

Power and Movement

Portraits of Britain's Paralympic Athletes

Photography by Richard Booth



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Text by Debbie Beckerman



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To all the Paralympic athletes I have worked with in preparing this book, with best wishes for their future success.

p.2 Liz Johnson, who won gold at Beijing 2008 in the 100m Breaststroke, was only 14 when she became part of the British Paralympic Swimming team. In 2011 she was invited to place the last of 180,000 tiles in the Aquatics Centre for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, where she hopes to repeat her success. 'I've got the taste for gold, and I won't be short of motivation to land another one in 2012.'

p.5 At 19, Kyron Duke's international career has already spanned two sports. He represented Wales in powerlifting at the Commonwealth Games in 2010, and the following





INTRODUCTION BY RICHARD BOOTH

In May 2011 I was working in Weymouth, Dorset, on Britain's south coast, with the winds up to 30 knots, and I was struggling to get the images I was looking for. This was one of the trickiest parts of the entire project and the weather was exactly helping. However, I was determined to get it right, however long it took to get the images I was looking for.

I have always had a passion for sport and for creative photography. In addition, through one of my commercial clients, I had helped to raise money for the British Olympic Association (BOA) and the British Paralympic Association (BPA). Soon after that I met, and began to photograph, some exceptional Paralympic athletes, including swimmer Kate Grey, fencer Tom Hall-Butcher and athlete Libby Clegg. I was inspired by the sheer drive and energy they showed. It dovetailed perfectly with the style and dynamism of the images that I was

looking for. I was hoping to capture the spirit of the Paralympic athletes and their goal of being the official publication of Great Britain's finest Paralympic athletes. This was one of the trickiest parts of the entire project and the weather was exactly helping. However, I was determined to get it right, however long it took to get the images I was looking for.

December 2010. This first involved a lot of research on the sports themselves. Some, such as Boccia, Goalball and Football 5-a-side for visually-impaired athletes, were new to me. I was determined to get it right, however long it took to get the images I was looking for.

Left: Boccia champion David, British sailors Ian Robertson, Stephen Thomas and Hannah were sailing in the Weymouth in May 2011.



are unique to the Paralympic Games and logistical challenges, the six I admit I knew little about. I had to gain an understanding of each sport to be covered was as presenting and the based. Sometimes I was given photographs could show a variety of locations around Britain. In total disciplines to best advantage. There were 40,000 kilometers from, or also much to organise Glasgow and Sheffield and Nottingham, shoots. I had to plan (and plan) a shooting schedule in London, Cardiff, and Birmingham, and constant contact with PR agencies in Weymouth, the Netherlands, and sometimes the athletes' departments of the country. On other occasions, because of their training and competition schedules, I would be told, as I was with wheelchair tennis, 'Our top guys are playing week in week out, and are available for one day at the end of February – is that OK?'



Wheelchair tennis ace Peter Norfolk powers a ball straight through the camera lens

is a global sport and Peter Norfolk, one

characters in the game. Nothing was too much trouble, and they generously gave me three precious hours of their time. I didn't know much about the technicalities of boccia beforehand, but it was inspiring to meet them both, and to witness their competitiveness even if it was during a set-up photo shoot. And luckily, being half Scottish, I immediately got their sense of



Nine-times Paralympic Games gold medallist Lee Pearson, saying hello to his horse, Gentleman.



Wheelchair rugby player Bulbul Hussain, training hard in the gym for my advertising agency, as it gave me the control I needed as well as the knowledge that I could throw everything at the athletes and get what I wanted. You wouldn't normally see big medium-format digital

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and ask the athletes to do and re-do the movement several times to get it just right; their helpful co-operation was hugely appreciated. However, I really did not want to retouch the images, so the ones in the book are all 'straight out of the camera', except for a bit of dust clean-up and colour conversion.

There were weather and location considerations to take into account every time. There

the whole process, making sure the action and positions were right and that I was capturing their sport correctly. All along, I have aimed to include as wide a variety of athletes as possible

in this project, from elite Paralympians such as Lee Pearson (Equestrian, nine golds), David Roberts (Swimming, 11 golds), Jody Cundy (Cycling and European, World Swimming, five golds), Sarah Girdle on her horse, and Deb Criddle on her horse, and Swimmer, seven





John Stubbs, who won a gold medal in the Paralympic Archery competition at Beijing 2008, takes aim, his focus firmly on the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

never forget any of the shoots and the remarkable athletes that I met at them. Thank you to you all.

