

Path to Tokyo Campaign



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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



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 in a swimmer at the Invictus Games, where she met Princess 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 20 per cent that were females so I said we really need to raise awareness of female disability and be really proactive."

Mary spent most of her career as a psychiatric nurse after joining the Army aged 20.

She was mentioned in dispatches in Hong Kong when she stopped a crazed man who had broken into the worst flats on Manhattan in his wife.

Recalling the November 1997 incident, Mary said: "This guy just lost it and started attacking the doctor, the cleaner, the porter, the janitor, the security guard."

TRUE HERO

Mary is among the Paralympians at the Invictus Games in Dorset, a brave, and inspiring, role model for young women. Her story is told in the book *Princess Wilson and Harry, before*



which I managed to restrain him but unfortunately I got a real kicking. I received internal bleeding, my shoulder stopped working."

"Then I got sent back to the UK where they took out both my ovaries because they were damaged."

Despite the ordeal, Mary completed courses in nursing and jungle warfare. A detachment in Bosnia followed at six hours.

The courageous war hero 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 don't think there was any real damage, but a few days later a doctor checked me out and told me I actually had bullet tracks over the base of my spine."

The courageous war hero needed surgery for her injuries then in 2006 she was given the devastating news she had MS.

She said: "I was walking home after finishing a mental health clinic when a man decided he wanted to run me over. I don't think there was any real damage, but a few days later a doctor checked me out and told me I actually had bullet tracks over the base of my spine."

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

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



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

ch with us by email: scotsun_features@news.co.uk

The Herald

Circulation: 22,000

4 The Herald Magazine

Saturday January 12, 2019

Saturday January 12, 2019

FIRST UP

5 THINGS WE HAVE LEARNED THIS WEEK



1 Margot Robbie is playing with Barbie

Sorry, that should read "Margot Robbie is playing Barbie". The Australian actor has been confirmed to play the Mattel toy in a live-action movie. Yes, that's going to be a thing.

2 The workers who sing together...

Studies suggest that singing with your workmates can help reduce stress and improve your physical and mental health. Scientists at the University of Leicester have found that choir sessions in workplaces can lead to a 96 per cent reduction in work-related stress, while feelings of social isolation can fall by 86 per cent. It is not clear the effect on the stress levels of those who have to listen to said choir.

3 Eminem still going strong

The bestselling artist of 2018? Ariana Grande? Little Mix? None of the above. It turns out Eminem outsold every artist on the planet last year.

4 There's no beginning to Chris Grayling's talents?

On Monday the Transport Secretary organised a traffic jam on the road to Dover as a dry run for what might happen if a no-deal Brexit actually happens. Alas, only 89 lorries turned up to take part, a mere one per cent of daily traffic to the port.

5 Oh, and by the way, Kate Bush is not a Tory

The Greatest Living Englishwoman (not up for debate) has felt the need to tell everyone she's not a Tory (after calling Theresa May "wonderful" a couple of years ago). It shouldn't matter but we like her more now.



PHOTOGRAPH GORDON TERRIS

What it feels like to be ... A NURSE IN A WAR ZONE

MARY WILSON

WAR is a terrible thing. I found myself in some difficult situations but that's what I trained for. At night, helicopters would fly past and, if their rotors continued, it meant the soldiers onboard were alive. Everybody would wake up and listen for this – if they stopped for only two seconds, it meant they were dead.

I had trained as a psychiatric nurse and when my marriage fell apart it made me realise it was time to do what I wanted to do, which was join the Army. I joined the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps aged 29. I was taught how to escape from a minefield, handle weapons, shoot live

fire and distinguish between a friendly helicopter and an enemy helicopter. Although I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2004 during my training, I didn't let it stop me.

It was winter when I arrived in Afghanistan in 2008, every night was austere as temperatures reached -10. There was no contact with the outside world. It's only possible to go for three months, which is more than enough.

There was no permanent block when I arrived so there were 10 of us living in each tent. I was on call 24/7 working closely with the doctors and A&E staff at Camp Bastion; we dealt with everything that went on. It challenged me but I made friends for life.

One night a local driver in the area

suddenly drove towards me with his truck and hit me and I had to have an operation. I woke up in the ward and was shocked to see a Taliban fighter in the bed next to me. It was difficult knowing that he could have killed one of my friends.

I was discharged from the Army in 2012 and found myself in a very dark place. I wasn't sure where my life was going and my illness could have made me housebound. I decided I would get involved with sports. Because of the MS, I signed up for the Invictus Games 2014. I won two bronze medals for shot put and discus, a gold and three bronzes in swimming. Each sport had a captain and, to my disbelief, I was selected as the only female captain

for field athletics and met Prince Harry. I enrolled in a local badminton club. Soon I was representing Scotland. However, I struggled to find sponsorship for competing until I contacted my local butcher who agreed to produce a sausage called "Mary's Smashers" to help.

This year is filled with touring; there's a ranking system and if I can make the top six in the world, I'll qualify for the 2020 Paralympics in Tokyo.

I believe in pushing myself and live every day by: "What have I done today to make myself proud?"

Visit justgiving.com/crowdfunding/mary-pars-just-giving Thanks to sponsors Crombies Butchers of Edinburgh and Path to Success

SOPHIE MCLEAN

The Herald

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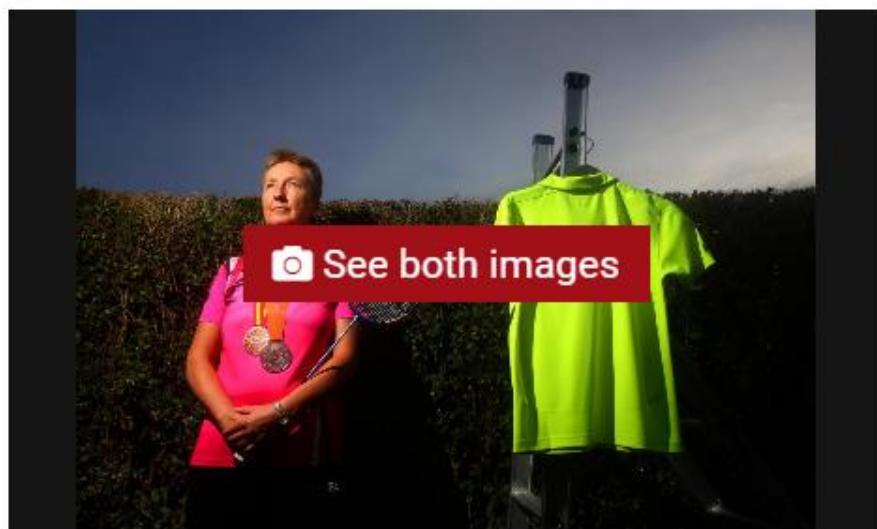
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LIFESTYLE

12th January

What it feels like ... to be an army nurse and para-badminton player

By Sophie McLean



     0 comment

Mary Wilson, former army nurse and para-badminton player

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Path to Success Raise over £10,000 for London Titans Wheelchair Basketball Club

London Titans Wheelchair Basketball Club have been presented with a five figure cheque by a leading disability charity to fund their forthcoming European exploits.

Ahead of their most recent match against the Owls, the capital's premier Wheelchair Basketball team received over £10,500 in a charitable donation from **Path to Success**, the leading UK disability charity.

The funds were raised at Path to Success's charity Wheelchair Basketball tournament at the Copper Box Arena in September. Businesses made a donation to enter teams into the tournament, before competing for the title of Corporate Wheelchair Basketball Champion 2018.

U Can 2

<https://ucan2magazine.co.uk/content/path-success-london-titans-wcb>



Path to Success Raise over £10,000 for London Titans WCB

March 5, 2019

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The money will be used by the club to fund their attendance in the European Cup next week. It caps a historic few days for the Titans, who had their match against the Owls streamed live on the BBC Sport website for the first time in their history.

