their juniors sport. With the skills to teach passed on, the cycle of learning and sports can continue to reflect the 2012 Game's motto: "Inspire a generation."

Erica Kouassi, a 16-year old sports leader and II torchbearer from North London, described her experience: "It was really nice to see how enthusiastic and happy the kids were. It was fun to pass on what I have learnt."



Give me five. Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson greets girls from the Libanon taking part in the programme.

Potentially Peacock

Rising star **Jonnie Peacock** challenges the legendary Oscar Pistorius in the 100 metres sprint. Will Peacock overtake his hero and become the new Paralympic blade runner icon?



A rising star and his idol. Will Jonnie Peacock (above) pass Oscar Pistorius (below)?

When the USA's Paralympic team invited Jonnie Peacock to compete as a guest at their Paralympic trials in July, very little was expected of the 19-year-old from Cambridge, England. The result of these trials however, has left USA's Jerome Singleton and the legendary "blade runner" Oscar Pistorius something to think about when they settle into their starting blocks in London 2012.

Peacock, who at the age of five contracted meningococcal septicaemia and lost his right leg below the knee, ran a new world record time of 10.85 seconds in the T44 category 100 metres sprint, bettering the previous world record time by 0.06 seconds.

Having achieved so much in such a short span of time, the pressure that rests on Peacock's shoulders to grab gold at the London 2012 Paralympics appears to be getting greater. However, if there is something that you should know about Jonnie Peacock, it's that he is no stranger to performing on the big stage.

The former ballet dancer has represented his school in rugby and football and even played a starring role in his local football team. The absence of a right leg posed no problem for Jonnie as he continued to impress when he attended a Paralympics GB Talent Identification day at the Mile End Athletics Stadium, competing in the 60 metres sprint.

After being taken under the wing of Paralympics GB, Jonnie went from strength to strength taking gold in the 100 metres at the UK School Games in Cardiff and the Aviva Parallel Success Challenge at Crystal Palace, running times of 12.85 seconds and 13.1 seconds respectively.

Peacock, who in his early running days was embarrassed by his 12+ seconds personal best has acknowledged the dramatic improvement in his per-



Reigning champion Oscar Pistorius

formances in the past year: "My personal best last year was 11.47 and less than 48 hours ago it was 11.24, now it's 10.85 and I'm not stopping there. I'm so excited now to just keep on racing and pushing the boundaries of what an amputee can do."

In 2010, at the age of just 17, Jonnie broke the 100 metres sprint European record when he ran an astonishing 11.32 seconds at the London Grand Prix but it wasn't until just over a year ago that he made his major championship debut at the 2011 IPC World Championships in New Zealand. Lining up against some of the fastest athletes on earth, including one of Jonnie's heroes, the now infamous Oscar Pistorius, Jonnie once again surpassed many people's expectations coming second in his qualifying heat and

fifth in the 100 metres final, less than half a second behind Pistorius.

The Pistorius effect has certainly rubbed off on Jonnie as it has done for many athletes around the world.

"In 2010 I met up with my fellow BT ambassador Oscar Pistorius and seeing what he has done only inspires me to do more," Jonnie said. With Pistorius and Jonnie expected to compete head to head in the

As a five-year-old he contracted septicaemia and lost his right lower leg

final of the T44 100 metres sprint in London, the question begs; Will Jonnie be standing above his hero on the podium?

One thing is for sure, Jonnie's world record time has certainly not gone to his head. When speaking of his world record time set at Indianapolis the sprinter said: "I didn't run as well as I hoped. My start was actually pretty bad, so I think there's more to come. In all honesty my coach wasn't too pleased with the race itself. He was a little bit mad at me."

His US-American coach, Dan Pfaff, has been at the heart of Jonnie's athletic success, giving him the same tough training regimes as GB's Olympic athletes. Jonnie, who has been training at the Lee Valley athletics track in East London, has had the

likes of leading Great Britain sprinters Dwain Chambers and Christian Malcolm running alongside him. Observation of their highly professional approach to training, dieting and relaxation has gone a long way in aiding Jonnie's approach to the Paralympic Games.