I must pay tribute to people whose help, input and support have been invaluable in making this book possible. Due to

one shoot - so there were a few amusing reactions when we turned up and it just kept coming out of the vehicles.

I also never realised how exhausting it would be to try to organise over 100 very diverse

can be seen when photographed in this way is immense. Equally, the beauty and calmness of mind prior to the competition itself is wonderful to witness. I have managed to open the eyes of my family and children





ATHLETICS

Queen of Speed

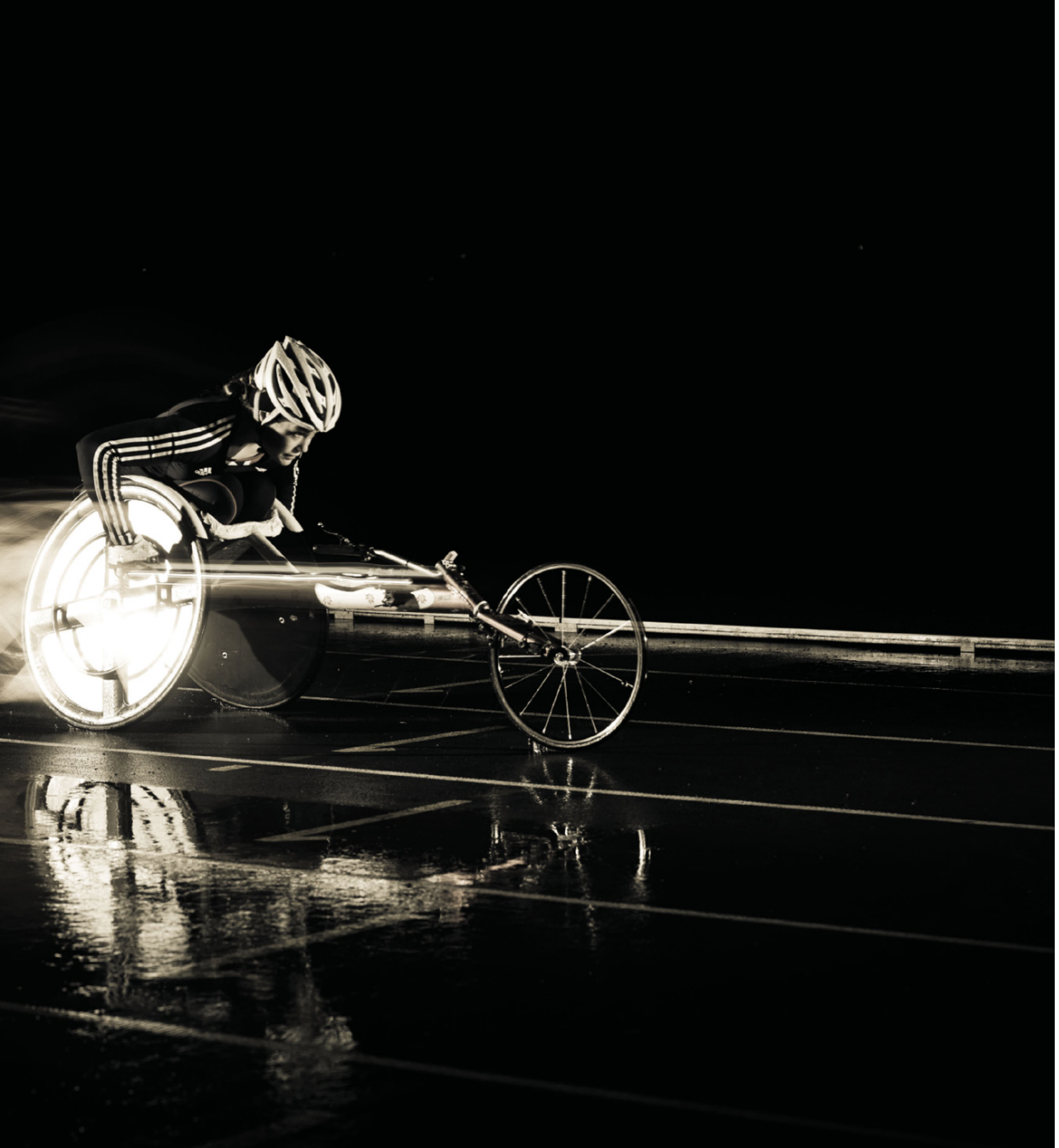
Nikki Emerson took up athletics in 2009, shortly after becoming a wheelchair user. A year later she came fourth in the London Marathon. She relishes being fit, strong and fast, and sees herself not as a disabled person but as an athlete. She has always been highly competitive and driven, and loves nothing better than pitching herself down the steepest hill she can find: 'I'm a massive adrenaline junkie.' Nikki graduated from Oxford University