This is the third consecutive year that Path to Success has raised funds to support London Titans. This week also marks the first anniversary of their exciting Path to Tokyo 2020 Campaign, which provides funding to female athletes in four disability sports who fall outside of central funding, as they pursue their dream of representing GB in a Paralympic Games.

Path to Success Founder Anita Choudhrie said:

'We are proud and excited to present London Titans with this donation, and we look forward to watching the Titans show the rest of Europe what the UK is capable of. Creating an environment where disabled athletes can get together and compete is crucial to our mission as a charity, and we will continue to support worthy causes like this one.'

[Find out more](#)



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Titans receive charitable donation for European push

PUBLISHED: 16:00 08 March 2019



London Titans have received a charitable donation from Path to Success (pic: Path to Success)

Club presented with cheque for over £10.5k by charity Path to Success

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"We are proud and excited to present London Titans with this donation, and we look forward to watching the Titans show the rest of Europe what the UK is capable of," said Anita Choudhrie, the found of Path to Success.

"Creating an environment where disabled athletes can get together and compete is crucial to our mission as a charity, and we will continue to support worthy causes like this one."

Newham Recorder

<https://www.newhamrecorder.co.uk/sport/london-titans-charitable-donation-path-to-success-european-cup-1-5924528>

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PUBLISHED: 16:00 08 March 2019



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Club presented with cheque for over £10.5k by charity Path to Success

Pos'ability

<https://posabilitymagazine.co.uk/jordanne-whiley-and-lucy-khuker-celebrate-double-title-success-at-busan-open/>



Jordanne Whiley and Lucy Shuker celebrated double title success after sweeping the board in the women's singles and doubles at the ITF 2 Busan Open over the weekend. The pair won the doubles title before Whiley clinched the singles title in the first of three Korean elite tournaments this month.

The duo opened their account with a 6-0, 6-0 win, before claiming a thrilling 7-5, 6-7(3), (10-7) win over top seeds Sakhorn Khanthasit and Ohtani in the semi-final following a nail-biting deciding match tie-break. The pair quickly regrouped and wrapped up the title with a comprehensive 6-1, 6-1 win over Japanese third seeds Kanako Domori and Saki Takamuro.

Whiley's incredible comeback to international wheelchair tennis after childbirth gained yet more momentum as the former world No.3 made it three titles in four tournaments this season with a series of four commanding straight sets wins.

Commenting on her victory, Whiley said: "I've played some really good tennis all week, but today in the final it was a little tricky as it was really windy. I am, however, happy that I found a way to stick in there and I'm very pleased with how the comeback has started."

After claiming her first title of 2019, Shuker said: "It's been really good to get back on court with Jordy and even better to win the first title together of 2019. I feel we have both made changes to our games (since Whiley's time out to start a family) and complement each other as a doubles team even better now, so I am excited to see how we develop."

Shuker and Whiley now contest the Daegu Open, starting Tuesday 9 April. For updates throughout the week, follow @PathtoSuccess1 and @WChairTennisGB.

Whiley and Shuker are both supported by leading British disability charity Path to Success, as part of their *Path to Tokyo* campaign. For this campaign, the charity has pledged over £130k to cover coaching, training, travel costs, equipment and specialised sports wheelchairs for the sponsored athletes in the build up to the Tokyo Paralympic Games in 2020. Both Jordanne and Lucy are also part of the LTA's GB Wheelchair Tennis World Class Performance Programme.

Able Magazine

<https://ablemagazine.co.uk/path-to-success-sponsored-wheelchair-tennis-champions-jordanne-whiley-and-lucy-shuker-celebrate-double-title-success-at-busan-open/>

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Path to Success Sponsored Wheelchair Tennis Champions, Jordanne Whiley and Lucy Shuker, Celebrate Double Title Success At Busan Open

British athletes, Jordanne Whiley and Lucy Shuker are celebrating double title success after sweeping the board in the women's singles and doubles at the ITF 2 Busan Open over the weekend. The pair won the doubles title before Jordanne clinched the singles title in the first of three elite tournaments in Korea this month.

Jordanne and Lucy are both supported by leading British disability charity **Path to Success**, as part of their **Path to Tokyo** campaign. For this campaign, the charity has pledged over £100K to cover coaching, training, travel costs, equipment and specialised sports wheelchairs for the sponsored athletes in the build up to the Tokyo Paralympic Games in 2020. Both Jordanne and Lucy are also part of the LTA's GB Wheelchair Tennis World Class Performance Programme.

Whiley's incredible comeback to international wheelchair tennis after childbirth gained yet more momentum as the former world No.3 made it three titles in four tournaments this season with a series of four commanding straight sets wins.

The 10-time Grand Slam champion's victories included three against Japanese players as she raced past fourth seed Manami Tanaka 6-2, 6-0 in the semi-finals before defeating fifth seed Momoko Ohtani in the final for her first ITF 2 title of the year.

Commenting on her victory, Whiley said:

"I've played some really good tennis all week, but today in the final it was a little tricky as it was really windy. I am, however, happy that I found a way to stick in there and I'm very pleased with how the comeback has started."

Following her success at the Wrexham Indoor ITF3 earlier this year, Whiley went on to finish runner-up in the ITF 2 Bolton Indoor before winning last month's ITF 3 Biel-Bienne Indoor in Switzerland. With 17 wins in her first 18 women's singles matches of 2019, Whiley's latest success will see her regain a place back inside the world's top 25 before contesting her first ITF 1 tournament of the year at this week's Daegu Open, which begins on Tuesday.

Two-time Paralympic bronze medallists Shuker and Whiley paired up for the first time since winning their bronze medal match at Rio 2016 to claim their first title together since 2015.

After beginning with a 6-0, 6-0 win, their toughest challenge came in the semi-finals as they claimed a thrilling 7-5, 6-7(3), (10-7) win over top seeds Sakhorn Khanthasit and Ohtani following a deciding match tie-break. Shuker and Whiley wrapped up the title with a comprehensive 6-1, 6-1 win over Japanese third seeds Kanako Domori and Saki Takamuro.

After claiming her first title of 2019, 2018 Wimbledon doubles finalist Shuker, said:

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With
horses
you
never
know
what
could
happen

..... 99



Mary Wilson with prince William and Harry.



Mary Wilson.

about money, it should be about the love of sport, but the love is disappearing quickly because people can't meet their goals."

A spokesman from UK Sport told me that "tough decisions" are being made in focusing on sports with the strongest medal potential, adding – rather depressingly – that sports are encouraged to become as self-sustainable as possible. "We did not take these decisions lightly and are acutely aware of the impact they have on sports, athletes and support personnel."

While many athletes have set up crowd funding accounts, Christiansen also created Sophie's Gold Club, a 120-strong community of para-dressage supporters drawn from her social media following. The membership ranges from an accessible £25 a month, to high level donors (in the region of £5,000 to £15,000) with perks scaled across the range. Her hope is to

be able to make the club a large enough operation that it can help to bring on the next generation of equestrian talent, while keeping her independent.

"With horses you never know what could happen," she explains. "On the one hand, people want money back for what they've put in, but on the other hand, I need to maintain control over my team. I bought Harry, and I'm the one who makes the difficult decisions, no one else. I'd be open to an owner with my second horse, but it's a very personal thing, so I'd almost have to have a relationship with the horse and the owner!"

Christiansen's concerns about the possibility of winning medals without further support are echoed throughout the industry. Parathletes are adamant about the need to nurture talent through the levels, or Great Britain risks losing future medal hopes.

As the 2018 European power-lifting champion, Louise Sugden, 34, receives "podium potential" funding from UK Sport, but she needs to medal at Tokyo in order to move up to the next sponsor levels. "UK Sport only fund for what they're going to get in return which is like any company really," she explains, "it's harsh, but it's the way of the world."

Also supported by Path to Success, Sugden was a five-time wheelchair basketball European championship bronze medallist, before switching to power-lifting in 2017.

"There will always be people who are naturally talented and make it through the system quicker – but there needs to be more opportunity to access funding for the ones that have to really graft for it," she says.