"We're not sat down cuddling and them giving me loads of endless advice – just being around these guys and seeing how they approach training helps," said Jonnie.

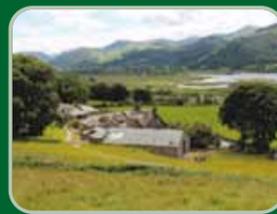
With Jonnie about to make his debut on the Paralympic stage, some say that success is written in the stars for the teenager in London. Whether a medal is to hang around his neck or not when he crosses that finish line, we can expect that every step and spring that is delivered from Jonnie and his single Cheetah X blade along the home straight will be the best he can muster.

The 6th September 2012 will certainly be a date in everyone's diary as the ultimate question will finally get its answer: is Jonnie Peacock the next generation blade runner?

JACOB JOY, 18 years

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More information about the Paralympics and a diary of our student reporters.



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It's what you *can* do that counts!

Short!

Welcome to the German Embassy!

High heels were not the best choice for the Tube, but they suited the occasion at the German Embassy on Belgrave square, where the reception to honour the Paralympic Post took place on the 28th of August.

German Ambassador Georg Boomgarden gave the excited students a warm welcome, and praised the project, saying it "symbolized the motto of the Olympics and Paralympics - 'Inspire a generation' - in a unique and creative way."

Managing Editor of the London Evening Standard, Doug Wills, who supports the project editorially was also impressed by the young reporters. Paralympic Post reporter Al Maatin Pereira Dos Santos was one of the lucky ones to have his article published in the newspaper.

A frenzy of excitement broke out when the young journalists saw their articles in print for the first time. Lorenz Maroldt, the editor of the German daily paper Der Tagesspiegel, arrived at the reception with piles of the first edition of the newspaper and thanked the students for their dedication. Gregor Dopke, Head of Corporate Communication of the German Social Accident Insurance, a sponsor of the project was also thanked for his support.

Young journalist Maxie Borchert felt "proud and honoured" when our Editor-in-Chief Karin Preugschat presented the team to the 100 guests at the reception. George Simonds from the Paralympic Post adds he "enjoyed meeting lots of people and the fancy building but was too scared to walk on the carpet or sit down anywhere!" Al Maatin says the highlight for him was "being personally introduced to the Ambassador and standing on the embassy's balcony." Most girls from the team had resigned to the sofa at this point, maybe heels were not such a good idea.

JOANNA BARTLETT, 20 years



photo: Thilo Rübner

A stamp for each winning athlete



photo: Royal Mail

The entire nation is very excited about the 2012 Paralympic Games and the Royal Mail is joining in by celebrating Great Britain's successful Paralympic athletes. The Royal Mail is honoring everyone who makes it to the very top of the podium by painting one of their hometown red post boxes gold. Caving in under the pressure of the public, the Royal Mail is now also issuing a special stamp for every British athlete who wins a gold medal. Although they had done the same for Olympic medalists, the Royal Mail had originally only planned to issue a set of stamps at the beginning and at the end of the Games and not to celebrate each winning athlete individually.

TAVISHI KANWAR, 17 years

Short!

From Olympics to Paralympics



photo: DOLBY

The London 2012 Paralympics are spectacular in many ways. But this year holds a world premier of another kind. For the first time in sports history, a former Olympian will compete in the Paralympics. German discus thrower Ilke Wyludda won a gold medal at the Atlanta 1996 Olympic Games. She was an outstanding athlete and exceptionally talented. But even then, she suffered from various injuries of the joints and ligaments in her knee. From 2000 to 2010 she underwent 15 surgeries the last of which didn't turn out well. Due to an infection of the wound, her lower leg had to be amputated. But Wyludda's heart and spirit were still those of a fighter. Only 18 months later, Wyludda decided to take up her beloved sport again to regain her perspective. Within just a few months, she was nominated for Germany's London 2012 team. And now there's a new perspective: Paralympic gold.