'It's an incredible feeling
to be going at over 40mph
with your face just a foot
above the ground.'

Nikki Emerson



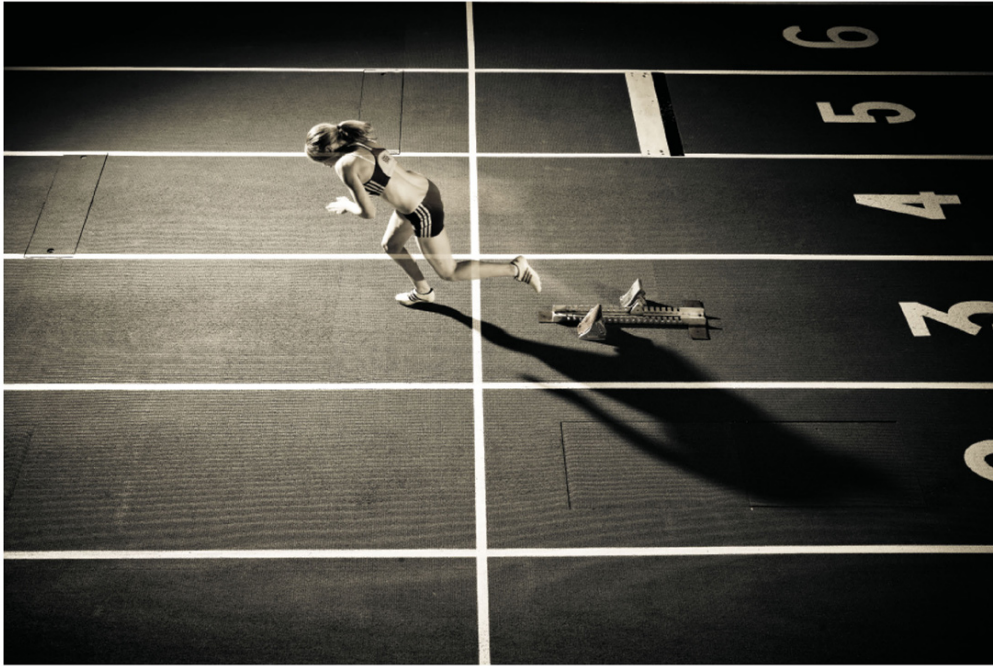






Winning Wheels

Born in 1979, David Weir MBE is one of the most successful Paralympic athletes in history. He currently holds the British record at all track distances up to 5000m, as well as on the road at 10km, half marathon and marathon. He is also a double-gold medallist from the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games. David always means business - a ruthless 'local hero', he is determined to triumph in his own back yard as he has across the world. Given his total dedication to his sport, it is not surprising that



From School to Stadium

Jenny McLoughlin competes in the 100m and 200m sprint events. At just 16 years old, and having just finished her GCSEs, she was one of the youngest members of the ParalympicsGB team at Beijing 2008. Competing in those Paralympic Games remains for Jenny her



New Horizons

James Ledger, seen here closest to the camera, knows how important athletics has been in his life so far: 'It has given me a lot of confidence and independence.' He also acknowledges that sport has enhanced his social skills and enabled him to mix with a wide range of people whom he would not normally have aot to