As it stands, even our brightest talents are at risk of being extinguished by financial pressure, leading in Christiansen's case, to potential early retirement.

"If a millionaire came along and would fund five horses and myself then that might change my view," she says wryly. "At the beginning, you didn't really see it as a sacrifice – but now I'm actually like, "would I rather put the deposit on a house than buy another horse?"

www.sophiechristiansen.co.uk/goldclub
www.pathtosuccess.org.uk

New Pathways Magazine

24 Real life

Real life 25

“The sense of achievement lit a fire in me and I had purpose again”



Mary Wilson, 54, is #5 Para-Badminton player in the world, and is hoping to represent Team GB in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics

I was 2012 when I first really knew that something was wrong. My coordination was worsening. I was fired all the time and I just didn't feel quite right.

That's when I made the decision to go and see a neurologist and found out that I had multiple sclerosis (MS).

I remember how afraid I was the day that I found out. I spent the whole day in floods of tears. When I was a student nurse I had looked after people with MS, and suddenly all these memories of what that had looked like came flooding back into my head. I had an awful vision of myself spending the rest of my days bed-ridden and fading into nothingness.

I spent a long day feeling sorry for myself, but afterwards I shook myself and said "No way, I'm not having this!" I've always strived to be a person who shapes their own future, and I have always believed that you can inspire other people by proving the naysayers wrong. I was so determined that I wasn't going to let MS be the master of my fate.

Searching

Growing up I had always wanted to join the army, and after trying a few other things I decided to sign up. I was the eldest recruit when I joined, and was posted to a mental hospital in Germany, before moving to Gosport to undertake nursing training as a psychiatric nurse.

My life as a psychiatric nurse took me to Hong Kong, Bosnia, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, and then to Afghanistan on my last operational tour, where I was in charge of field mental health for all of Afghanistan. It was in Camp Bastion where the Taliban infiltrated our camp and tried to run me over in a jeep at night. I managed to get out of the way, but sustained fragment injuries from the road in my leg and left buttock. The real shock came the next morning though, when I woke up and there were Taliban fighters in the bed next to me, as we shared the Field Hospital!

Call 01206 226500

What to do next?

Following this and the MS diagnosis, I was medically discharged, and of a loose end, I decided to start running 10k races and found that keeping active kept my body and mind sharp. I decided to set myself challenges, and the next was to climb all 282 Munros in Scotland. It took me seven years and was a wonderfully cathartic experience. My eyes move all the time because of my condition which makes it feel like the ground is moving, and I felt so frustrated at not being able to put my feet where I wanted to put them. But once I had completed that final climb the sense of achievement lit a fire in me, and I felt that I had purpose again.

Forever moving forward

In 2014, I was selected as the only female captain in the inaugural Invictus Games. I won a gold and three bronzes in swimming, and also had the chance to meet Prince Harry. Do you know, I was so ready not to like him, but the more I got to know him the more he won me round. I remember him hiding in the holding area from the press before one of my races and telling me to make sure I smashed the Americans. Luckily, I did in that race!

Trying something new

It's natural to feel down when something as inspirational as Invictus comes to an end, and I needed something to interrupt the lull. I went in search of something new and found lawn bowls. I took up lawn bowls and got a silver in the Scottish disability national championships. And then para-badminton came into my life.

I hadn't played in years, not really since playing as a child with my brother. I found a club nearby and within four months had played my first international in Spain. I've since competed in Uganda, Peru, Spain, Northern Ireland, Japan and South Korea and have won medals apart from the World Championships in 2018 where I made the top eight.



Finding support

I'm very lucky to be supported by a wonderful charity called Path to Success, who support disabled female athletes like me who dream of the Paralympics but don't qualify for central funding. I emailed over 120 companies asking for support and they were the first to respond, and it means I'm not relying on my pension or disability allowance to pay tournament entry fees or travel costs.

The next step for me is to get to the Tokyo Paralympics and show the world how far I have come. It's easy to feel invisible and vulnerable as a woman with MS, but I hope I can fight that stigma and motivate others to show that anybody can do things that seemed impossible.

Help support Mary

Mary is currently fundraising £1,500 to support her Badminton Journey towards the Paralympics Tokyo 2020, if you would like to contribute, visit www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/mary-para-just-giving



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www.ms-uk.org

BBC Radio Oxford



Jordanne Whiley MBE ✓
@jordannejoyce92



Loved being on BBC Oxford radio this morning with the lovely @KatOrman talking about my return to tennis after having my son ❤️ bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07...



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Kat Orman

NEXT: 13:00 - 16:00

Lilley Mitchell

Blenheim Palace in WWII



Full schedule

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Philanthropy

ON THE PATH TO PARALYMPIC SUCCESS

by Anita Choudhrie

Founder of Path to Success

When Mary Wilson was first diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, she spent the day in tears, and in shock. But what she did next is far more important.

Mary is no stranger to setbacks, having spent twenty years as a psychiatric nurse in the Army. While serving in Hong Kong, she was mentioned in dispatches for bravery after intervening to stop a man who had broken onto her ward to murder his own wife. Her injuries were severe enough that she required surgery, but as soon as she was fit to return to duty, she did.

She was serving on Camp Bastion when a Taliban fighter infiltrated the camp and attempted to kill her by running her over in a stolen jeep. She escaped with her life, but with fragment injuries in her leg. Again, this didn't stop her.

So, when the shock of her MS diagnosis had subsided, it should come as no surprise that Mary took life by the scruff of the neck once again, competing as the only female captain in the inaugural Invictus Games, before taking up para badminton. When I heard that Mary, 55, had emailed over 100 companies asking for sponsorship on her

para badminton journey and had received no response, I knew I had to get in touch with her. At that time she was funding her own travel and tournament entry fees out of her disability allowance and pension fund, but now she is number 5 in the world at para badminton, and on course, set to compete in next year's Tokyo Paralympics.

Mary is part of the Path to Tokyo 2020 campaign, which is run by Path to Success, the charity I founded in 2005. I have been passionate about philanthropy all my life, but this latest campaign, launched on International Women's Day in 2018, is one that I am particularly proud of.

We are supporting twelve talented female athletes across four Paralympic sports, Wheelchair Tennis, Para Badminton, Para Powerlifting and Wheelchair Basketball, providing the crucial funding that they need as they target a place in Tokyo. As a philanthropist, this is an incredibly challenging field. Women's sport is finally making

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Mr Choudhrie & Titare.

strides in the right direction, but there is still such a long way to go. The funding and press exposure challenges that women's sport face is even more pronounced in women's disability sport.

The reality is that for those who fall outside of central funding, the onus is on them to self-fund or find benefactors who are happy to help them along the way, with little or no prospect of seeing a return on that investment. Causes like this are why philanthropy is so important. By finding a niche such as this and putting resources and expertise into changing it, philanthropists can make a tangible difference.

Mary is not the only athlete who has an amazing story to tell. Louise Sugden was a Wheelchair Basketball player, competing for Team GB at London 2012 and Beijing 2008. She switched sports to Para Powerlifting, and through sheer hard work she won the European Championship gold medal within six months. Then there is Lucy Shukar, Wheelchair Tennis star, who finished runner-up in last year's Wimbledon. She beats the odds every time she takes to the court: she has a spinal injury that is more severe than any other player on tour's disability, yet she keeps reaching the latter stages of Grand Slams through skill and dedication.

In modern society we often talk of role models, but to my mind these women

are who we should look to when trying to inspire the young girls of tomorrow. Nothing has been given to them, they have used their talent and work ethic to reach the top level of their respective sports, and sadly they remain relatively unknown to the public.

I adhere to the notion that while I cannot change the world, I can change the world of one person. Experiences change people's perception, and this is what drives our work as a charity. Each year we put on a Wheelchair Basketball Tournament in Olympic Park, inviting companies to enter, learn the game, and compete to become Corporate Wheelchair Basketball Champions. This is a great introduction into disability sport for participants, and an eye-opening demonstration of the skill that these athletes have. I am pleased to say the event grows every year.