MAXIE BORCHERT, 18 years

Medals locked up in the Tower

Time for the crown jewels to move over. On the occasion of the Paralympic Games the Queen had to make room for some valuable items: The Paralympic bronze, silver and gold medals are kept safely locked up in the Tower of London. The precious prizes have been guarded there as safely as the British monarchy's treasures have been for the last 600 years. The competing athletes certainly value them as much as the Queen does the crown jewels. The medals will next be seen draped around the necks of the lucky Paralympians during the 502 victory ceremonies. More than 2,100 of the athletes' favorite jewels will be handed out during the 11 days of the Games. The Paralympic Medals were designed by jewellery artist and lecturer Lin Cheung.

CARINA CANAVAN, 18 years

Short!

The oldest and the youngest

Not only was August 30th the starting date for the Paralympic Games, but it was also the date of Kate Murray's birthday - her 64th birthday. What makes that celebration particularly special is that she will be competing in her second Paralympic Games. A talented archer, Kate also has a keen interest in equestrian sport, wheelchair basketball, and wheelchair rugby. The 13-year-old water-baby, Chloe Davies, is the youngest athlete representing GB - but don't let her age fool you. She has had a love for the pool since she was a baby and already has six years of competitive experience behind her. She also has the proud title of British record holder in the 100 metres backstroke. London 2012 will be Chloe's first Paralympic Games but that does not scare her because she has competed in London before: "I really liked racing in the pool in London because it is really fast, so I can't wait to go back."

CARINA CANAVAN, 18 years

Race against the clock

The London 2012 Paralympics will see two nations competing in the Paralympic swimming events for the first time. The Comoros's Hassani Djae and North Korea's Rim Ju Song will be lining up with their fellow athletes to literally take the plunge and represent their nations in the pool. Hassani Djae, however, has not endured the smoothest of journeys to the Paralympics. His chance to win a gold medal in London was almost whisked away from him when his travel arrangements to the International German Championships in Berlin fell apart in June 2012.

The Comoros, the third smallest nation in Africa with a population of 798 000, did not have any direct flights to Berlin. Hassani tried his luck in Madagascar, but his plan to arrive at the Berlin Championships on the 23rd of June was once again disrupted as the country was in the middle of its public holiday and all the airports were closed. In desperation Hassani and Ahamed Chahalane (president of the National Paralympic Committee of Comoros) contacted to the organisers of the competition in Berlin, explaining their dilemma. The organisers decided to keep them entered in the competition and simply wait for their arrival. Hassani's troubles, however, were far from over.

By the 30th June, Hassani had arrived in Paris and from there managed to catch the right train connections to Frankfurt. Though relieved they had managed to finally arrive in Germany, they were still 350 miles away from their ticket to the Paralympics. Hassani travelled those final few hundred miles overnight by train.

Despite being exhausted and stiff, Hassani secured his place at the Paralympics in London by swimming the 100m freestyle event in 1:36:01.

The mental and physical difficulties that athletes face whilst training and competing are beyond comprehension for most of us. For some athletes, unfortunately, the seemingly easy task of being punctual can be the biggest hurdle they face.

JACOB JOY, 18 years



photo: Klaus Bross, Reinhard Tank

WWW

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More Information about the Paralympics and a diary of our student reporters.

Girl power

Amy Conroy and Maddie Thompson play wheelchair basketball for Great Britain. They hope the blood, sweat and tears they put into the sport they love will pay off. In London, the **young talents** hope for a Paralympic medal

ALICE CONROY, 17, EMILY JAMISON, 18 years

Taking to the world stage at the 2012 Paralympics will be the youngest women's wheelchair basketball squad to date. With so much to prove, sacrifices of time, money, relationships and lifestyles are greater than ever; ultimately posing the critical dilemma – is it all worth it?

