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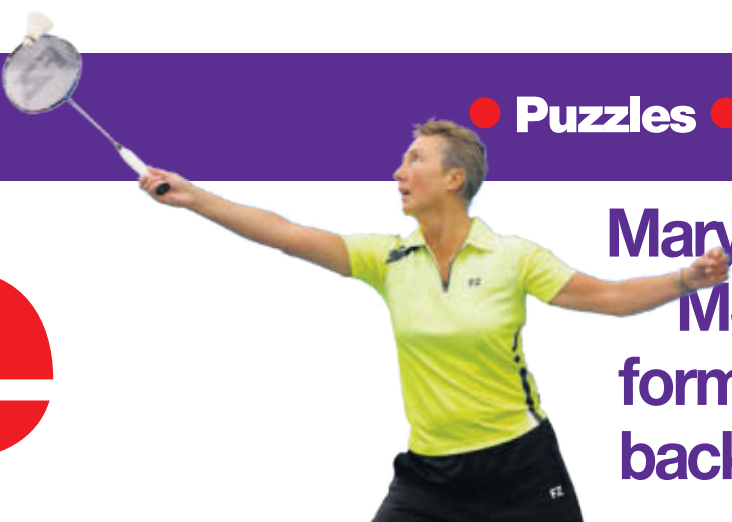
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Mary Wilson was left devastated by her MS diagnosis but the inspirational former Army hero hasn't let it hold her back from achieving sporting success

I've seen action in Afghanistan & Bosnia...now I'm ready to tackle Tokyo with Paras



By LISA BOYLE

ARMY hero Mary Wilson could be confined to a wheelchair in just five years — but she's had the royal seal of approval as she forges a stellar career in sport.

The former combat nurse suffers from multiple sclerosis and has been told she'll be unable to walk without aid in a few years. But Mary, 54 — who served in Bosnia and Afghanistan as a military medic — has her sights set on competing at the 2020 Paralympics in Tokyo. The para-badminton champ, from Edinburgh, has already won a gold medal and two bronzes at the Invictus Games, where she met Princes Harry and William.

And she wants more women to compete in these events. She said: "Harry asked me if there was anything missing from the Invictus Games and I said there were hardly any females."

"Out of hundreds of people I think there was only about 10 per cent that were females so I said we really need to raise awareness of female disability and he totally agreed."

Mary spent most of her career as a psychiatric nurse after joining the Army aged 29.

She was mentioned in dispatches in Hong Kong when she stopped a crazed man who had broken into the ward intent on murdering his wife.

Recalling the November 1993 incident, Mary said: "This guy just lost it and started attacking the doctor. I couldn't just stand by and

TRUE HERO
Mary is aiming to qualify for Paralympics at badminton after career in Army, above, and success in pool at Invictus Games, below, where she met Princes William and Harry, bottom



watch. I managed to restrain him but unfortunately I got a real kicking.

"I received internal bleeding, my bladder stopped working. Then I got sent back to the UK where they took out both my ovaries because they were damaged."

Despite her ordeal, Mary completed qualifications in nursing and jungle warfare. A detachment to Belize followed as did tours

in Bosnia and Kosovo. During a posting to Camp Bastion in Afghanistan Mary had a close shave with the Taliban.

She said: "I was walking home after finishing a mental health clinic when a man decided he wanted to run me over. I didn't think there was any real damage, then a few days later a doctor checked me over and told me I actually had poison tracking over the base of my spine." The courageous war hero

needed surgery for her injuries then in 2004 she was given the devastating news she had MS.

She was forced to give up her 20-year career as an Army nurse in December 2012, but she kept training and became the only female captain at the inaugural Invictus Games for swimming before taking up para-badminton two years ago.

She emailed more than 120 firms looking for sponsorship and Path To Success took her on. The organisation aims to support

women in disability sport. Now Mary, who is ranked fourth in the world, must stay in the top six by June 2020 to make Tokyo.

Mary — who has been with her partner Judi Syson, 54, for 16 years — said: "I was diagnosed with relapsing remitting MS but it changed in January this year to secondary progressive, which is a bit of a shame."

"That means it's gradually going downhill. There's a good chance that I'll be in a wheelchair in the next five years or less so that's

why I want to do this now. We've got the world championships in Switzerland in August and that will also go towards the Paralympic rating. I dare not to dream in case I don't get in. I just make the most of every day and get on with it."

Find out more about Path To Success at pathtosuccess.org.uk lisa.boyle@the-sun.co.uk



OUR MARRIAGE WAS ALWAYS ON A FIRM FOOTING

A MARRIED couple clocked up a combined service of 65 years — after working together in the same building for nearly three decades.

Janette and Alan McKay, admin manager and storesperson for Glasgow-based City Building respectively, marked the achievement as they both retired from the firm just before Christmas, above.

The hard-working duo, below when they were younger, first met at a different firm more than 40 years ago and have been inseparable ever since.

Janette, 58, explained: "We met at a different company where I'd worked in the office and Alan was working in the warehouse."

"We both left there and Alan went to Littlewoods before he was made redundant and I went to what's now City Building's manufacturing division Royal Strathclyde Blindcraft Industries."

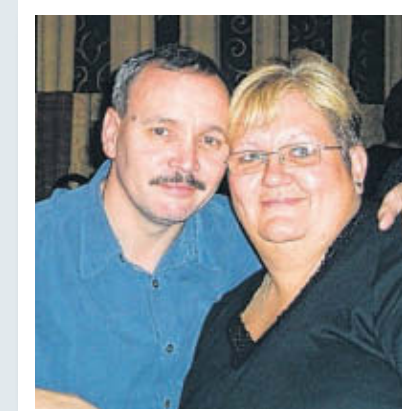
"Then a job came up and Alan started there too."

Janette's career began 40 years ago when the factory operated under the name Blindcraft and she secured a job as a clerical assistant.

After Alan was made redundant at Littlewoods nearly 25 years ago, she told him about a vacancy in the organisation's store room.

He swiftly got the job and the couple worked together at RSBI ever since.

Some couples might struggle to be



together 24-7, but for this happy pair it worked.

Alan, 63, said: "We lived together, worked together and socialised together. For us it seemed to work better. No matter how much we argue we always seem to smooth it over."

Janette added: "I think it makes us a stronger couple — a lot of people think if it was them they'd be fighting all the time."

"We're both laidback so I think that's why it worked for us."

The couple, who have been married for 35 years, said they want nothing more than "health and happiness" this New Year as they hang up their working boots.

And they have no immediate plans for their retirement and will just take things as they come.

Janette said: "We finished on December 21, when everyone else went on leave for Christmas."

"This time, at the end of the two-week holiday, we won't be going back. After New Year we are going to a cottage in Glenshee, so we will play it by ear."

"After such a long period of service, we will definitely miss the people we work with."

Alan added: "I have mixed feelings about it. I was happy in what I did, and I liked the fact that I worked with a lot of disabled people, who appreciate the support."

"We've not actually planned anything yet for our retirement. We will take each day as it comes."

Do you have an extraordinary story that you'd like to share? It can be inspiring or harrowing, uplifting or heartbreaking, or even just a quirky tale. Get in touch with us by email: scotsun_features@news.co.uk