We are also now into preparations for our latest Fundraising Gala dinner. It is always a great event, a chance for the athletes to celebrate their achievements with us, and to mix with the dedicated network the charity has built over many years. Sport can be transformative. Every day I am in awe of the women we support, and I can't wait until next year's Paralympics, so that the rest of the world can witness the hard, skill and determination of the athletes we support.

Path to Success's charity's fundraising Gala will take place on October 3rd 2019 at the historic Church House, Westminster. To find out more please visit:

www.pathtosuccess.org.uk



Louise Sugden.

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Supporting our female stars

Let's fund our female athletes on the path to Paralympic success
- by Anita Choudhrie, founder of Path to Success

SPORT is often ahead of the rest of society in the way it breaks down barriers, encourages acceptance and brings people together. The London 2012 Paralympic Games was one of those moments, bringing disability into the mainstream and changing attitudes of people across the UK.

But while London 2012 was a watershed moment, the work it began is far from finished. It is with this in mind that my charity, Path to Success, launched our Path to Tokyo 2020 campaign on International Women's Day in 2018.

Women's sport is still heavily underfunded compared to men's sport, and this problem is even more pronounced in disability sport. Path to Tokyo 2020 supports 12 women across four major disability sports: para badminton, para powerlifting, wheelchair tennis and wheelchair basketball.

All the athletes we support are wonderfully talented, but they fall outside of central funding, forcing them to self-fund or rely on sponsorship.

A desire to empower women is very much at the heart of what we do, and I find it astonishing that athletes with so much talent could be winning a gold medal in front of the entire world one day, and then be scrambling around to pay their tournament entry fees within a few weeks.

All our athletes have incredible stories. Louise Sugden is a two-time Paralympian with the team GB wheelchair basketball team, competing in Beijing and London. She has now changed codes to para powerlifting and is the reigning European champion. To have achieved that within a year is astonishing.

At just 18, Olivia Broome has just lifted 97kg in the short stature classification for the first time and is well on course for a medal in her first Paralympic appearance.

Mary Wilson is one of the most remarkable

women I have ever met. She served all over the world with the military, survived an attack on her life by the Taliban and after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis she was the only female captain in the inaugural Invictus Games.

Jordanne Whiley was earlier this month targeting a first Wimbledon title since her doubles win in 2017, a match she won while 11 weeks pregnant. Lucy Shuker has won Paralympic bronze twice in her career and, despite having the most severe disability on Tour, she consistently reaches the latter stages of the major Opens. And then there are young Abbie Breakwell and Ruby Bishop, names to remember as stars of tomorrow.

If the support we offer helps these athletes achieve their Paralympics, Path to Success Gala will take place on 11th October. Find out more at www.pathtosuccess.org

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Name: Anita Choudhrie

Age: 66

Profession: Founder of Path to Success

Her Story: Inspired by her Grandfather's philanthropy and her own passion and experience for charity, Mrs Choudhrie established Path to Success in London in 2005 with a focus on causes that support disability. Most recently Path to Success has supported the London Titans Wheelchair Basketball Club, which has produced over 50 Team Great Britain players, yet receive no central sports funding. To raise funds for the athletes and awareness of Paralympic sports, Path to Success has hosted two fundraising charity Wheelchair Basketball Tournaments at the iconic Copper Box Arena in the Olympic Park. Path to Success's third annual charity fundraising Gala will take place on 3rd October 2019 to raise funding the unsung heroines of today, to inspire the talented women who will be the stars of tomorrow.

ITV News



The Sunday Times

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SPORT TENNIS: US OPEN

The Sunday Times September 1, 2019

Mother's pride keeps Whitley on track to serve for gold in Tokyo

REBECCA MYERS



British tennis star targets Paralympics glory after giving birth

The problem for Jordanne Whitley is that nobody else has done this before. She would like to talk to other wheelchair tennis players who have come back after having a baby, or get advice on how to juggle travelling to tournaments and being a mother, but there aren't any. "I don't know anybody else who's done it, so I just sort of wing it," she says. This approach has been surprisingly successful for the 10-time Grand Slam winner, who returned to competition earlier this year and is ranked ninth in the world. In 2017, she won the Wimbledon doubles while 11 weeks pregnant and plagued with morning sickness; last month, she reached the semi-finals. This week, she will compete at the Birmingham

Canadian Wheelchair Tennis Classic. It matters not only for qualification for other competitions, including the Australian Open, but for the Tokyo Paralympics, now less than a year away. It will be Whitley's fourth Games and, she suspects, her last. She should qualify easily - the top 20 receive automatic qualification - but the top four enjoy favourable seeding. "The top four are at a different level," she says. "That's where I was before and where I feel I should be." Although Canada is a crucial tournament for Whitley, it would not have been her first choice she might have expected to be competing at the US Open next week but missed out because places go to the top seven in the rankings plus an American. The ITF recently published new classification rules after the International Paralympic Committee mandated that tennis move from "self-assessment" to a formal

system of testing athletes' disabilities, as is already the case in sports such as swimming and athletics. Whitley, who has osteogenesis imperfecta (brittle bone disease), is now classified and eligible to compete, but some players, including world No 4 and former Paralympic gold medalist Marjolein Buis, are no longer eligible. For Buis, her disability, Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, which affects the connective tissues, is not recognised under the new regulation; she will be forced into early retirement and has spoken of her disappointment. However, she will still be able to compete at the US Open and the Paralympics under an ITF clause that allows for a transition period. If athletes have trained towards Tokyo, they will be allowed to compete and will be ruled ineligible and stopped from competing in the sport after January 1, 2021. For Whitley, 27, it will make watching the US Open

particularly hard. "It's someone who shouldn't even be eligible to play in the sport, playing instead of me," she says. "In any other Paralympic sport, if you're classified out, you're out. I questioned [the ITF] and they said it's because it's not fair on the people who are classified out," she says, "but my response is that it's not fair on people who are classified in, who have to play against people who aren't even eligible. She could go to the Paralympics, win a double gold medal and the next day be like, 'I'm not actually eligible, see you later'. She's nicked two gold medals. If you bring in a rule like that, it should be simple: you are out, you are in." She is sympathetic, too, to the athletes who have been disqualified by the new rule, raising concerns about their mental health playing under the pressure of knowing many don't believe they should be allowed on court. "It's hard but I can't do



Mummy's boy: Jordanne Whitley with her son, Jackson

anything about it. I have to get on with it and do as well as I can in my other tournaments." That means stepping up her training, which is less frequent but higher intensity as she fits it in around childcare. She was lucky to have a smooth delivery - with her genetic condition, she could have broken her pelvis during birth - and an 18-month-old son, Jackson. Her partner,

Marc McCarroll, is also Whitley's coach. Tokyo could complete Whitley's trophy cabinet, which lacks only a singles Paralympic medal, after bronze medals in the doubles at London and Rio. Although her priorities may have shifted since giving birth, she says she feels more ambitious than ever. "Before I had Jackson, I knew I wasn't at my full potential because I was lazy," she says. "I could have been world No 1 if I'd applied myself a bit more. I need to do that because I don't want to retire knowing I could have been No 1 or I could have been Wimbledon singles champion, or I could have had a gold medal. I'm trying my hardest to do everything right so when I look back at my career I can say I gave everything." ● Jordanne Whitley is a member of the charity Path to Success's Path to Tokyo 2020 campaign which supports and empowers disabled female athletes

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TENNIS | REBECCA HYER
SEPTEMBER 16, 2021, 12:00PM, THE SUNDAY TIMES

Mother's pride keeps Jordanne Whiley on track to serve for gold in Tokyo

REBECCA HYER


British tennis star targets Paralympics glory after giving birth



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Whiley's top Jordanne Whiley with her son Jackson
© Nick Ansell

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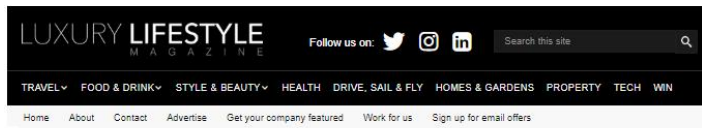
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Jordanne Whiley is a member of the charity Path to Success's Path to Tokyo 2020 campaign which supports and empowers disabled female athletes

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Anita Choudhrie talks philanthropy, art and classic cars

By LLM Reporters on 24th September 2019



Mrs Anita Choudhrie is the matriarch of one of India's most eminent and wealthy UK-based families. The family presides over a global business empire spanning hotels, healthcare and aviation.