For Amy Conroy, 19, her Paralympic debut this summer holds great expectations. Viewing the looming home crowd pressure as an opportunity to excel, she describes the event as "our biggest chance yet to produce something special".

At just 12, Amy was diagnosed with bone cancer and had her left leg amputated above the knee. Determined to resume her active lifestyle, she soon threw herself into the world of wheelchair basketball – instantly falling in love with its sheer speed

When Amy was twelve, her left leg was amputated because of bone cancer

and aggression. Now, representing Great Britain, the weight of responsibility has inevitably put a strain on her previous lifestyle.

"It was really hard balancing school friends with training", Amy admits. "I had to let so many people down. I lost a lot of those who weren't understanding." She feels the loyalty and support of friends and family are of utmost importance, viewing the Paralympics as "a chance to give them something back".

Relationships within the team are stronger than ever. Shared emotions and passions, such as exhilaration and euphoria through to disappointment and regret, have created bonds beyond the game. "My teammates are some of the most inspiring people I know. They help motivate me when things get tough".

Taking a gap year dedicated to the sport, Amy has been living with a teammate and carrying out a rigorous daily training regime. "When you give everything to the sport, it hurts a lot more when things don't go the way you'd hoped." Nevertheless, enthusiastic Amy says that she wouldn't change anything. "Experiencing such challenging obstacles along the way makes the elation of success overwhelmingly powerful".

Joining Amy on the London 2012 women's wheelchair basketball team is 17-year-old Maddie Thompson, the youngest player on this year's squad. A single-amputee who plays for the Sheffield Steelers, Thompson's grit and determination in the bas-



Amy Conroy (pictured above) and the Paralympics GB wheelchair basketball team hope to win a medal in London.

ketball court belie her age. By now she is used to being the youngest member of her basketball squad as, aged 12 years old, she was the youngest person ever to represent GB in wheelchair basketball when she competed in the Junior European Championships in Turkey.

However, despite her age, Maddie does not lack experience. A member of the Gold Medal winning team at the 2011 BT Paralympic World Cup, she is more than ready to take on the challenge of London 2012, believing a great home crowd could help bring home the gold medal.

With similar aspirations to her teammate, Maddie's social life is of secondary importance while she tries to achieve success within the basketball

court. "People say 'oh you sacrifice so much.' But to me, it's a great thing to be part of a team." Juggling intense training with A-Levels in Psychology, Science and Maths and hoping to achieve a basketball

Maddie doesn't feel pressure. She loves the atmosphere

scholarship to an University in America, she is far from the average person of her age.

When asked how she copes with the pressure of being the youngest member of such a renowned

wheelchair basketball team, her reply is cool and simple, symbolising her frame of mind. "I don't feel pressure. I love being in that atmosphere where you've got to make the final basket."

So back to the crucial question – is it worth it? Amy sums up the answer easily, believing that hard work is necessary when it comes down to winning a medal at the world's largest sporting event. "It's part of what I am now; I can't imagine life any other way. Winning a Paralympic medal would be invaluable, as it would show all of our hard work has paid off. It's something that you want but you can't buy and no-one's going to give it to you. The only way to get it is through long hours, blood, sweat and tears," Amy says.

A new shot at life

After an accident left **Richard Sargent** paralysed, wheelchair basketball gave him new hope

Richard Sargent was just nine years old when he broke his back in a head-on traffic collision. He still remembers the date, 6th August 2001, and the two weeks he spent in a coma. Young Richard, who was left paralysed below the waist, showed undeniable optimism, determined to "man up" for the sake of his grieving family. Now 19, Richard recalls: "I couldn't walk - so what? I wasn't meant to survive, so having been given a new shot at life I was determined to embrace the new challenge."