Today, Mrs Choudhrie channels her energies into philanthropy, and set up Path to Success in 2005, a charity focused on 'turning inability to ability' for disabled women in sport.

She also collects art and rare vintage Indian cars with a passion and set up the Stellar International Art Foundation to institutionalise the former in 2008. The foundation was based on the private collection of the Choudhrie Family and comprises more than 800 works dating from the late 19th Century to the present day.

In a rare interview, Mrs Choudhrie discusses these three main preoccupations.

CARS



Anita's family have one of the biggest collections of vintage cars in India

What started your car collection and what sort of models is it composed of?

Our family have one of the biggest collections of vintage cars in India. The first car we collected was a convertible Mercedes that was in a terrible condition and had cats living in it. It was only much later on that my husband discovered it was custom built. We acquired it for the lavish sum of 50,000 rupees – about £9,000 in today's money. We also have some of the earliest vintage cars to be built, including Cadillacs from 1900 and 1902 and a Rover 1906, brought to Southern India by a British tea estate manager, and they're all beautifully designed.

We now own 37 vintage cars that are kept in a garage in Delhi and we have a team of seven mechanics that work to restore them.

What, for you, is the best thing about cars from the pre-war period?

My husband and I love old cars, but our interest goes back much further to the pre-war years. We both adore vintage cars – defined as any car built before December 1939 – and we have been lucky enough to acquire a substantial collection since buying the first one in 1980. As for the best thing about these cars, I think it's the simplicity of the engineering combined with the quality.

Another attraction for my husband is the challenge of restoring these cars to their original condition. It's a real labour of love that can easily take 5-6 years, and sometimes more than 10. Mainly this is because it is far harder to find the original parts for a vintage car compared to a classic car. Sourcing these can require a significant amount of ingenuity, patience and often a dose of luck. Yet this makes it all the more satisfying.

What informs your buying approach – what do you look for in every car that you purchase?

Cars that will increase in value and popularity with time: our first vintage Rolls Royce cost \$3000-\$4000 and is now worth around \$250,000.

This is not the reason we collect vintage cars though. For us, the pre-war period was the real heyday of the motor car and by collecting them we can help ensure it is not forgotten. Vintage cars have provided us with so much pleasure over the years and we intend to put the collection in a trust so that they can be enjoyed by generations to come. The cars are not on public display but one day we hope they will be. We plan to build a car museum that will sit alongside an art gallery exhibiting our collection of art, along with a hotel and convention centre. It will be designed as a place to mix business and pleasure.

What are some of the key models in the collection and the background behind them?

The stories behind the cars are often incredibly interesting. One notable car we have is a Bugatti, a 1921/1923 model that was originally imported to India by a family based in Bombay who manufactured umbrellas. They purchased it for their son but sadly he went blind and was not able to drive it. The car had been kept in a garage, but the roof had fallen in and the car was badly smashed. It has taken more than 10 years to restore the car and took three years simply to get permission to send the engine to the UK to get it re-built.



This vintage Rolls Royce cost \$3000-\$4000 and is now worth around \$250,000

Luxury Lifestyle Magazine

PHILANTHROPY

You have several different philanthropic strands – what would you say unites them all?

A desire to empower women is at the heart of what I do. Sport and Art are two great passions of mine, but women are still grossly under-represented in both. What unites my work in both sectors is a desire to change this, and ensure women have the exposure, support and funding that they deserve.

What can you tell us about your current philanthropic projects?

My philanthropic interests are not solely confined to art, and I have always been passionate about supporting and creating new projects that empower women and support disability causes in different ways. It is for this reason that I founded my own charity, *Path to Success*, in 2005. We have always supported disability causes, but in March 2018 we decided to focus more on women.

Our current campaign, *Path to Tokyo 2020*, launched on International Women's Day in 2018 and has been extremely well received. We are empowering and supporting twelve disabled female athletes whose dream is to compete for Great Britain at the Paralympic Games but lack the necessary funding to compete. With Tokyo 2020 less than a year away, this is a very exciting time for the charity and there is a real chance of our athletes bringing home some gold medals.

How easy is it to generate interest and donations for women's disability sport?

Women's sport is slowly gaining more recognition, the women's football world cup was evidence of that, but women's disability sport still does not attract anywhere near the attention it both needs and deserves.



Inspired by her grandfather's philanthropy and her own passion and experience for charity, Anya established Path to Success in London in 2005

We run a number of initiatives throughout the year to try and change this. Two highlights are our fundraising gala and our annual corporate wheelchair basketball challenge at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Corporate teams pay a fee to enter and compete against each other. It is a fantastic opportunity for them to spend a day out of the office building relationships, trying a new sport, and playing alongside international-standard athletes, which is a rare and exciting thing.

Our upcoming fundraising gala is on October 3rd at the Historic Church House in Westminster. This is always a fantastic event, and a chance for supporters to enjoy a fun and entertaining evening, meet with the athletes they are supporting and trade stories on their life experiences. Building those networks is so important if women's disability sport is going to continue to grow.

ART

Take us through your art collection? How is it organised and what does it cover?

Stellar International Art Foundation was established in 2008 and took its basis from our private art collection. The Collection has become internationally renowned for its content, coverage and activities around the globe. From London to India, Dubai to St Moritz, the material of the Collection and its efforts have earned it a distinguished place amongst the increasing number of foundations across the globe.

Currently the foundation comprises over 800 works dating from the late 19th Century to the present day, including international artists and ranging from sculptures to paintings.

Stellar has staged exhibitions of significant heretofore unseen works, has produced a seminal publication on a master artist within the Collection and has even been revered by some of the worlds' most respected curators and critics. These are organised by our Managing Director and Art Advisor Anya Zakharova.



Anya is the founder of The Stellar International Art Foundation. Image credit: Charles Shearn

Could you describe the process that goes into arranging and procuring the works?

As we are a foundation, we have to create an annual budget and a well thought out plan for future acquisitions. In essence, this means finding a middle ground between what we could ideally love to have in the collection and the artistic attributes of the pieces we choose.

In terms of procuring the works, we tend to have a yearly curatorial theme suggested by our art advisor. This year, the theme is feminism and female artists. As such we have recently acquired new art by English feminist Tracey Emin entitled 'The More of You the More I Love You'.

What are some of your favourite works in the collection? Why?

I'd say our collection of MF Husain's works. We have one of the largest artworks outside the estate, making it the most significant home for the artist's oeuvre. With over 250 works spanning from the early 1950s through to his final years, the Collection supersedes all the world's gallery, museum, and private collections. A great patron of the artist, we were chosen as the guardians of not only a large volume of work in general, but especially his most famous and, arguably, most important series: *Maria*. With the same ethos in mind, the Foundation has sought to keep his most significant series intact for future generations.

Ten years after the founding of the Stellar Foundation, what are some of the things that you are proudest about?

For me the real meaning of the foundation lies not in its material possessions but the opportunities it provides for artists. By collecting Russian, European, American and Indian Art and distinguishing our selection less on regional concerns and more artistic talent, we have been able to champion excluded artists and give them a well-deserved voice. Seeing these artists thrive through our help has been incredibly rewarding.

Image credit at the very top of the article: Charles Shearn

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DISABILITY IN SPORT

CHARITY 'PATH TO SUCCESS' FOCUSES ON TURNING INABILITY TO ABILITY FOR DISABLED WOMEN IN SPORT

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The Daily Express

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Daily Express Monday, October 14, 2019 23

By Kat Hopps

SHE survived a Taliban attack in Afghanistan but ex-Army nurse Mary Wilson has a new fight on her hands – reaching the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics. The determined athlete hopes to compete in the first ever contests of Para-Badminton (a kind of badminton for people with a variety of disabilities) but is having to use her disability allowance to cover costs. So far, she has spent £35,000 – a mixture of benefits, military pension and savings, plus money left to her by her late father.

"If you're not expected to win medals, forget it, you get no money," says Mary of the funding available.

She needs to be in the top six to qualify in her category by April but is now seventh and must pay all the costs for the international ranking tournaments herself.

She needs £10,000 to pay for her travel, training, accommodation and physiotherapy while competing in these matches to gain the all-important points to qualify.

This is a big ask for someone who survives on £1,300 a month, a combination of disability benefits and pension.

And even if Mary makes the team, she will need thousands of pounds more to get her to Tokyo on August 25 next year.

Mary also has to pay for her coach, Sarah Bok, because she receives no funding either.

"The Paralympics are meant to be inclusive," says Mary, 55. "Well, this is actually elite because I know people who would be good and do well but they can't even afford to go to one tournament."

"The sports bodies and Government need to have a good look because it should be much fairer than picking certain sports and giving them all the money."

Funding for the 22 Paralympic sports varies, according to the government-run UK Sport.

ASPOKESPERSON said: "UK Sport invests Exchequer and National Lottery funds across a variety of Olympic and Paralympic sports. This investment is targeted where it has the greatest chance of delivering medals.

"Of course, we would love to fund every athlete and every sport but unfortunately with limited resources we do have to make tough decisions. However, during the four-year cycle building towards Tokyo 2020 we have invested £949,595 in Para-Badminton specifically."

Mary, who has multiple sclerosis, is already a champion, however, having won a gold and two bronze medals for swimming at the first Invictus Games held in London.

And as the only female captain at the 2014 event, she met Princes Harry and William. The Duke of Sussex's competition for wounded service personnel is now a biennial phenomenon

Picture: TIM CLARKE

Paralympian attacked by the Taliban spends own benefits to get to Tokyo

Mary won three medals at the inaugural Invictus Games. Now former Army nurse has to self-fund her training

PROUD: Mary Wilson wearing her medals at a fundraising gala



SPORT OF PRINCES: Mary with William and Harry at Invictus Games trial event

watched by millions worldwide. It was a chance for Mary to stay positive rather than focus on the worsening effects of MS, which could leave her dependent on a wheelchair within five years.

But she didn't hesitate when it came to breaking royal protocol during her meeting with Princes Harry and William at the Invictus trials in Bath.

"I had been warned not to ask for a photo but I said to Prince William, 'Sir, with all due respect, is there any chance I can get a photo?'"

"I was talking to Harry but William grabbed me around the waist and said, 'Of course you can Mary'. As we were standing having our photo taken, Prince William whispered in my ear, 'Do you know that guy over there?'"

"I said, 'Yes I do, he's one of our lads, he's a Royal Marine and he was blown up by an IUD. He's lovely, a really nice guy.'"

"William said, 'He's very handsome isn't he?' and I said, 'Yes, I suppose he is,'

and then I had another look and said, 'Well, yeah, he is very handsome and William said, 'Steady on Mary, steady on!'"

But despite her royal connection, Mary, from Edinburgh, is "sacrificing holidays and personal time" with her partner Judi Syson. And the situation for wounded service personnel is getting worse, she says. "Since the wars [Afghanistan and Iraq] people have become more acclimatised to disability," she says.

"Some people think it's unlucky but you've got to make your own way and we haven't got the money to give you to do it because you're nothing special really."

In a desperate attempt to raise funds, Mary has contacted at least 200 companies.

We meet at a fundraising dinner for female para-athletes organised by British charity Path to Success.

Anita Choudhrie, the charity's founder said: "Disability sport is still heavily underfunded in the UK, and despite their talent

these athletes need support to be able to compete.

"By supporting our athletes, we want to change this reality and inspire the next generation of female Paralympians. I am confident we can make a difference, in Tokyo and beyond."

MARY is wearing her eight military medals with pride. They represent long stints on the frontline in Bosnia, Kosovo and Northern Ireland, and for the bravery she has shown in life-threatening situations.

She spent 20 years as a psychiatric nurse and was in charge of a mental health team, responsible for 5,000 troops in Afghanistan during 2008.

The nurse faced life-threatening situations daily, and once narrowly escaped death when a member of the Taliban deliberately drove at

her in Afghanistan. She recalls: "I was walking back from work along a gravel road to my accommodation and a vehicle behind me switched its lights off before trying to run me off the road," she said.

"I dived off to the side and he skidded past, throwing gravel."

The encounter left Mary with fragments of metal under her skin, which turned septic.

She was whisked into surgery and although she made a full recovery, had to spend days in hospital next to an enemy insurgent.

"I woke up with a Taliban fighter next to me in bed as there was only one ward," she recalls. "I had to think about what he might have done and whether he might have killed one of our British guys."

"It was hard juggling those thoughts, while he was next to me and getting the same care."

Mary left the Army in 2012, eight years after her MS diagnosis.

Now all her efforts are focused on reaching Tokyo.

"To walk out at the opening ceremony with other Paralympians and go: 'You know what, we've made it,' she says. "We are elite athletes who have determination, power, courage and everything that goes with it."

"We are proud to be here."



WAR ZONE: Mary in Afghanistan

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Westminster-based charity raises £59k to support female Paralympic hopefuls

October 15, 2019



A LEADING Asian philanthropist has raised more than £59,000 to support 12 female paralympic hopefuls in their journeys to Tokyo in 2020.

Four major disability sports - para badminton, wheelchair tennis, para powerlifting and wheelchair basketball – will be funded by the money raised by women’s disability charity Path to Success at a fundraising gala dinner recently.

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CHARITY

Charity raises almost £60,000 to help Paralympic hopefuls

TOPICS: Paralympics Path To Success Sport Tokyo 2020

POSTED BY: ENABLE MAGAZINE 15 OCTOBER, 2019

A Westminster-based charity has raised £59,000 to support female Paralympic hopefuls get to the Tokyo 2020 Games.

Path to Success, is a charity that supports women in disability sport, enabling underfunded female Paralympians to access sporting opportunities that will help take their careers further.

Path to Success raised the money at a fundraising gala dinner held at the Historic Church House in Westminster, in aid of the charity's Path to Tokyo 2020 campaign.



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Asian Voice > News > UK > London > 'Path to Success' raise £59k to support female Paralympic hopefuls...

'Path to Success' raise £59k to support female Paralympic hopefuls

Tuesday 15th October 2019 06:12 EDT



A Westminster-based charity has raised more than £59,000 at a fundraising gala dinner to support female Paralympic in their journeys to Tokyo in 2020 and beyond.

'Path to Success' hosted a fundraising gala at the Historic Church House in Westminster supporting twelve athletes across four major disability sports: para badminton, wheelchair tennis, para powerlifting and wheelchair basketball.

Athletes included powerlifters Olivia Broome and Louise Sugden, wheelchair tennis stars Jordanne Whitley, Lucy Shuker, Lauren Jones, Ruby Bishop, Abbie Breakwell and Louise Hunt, para badminton's Mary Wilson, Rebecca Bedford and Rachel Choong and wheelchair basketball player Sophie Patterson.

All of these athletes are underfunded due to falling outside of central funding programmes wherein they

have to fund themselves through any means necessary. Many rely on friends and family for donations, and if they cannot attract sponsorship, they are forced to dip into their disability allowances. Para badminton star Mary Wilson was even using her pension pot and war pension to fund her participation in international tournaments before receiving support from Path to Success.