Whilst still recovering, Richard began playing wheelchair basketball. At first he thought it was fun to test his wheelchair and be allowed to bump into things. But he was to spend his last four months in hospital training alongside the Sheffield Steelers, the country's premier wheelchair basketball team, and within a year he was competing in the national league. Richard says: "My teammates acted as a family of support around me. Their positive outlook and encouragement taught me how to adapt to my disability and turn a negative into a positive."

"The best thing about wheelchair basketball is the rule allowing able-bodied participants", he adds. His brother trained alongside him during the

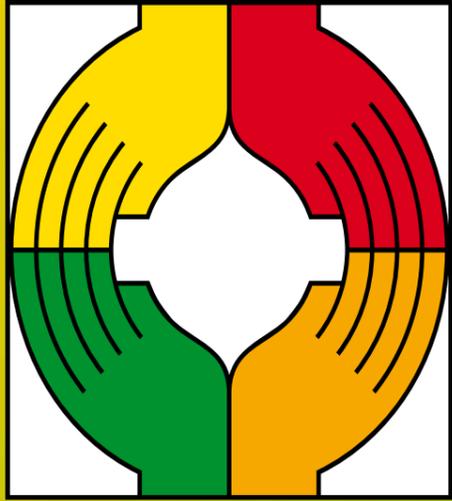
first two years following the accident. "When your cards are down you know who your friends are," he says. "The support of my family and friends was the pinnacle of importance."

With optimum motivation, Richard aims to become "the greatest 2.5 player in the world". Wheelchair basketball players are classified according to their degree of disability: a non-disabled player is a 5 and players with the most severe disabilities are classified as a 1. He is currently a junior player for ParalympicsGB, Great Britain's Paralympic team and hopes to compete in the Rio 2016 Games.

Despite the bright future that lies ahead of Richard, a challenging aspect in everyday life remains the way some people react to disabilities. He explains: "For instance, when you go to a shop with another team-mate who is in a wheelchair, everyone looks at you as if you are on a special day out." The build-up towards the London 2012 Paralympic Games and the increasing media coverage bring expectations of change. Richard says: "People finally understand the fact that those with a disability can still live their lives." Now when people on the street see Richard in a wheelchair, they ask "so do you play sport?" **ALICE CONROY, 17 years**



Richard Sargent aiming for Rio 2016.



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Help and hope for heroes

The charity **Help for Heroes** wants to do right by British servicemen and women who were injured in battle. Many of them are now competing for ParalympicsGB

BRADLEY NEEN, 17, JACOB JOY, 18 years

For injured servicemen and women returning to the UK, adapting to their new life presents a huge challenge. Bryn Parry founded Help for Heroes in 2007 in order to support them and help rehabilitate them.

Help for Heroes can be attributed with developing a whole new generation of ex-servicemen athletes through the Battle Back programme which runs in partnership with the Ministry of Defence. The support offered to soldiers who have lost arms, legs and even the will to live has been invaluable to many of the British athletes who will be representing team GB at the Paralympics in London 2012. Chris Holmes, a fifteen times medal-winning swimmer and Paralympic organisation director, is a long-time patron for the charity. "I first heard of Help for Heroes when it just started up, I was just so keen, I had to get involved," he explained. "What is trying to be achieved by Bryn is absolutely extraordinary and absolutely right." With the support of figures such as Holmes, the charity can continue to, in Holmes' words, "do right by our servicemen and women injured in conflict." Other prominent supporters are James Blunt, Andy Murray, HRH Prince Harry and David Beckham.

The aim of the program is to do right by British servicemen and give them opportunities after being injured serving their country. Help for Heroes provides injured service people sports training, showing them what they can achieve, as part of the overall pathway to recovery to help them adapt to their new life.