Path to Success was founded by philanthropist Anita Choudhrie in 2005. She said,

"It is our mission at Path to Success to support and empower women in disability sport. The money raised at this year's gala dinner will be crucial for our Path to Tokyo 2020 campaign, which supports talented and inspiring disabled female athletes who remain badly underfunded.

"Our goal is to help these women achieve their dream in Tokyo and beyond, and to inspire a new generation of female Paralympic stars to embrace their talent and chase their own dreams."

The money raised by Path to Success will help these athletes afford coaching, tournament entry fees, travel costs, physiotherapy and court hire fees.

More than 200 guests attended the gala dinner, with entertainment provided by DJ Navi from Tram9 London and Incognito Artists, a group of stars from London's best-known West End shows who captivate the audience with an assortment of iconic songs.



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Anita Choudhrie

Mrs Anita Choudhrie is the Founder of charity Path to Success, the Stellar International Art Foundation, and a tireless campaigner for underprivileged and overlooked sectors of society.



PERSONAL STORY

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Anita's grandfather was a doctor in India, and it was he who first inspired her interest in philanthropy. That philanthropic passion blossomed while she was a student at Delhi University, where she worked in a crèche with young children from challenged backgrounds.

This inspired Anita to spend time supporting local and international charitable causes, and these experiences crystallised into a desire to support and empower women with her philanthropic work. She made the decision to focus on art and sport, two of her great passions, and two worlds in which women have historically been grossly underrepresented.

The culmination of her lifetime dedication to philanthropy was the founding of Mrs Choudhrie's own charity, Path to Success, which became a registered British charity in 2005. She later founded the Stellar International Art Foundation, with the aim of redressing the imbalances of gender and ethnicity in the art world.

Path to Success was conceived as an umbrella charity, focussing on education and disability and each year selecting a different cause to lend its support to. An early recipient of Anita's support was the Amar Jyoti Trust, a school for disabled children that was founded in Delhi in 1981, and which Anita has been a patron of for more than twenty years. The school started under a tree in a backyard with only thirty disabled students and able-bodied students from underprivileged backgrounds. In 2006, Anita organised the schools' visit to the UK during their International Tour 'Celebrating Abilities, Glimpses from the Epics'.

Anita organised events at the House of Commons and Leicester's Peepul Theatre which raised more than £65,000 for the Amar Jyoti Charitable Trust, funds that were used for the construction of additional rooms for a brand new school wing and rehabilitation centre, and the purchase of crucial new equipment for the school. Path to Success continue to support Amar Jyoti, which is now a school of more than 300 students. Mrs Choudhrie has also adopted the Amar Jyoti Wheelchair Basketball team, providing funds for wheelchairs for its students.

Path to Success's next flagship campaign was "60 for 60". Launched in honour of her Majesty the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the campaign sought to provide sixty specialised wheelchairs to sixty NHS hospitals across the UK. The campaign attracted the patronage of Miriam Gonzalez Durantez, the wife of then deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, subsequently raising more than £120,000 and surpassing the initial target by providing a total of 83 wheelchairs.

Her Art Foundation, Stellar, consequently features work from a vast array of individuals with diverse understandings of the world and champions artists regardless of background or gender. By collecting European, Russian, American and Indian Art and distinguishing its selection less on regional concerns and more on artistic talent, the Foundation has been able to champion overlooked artists and give them a well-deserved voice.

Stellar's exclusive events also provide necessary platforms for conversations on diversity and equality. Each year Stellar invites one female artist to speak on how her own artwork has been shaped by issues of culture and gender. With a shifting political landscape and campaigns for female empowerment across the globe, the work Stellar does is therefore exemplary not only in the art world, but on wider issues of gender equality and cultural acceptance.

To find out more about Anita Choudhrie, please visit: <https://www.pathtosuccess.org.uk/>

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Gala boost for Tokyo hopefuls

A GALA fundraiser for disabled women hoping to star at the Tokyo Paralympics next year raised £60,000, writes Tom Foot.

Twelve elite British athletes received a major boost from the Path to Success event in Church House, St James's.

The charity helps women progress in four major disability sports – para badminton, wheelchair tennis, para powerlifting and wheelchair basketball.

The sports are not fully funded, meaning many athletes rely on friends and family for donations or use

their disability allowances. Para badminton star Mary Wilson had to use her pension pot and war pension before being helped by the charity that was founded by



MINUTE TOKYO GALA

philanthropist Anita Chowdhrie in 2005. Ms Chowdhrie said: "The money raised at this year's gala dinner will be crucial for our Path to Tokyo 2020 campaign, which supports

talented and inspiring disabled female athletes who remain badly underfunded. "Our goal is to help these women achieve their dreams in Tokyo and beyond and to inspire a new generation of female Paralympic stars to embrace their talent and chase their own dreams."

Picture: Anita Chowdhrie with athletes, para powerlifter Olivia Broome and Louise Saggden, wheelchair tennis stars Jordanne Whitley, Lucy Shaker, Lauren Jones, Ruby Bishop, Abbie Breakwell and Louise Hunt, para badminton's Mary Wilson, Rebecca Bedford and Rachel Choong and wheelchair basketball player Sophie Patterson.



Fear that proposal to stop vehicles using Soho's Beak Street would push the traffic elsewhere

Society's concern about car ban

BANNING cars from a Soho back street under new plans drawn up by Westminster Council have been criticised and claims the scheme would push traffic elsewhere.

Soho Society chairman Tim Lord warned that blocking vehicles from using Beak Street appeared to be geared to pleasing to business interests, with little advantages for residents.

He said: "There is scepticism and grave concerns. We are pretty firmly against it. We

would agree with anything that reduced traffic, but this sounds an odd proposal."

The society consisted its members and two-thirds are against the plan, with primary reasons being how traffic will be displaced. They claim any existing streets would take on the burden if the key east-west route through Soho was cut off. Under the plan, which is being put out to public consultation, there would

be limited access for delivery vehicles before 11am each day.

Mr Lord said the *Evening Standard* reported that they had sold developer Stanfishbury, who own large tracts of land in Beak Street, and the council three times for access to the traffic modelling, but despite the plan being considered for the past 12 months, no information had been made available and they had to use the Freedom of Information Act to read the findings.

He said: "We have one

of the reports but we still need more information. Their estimate of the closure of Beak Street means traffic will go elsewhere, and 60 per cent of traffic on Beak Street use it as a rat-run. But we have no way of knowing how they reached that figure."

If there was no reduction in traffic numbers, it would force cars into Debenhams Street, Great Marlborough Street and Golden Square and therefore not solve the problem, he said.

"This is a conservation area and it has a narrow street structure," he said. "We do not think it is historically appropriate. This is just about football. They simply want more and more people to walk past their shops. It appears they want the area to become 'Westfield Soho'."

He also cited a previous plan to permanently pedestrianise Old Compton Street and how it led to a rise in anti-social behaviour

while traffic-free periods were tested. He said: "If they simply want to turn Soho into a tourist and entertainment place, then we need to ask if that is right."

Property owner Stanfishbury, who first suggested the scheme, said: "We are supportive of Westminster City Council's aspiration to improve Beak Street, which is currently used as a traffic rat-run."

"We understand the city council will be launching a public consultation on its proposals to reduce traffic on the street and we look forward to working with the council on any scheme that they decide to take forward."

Traffic chief, Conservative councillor



Tim Lord: "We are pretty firmly against it"

Tim Mitchell added: "The part-pedestrianisation of Beak Street is an early proposal, one of a number of ideas to make Soho's streets cleaner, greener and safer."

"This is still in the very early planning stages and any other proposals will be put out for public consultation, where we welcome feedback from residents and business owners."

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Sport

Rugby World Cup: Thank You Japan

By Derek Wyatt

Huge congratulations to South Africa for winning their third World Cup. They seem to do it every twelve years. But the stars were really the Japanese and their fabulous rugby team. For a game which is not essential to its culture, their games on television attracted the largest ever viewing figures in history. The world should offer a collective bow or two.