Derek Derenalagi is just one example of how Help for Heroes has spurred on these injured patriots to continue living a life of fulfillment in sport. "I decided it would be my career, and I've loved it since I started athletics," Derek confessed. After losing both his legs above his knees in 2007 when his patrol vehicle hit an IED and exploded in the Helmand Province in Afghanistan, Derek has gone on to break two British records in the shot-put and is

The organisation was founded in 2007 – and is constantly growing

hoping to repeat this success in the Discus. "Help for Heroes is a fantastic charity," he said. "What they have done to raise awareness of wounded soldiers like myself is amazing. I am just thankful." The effect of Help for Heroes is becoming apparent. There are more and more injured service people competing at the Paralympic Games because the funding Help for Heroes provides allows these people to take up a Paralympic sport and have opportunities to progress to an elite level, opportunities that simply would not be there without the organisation.

The London Paralympics 2012 is undoubtedly one of the greatest sporting spectacles this country has ever seen but whatever colour the medal that hangs around our athletes necks, the bravery and sacrifices made to protect the very country we live in should always be remembered.



Help for Heroes supported ex-serviceman Derek Derenalagi on his way to the Paralympics.

Ade Adepitan's Paralympics

He played wheelchair basketball at the Games – now he fronts much of the Paralympics coverage on Channel 4. So where does this man's **passion** come from?



Good mood, good job. Ade Adepitan likes his work for Channel 4.

TAVISHI KANWAR, 17, LUCY MICHAELOUDIS, 17 years

He has spent the best part of twelve years involved in the Paralympics: from playing wheelchair basketball in Sydney and Athens to helping win the bid for the 2012 Games in London to presenting "That Paralympic Show" – among others – for Channel 4 (C4). So where does Ade Adepitan's passion come from?

Adepitan's continued involvement in the Games stems primarily from his love for sport. He was inspired at the age of twelve when he saw a British team play. "I saw a group of guys in funky wheelchairs. They

had massive arms; they looked awesome, like real gladiators. I was hooked immediately."

Representing Great Britain in the Sydney games was "the best moment of my life", said Adepitan. He continued in Athens, where he hel-

Representing Britain in the Sydney games was "the best moment of my life," he says

ped GB clinch a bronze medal. Perhaps a reason why the 39-year-old is so passionate about the Paralympics is because of his belief that they are unique. "I think we have a different sort of appeal. You'll get people who watch the Paralympics, who are not necessarily sports lovers, because there is a story behind each athlete. A lot

of people think they are seemingly more accessible."

With the opinion that the Paralympics have something special, Adepitan wanted to bring the games to his hometown London. The bid was about taking the Paralympics to the next level and increasing its profile, and also about inspiring the next generation. Having shown one of the only bids that involved two Paralympians, he believes that "we showed the IOC something special".

One way London has delivered the promise of increasing the profile of the Paralympics is to ensure there is extensive media coverage. Adepitan has

His work on TV is motivated by the fact that he is helping to change perceptions

been closely involved with this, currently being a presenter for Channel 4. The channel won the right to broadcast the Paralympic games in 2010, and have commissioned three pre-games in-depth documentary series, as well as coverage of the Games themselves, with UK TV hours devoted to coverage of the Paralympics increasing by 400 percent.

Adepitan has worked on "That Paralympic Show", which educates the public about Paralympic sports, whilst introducing Paralympic hopefuls from the British team. Helping C4 deliver their pledge of "the best possible coverage", Adepitan has worked on several pre-games programmes to give disability sport a higher profile.

C4 aims to bring about "a fundamental and permanent shift in perceptions of disability in the UK", and Adepitan's work on TV is motivated by the fact that he is helping to change perceptions.

"I think we would be kidding ourselves if we thought everyone looks at Paralympics at an equal level. A preconception people have is that we are not as good, we don't train as hard and we only do our sport for recreation. Those kinds of preconceptions are very annoying."

"Working on live TV is nerve-racking. You don't want to get things wrong and make a fool of yourself." So how will Adepitan know whether his work has been successful? "As long as people don't throw tomatoes at me in the street!"

In a more serious tone, he thinks "when we look at the uptake of Paralympic sports and the profile of the Paralympians afterwards and that has increased, then I can say the work we have been doing on C4 has been successful."