I have been very fortunate to have attended five of the eight Rugby World Cup finals but sadly for me not this year. Like perhaps a billion other eyeballs I watched it on television but fortuitously, on a beach in Bali. It was Tough to watch England go under.

The competition is simply too long, longer than both the soccer and cricket world equivalents. The preliminary rounds go on and on and on. Since its inception in 1987 no other countries have won it other than the 'founding fathers' of the game: NZ and SA on three apiece, Oz on two and poor England still on one (and two



losses). Interestingly, France, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, four of the essential ingredients of the Six Nations tournament, have never won the Cup. Moreover, only France has reached the finals, in 1987 and 2011.

It is worse, new rugby countries like Canada and USA have gone backwards in their development programmes. The wonderful and exciting Fijians, Tongans and Samoan players seeing the riches in the game move to New Zealand, Australia and now their northern hemisphere counterparts. There has been no breakthrough for Georgia or Russia and surprisingly Argentina has floundered. The only team advancing is Japan but count the XV which made it to the quarter finals this time and you will have seen, not all are home grown. The game simply has not become global.

Here lies the problem, for rugby per se. Too many of the second and third tier countries were simply unable to compete. This is not good for rugby. A decision needs to be made to have a different kind of World Cup.

For my money, I would like to see thirty six countries winning their way to 2023 in France but in three World Cup sections: Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 with the bottom two being relegated from Tiers 1 and 2 and the top 2 from Tiers 2 and 3, being promoted. It will never happen because the way in which the executive board of World Rugby is structured always ensure that the founding rugby countries seemingly always have the final say. This is because on its main council board, they have two votes each! You couldn't really make it up.

Paralympians on the path to success

By Anandi Shah

Tokyo 2020 is almost upon us and once again, the world has the chance to see history being made both in the Olympics and of course the Paralympic Games.

The first Olympic Games took place on 28th July 1948, as did, the Stoke Mandeville Games for the Paralymped. Since then, The Paralympics has grown from 400 disabled athletes in 1960 to 4,328 para-athletes in the 2016 Games.

Sadly, Paralympians are significantly underfunded compared to their Olympic counterparts; it is still essential for disabled and female athletes to secure their own funding required to train and compete on the world stage.

Push to Success is an organization that helps disabled female athletes, achieve the funding they require to train and compete. The founder, Anita Choudhrie, hosted a glamorous *Push to Tokyo* Gala on 3rd October to raise money for competing in the next Games. Choudhrie deems that the lack of funding stems from insufficient knowledge about these games. Whilst sporting events such as the *Invisio*

Games champion disabled athletes, 'a lot of money generally goes to the Olympians and not so much the Paralympians.'

She stresses the need for more governmental intervention to ensure adequate funding: "Paralympians are not into politics or administrative issues. We must have representatives who would ensure the rest of the world is aware of what's happening."

The Gala raised a grand total of £59,000.

Two Paralympians, who attended the event, are successful in their own fields:

Mary Wilson, a former army nurse, who survived a Taliban attack, was diagnosed with MS in 2004. Ten years later, on 11th September 2014, she became the first female captain at the *Invisio Games*, with medals in Swimming and Discus and met the Duke of Sussex, Prince Harry. She is fighting to become the first Scottish woman to compete in Badminton, which will also make its debut in the upcoming *Paralympic* in Tokyo 2020.

Louise Sugden is a powerlifter and former international wheelchair basketball player. She has competed in 6 European championships, winning bronze in five of them. She brought home a gold from the 2011 *Paralympic World Cup* and competed in the 2008 Beijing and 2012 *London Paralympic Games*. She retired from wheelchair basketball in 2016 and a year later, took up Para-powerlifting. She won a silver

medal at the 2018 *Commonwealth Games* just 9 months later.

Both these women have competed on an international level and yet they have disparate training regimes, unique to their personal capabilities and health.

A key component of training is to remain motivated to maintain strength, or so they say. "I think it's a myth that you can be motivated all of the time. But actually, it's when you're not motivated and you still train that it really counts." - Louise Sugden

"There are negatives as well, when you feel so unmotivated that you have to drag yourself out of bed, but then once you've done it, all the endorphins are going and you feel much better."

Both athletes, have faced constant underfunding, and are supported by *Push to Success*.

Mary surmised why there is such a lack of funding for female Paralympians, criticising the government and other sporting bodies for not "sharing money fairly. Sports are meant to be inclusive for anybody and it certainly isn't."

Whereas Louise receives funding for every weight-lifting target she meets, she comments: "Other sports are very underfunded and driven by results."

A persistent issue is the perception of Paralympians. Mary feels that more integrated games should be put into place: "I'm sure some of the Paralympic athletes could beat some of the Olympians!"

London 2012 was a game-changer

Rugby World Cup will not be remembered for much. The Japanese were wonderful hosts and their team was the team of the tournament. Shame on the same founding fathers which clubbed together to stop Japan hosting the tournament in 2011. Let us hope that America, Canada and Argentina combine to present themselves as the candidates for hosting in 2027. Last year, I made a approach to both the North American RFUs but my emails must have been lost in the ether.

Of the games, none were more thrilling than the Japanese wins over a dreadful Ireland and a poor Scotland. Both looked tired and out of sorts. Wales were unlucky to have such a tough quarter final against France which fortunately for them went to the wire as they clinched it at the last by 19-16. It was almost a game too far as their semi final with South Africa showed. In international rugby you need a backbone of forty-five world class players. England showed this when they played out of their skins to beat New Zealand in the other semi-final in what had previously been an seemingly unbeatable XV.

Finally, World Rugby missed its biggest trick by failing to donate to the Japanese Disaster Appeal. They sucked \$100m out of the Japanese RFU for hosting the event and at least double that from TV rights and advertising but could not rise to the occasion. Shame on them.

that started to alter this, which Louise lauds. She praised the *Commonwealth Games* last year, which showcased integrated events. However, she still feels that there's "more room for improvement", remarking the outrage over empty stadiums in the Doha Stadium of the 2019 *World Athletics*, a regular occurrence in *Paralympic* sporting events.

When it comes to inspiring the next generation, both athletes provide pearls of wisdom.

"Don't pay attention to what everyone else thinks or focus on your appearance, just do what your heart says and give it your best shot. The world is your oyster. I'm 55 and who would have thought I'd be number 6 in the world!" - Mary Wilson

Louise provides a pragmatic approach: "Work hard, because you don't get anything for free...Enjoy it as well. If you don't, you'll never give as much as if you do."

It is perhaps unfortunate that in this day and age, where we believe that everyone is on a level playing 'field', disabled athletes are still not receiving the crucial funding required to compete. Paralympians have been hailed as 'super-humans' and judging by Mary Wilson and Louise Sugden, one can see why. There are many disabled female athletes in similar situations and we can only hope the world wakes up and the right people help to secure funding, ensuring they are all on the path to success.

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Gala boost for Tokyo Paralympic hopefuls

Path to Success event raises £60,000 for disability sports women athletes

11 November, 2019 – By Tom Foot



Pictured: Anita Choudhrie with athletes, para power-lifters Olivia Broome and Louise Sugden, wheelchair tennis stars Jordanne Whiley, Lucy Shuker, Lauren Jones, Ruby Bishop, Abbie Breakwell and Louise Hunt, para badminton's Mary Wilson, Rebecca Bedford and Rachel Choong and wheelchair basketball player Sophie Patterson

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The sports are not fully funded, meaning many athletes rely on friends and family for donations or use their disability allowances. Para badminton star Mary

Wilson had to use her pension pot and war pension before being helped by the charity that was founded by philanthropist Anita Choudhrie in 2005.

Ms Choudhrie said: "The money raised at this year's gala dinner will be crucial for our Path to Tokyo 2020 campaign, which supports talented and inspiring disabled female athletes who remain badly underfunded.

"Our goal is to help these women achieve their dreams in Tokyo and beyond and to inspire a new generation of female Paralympic stars to embrace their talent and chase their own dreams."

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