Adepitan has an outlook in line with the Paralympian value of determination, which is how he came to be on TV. "When I went into TV presenting I thought I'll go for it, and if it doesn't work out and I still want it, I'll go and try harder."

Adepitan will be presenting the 2012 games, but his involvement will not stop there. A post-games series of "That Paralympic Show" is being planned, highlighting the glittering moments from the London games as well as looking ahead to the fifteenth Paralympics. He hopes London's record ticket sales will be overtaken in Rio de Janeiro.

"I think it would look really strange if a massive spectacle has been made of the Paralympics in London and this is not followed through in four years' time."

So Adepitan's "trademark cheeky grin and flowing dreadlocks" (so his website proclaims) grace television screens with the intention of raising awareness for the Games, which have given him so much, now and in the future.

Speakers' Corner

Enthusiasm! You feel it everywhere these days. Just ask our **young reporters**

It could be the new fashion: A woman has a UK flag painted on her face, styled eyelashes, and her daughter is clothed in British colours. Many people believe the stereotype that the Brits are sophisticated and an bit stiff. The Brits are very sophisticated and probably a little stiff, that is the prejudice of some people on this globe. But they should travel to London and buy one of the last remaining tickets to the Paralympic Games.

It started with the opening ceremony, where people in the audience cheered and shouted spontaneously. You could really feel how touched they were, and how happy they were to host the Games. But to really feel the spirit of sports, humanity and solidarity you just need to accompany our young reporters for a few hours.

Well, this is an international journalist project requiring practical little things like adapters to get all these articles written. Even late at night the young journalists help each other and lend that precious little thing to the one who needs it. I am proud of them - and also happy to be a partner of "Sec Ed" and London Evening Standard.

I will never forget the enthusiasm of my younger teammates, when it all started during the opening ceremony. It was so overwhelming that tears of joy filled their eyes. Pre-Games it is sometimes hard to get an appointment with an athlete. But now, everybody is in Olympic Park, our staffwriters approach famous athletes, taking pictures and getting their email addresses. Good investigative work for a sports reporter! They even test the equipment, like racing wheelchairs, and are impressed how hard they are to steer. When we came back from the opening ceremony at half past two in the morning the, the young journalists said: I'll go to my room, I want to get my article done. Some teachers would be jealous.

This opening party will be remembered. This is my fifth Paralympics, and I must say that never before have the disabled have included themselves in a ceremony with that displayed such self esteem at an opening ceremony. It might help change our conception of a "handicapped person". How gracefully the dancer without legs performed, how positive the song "I am what I am" sounded. And then: the Queen, William and Kate, David Cameron. They all showed their respect.

Eva Loeffler, daughter of the founder of the Paralympic Games, Sir Ludwig Guttmann, says society in Great Britain will be changed by the Games. We already feel this. London trained the first disabled Vip-shuttleservice drivers. I have never experienced that before. But still running up and down the stairways in the underground feels very draining. Hopefully, all escalators will work until the end of the Games – and further on. Thanks to the Games in London, the image of amputees, blind or deaf humans will change. Just look at the cool "superhumans"-spots or check the great Samsung-ads on TV: They present the athletes as they are: hard-training men and women, no pity needed. Trainers must shout sometimes when their performance is not good enough. Athletes sweat and fight and don't give up. Disabled sportsmen and women also have a great sense of humour, they joke about each other in a funny way which makes it easier to handle one's own insecurity. But if you train, you can also always improve. There should be more Paralympic posters and flags in town, Paralympic atmosphere, when you arrive at Luton airport.

Great Britains Paralympic National team was second in the medal race in Beijing. So they achieved more than the Olympic team during the Games a few weeks ago. Good luck to team GB! And may the friendly and social and humanitarian spirit of the first Games in Stoke Mandeville, where a native German started the movement in GB, live on.



Foto: Theo Peltz



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take the
stage

ellie #takethestage