



Paralympic Games
Case Studies

Channel 4

Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games



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Introduction

Vision for the Games



Channel 4's coverage of the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Paralympic Games set the benchmark for all other broadcasters around the world. We smashed viewing records. We transformed the public perception of the Paralympic Games, turning it into a must-see elite sporting event on a par with the Olympic Games. And we changed the conversation around disability.

We knew that trying to raise the standard even higher for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games would be a mammoth undertaking. Add a global pandemic and the difficulties of filming and production during Covid-19, and the challenge was near-overwhelming.

But it's in our blood to reinvent entertainment. To find new ways of engaging people. To be noisy, bold and ambitious. Despite the challenging circumstances, we vowed to produce the biggest, best, most accessible Paralympic Games coverage ever, and bring it to the widest audience possible. So that's what we did.

We aired more than 300 hours of around-the-clock Paralympics coverage on Channel 4 and More4, as well as over 1,000 hours via 16 live streams on All 4. If the Games organisers captured an event on camera, we broadcast it live.

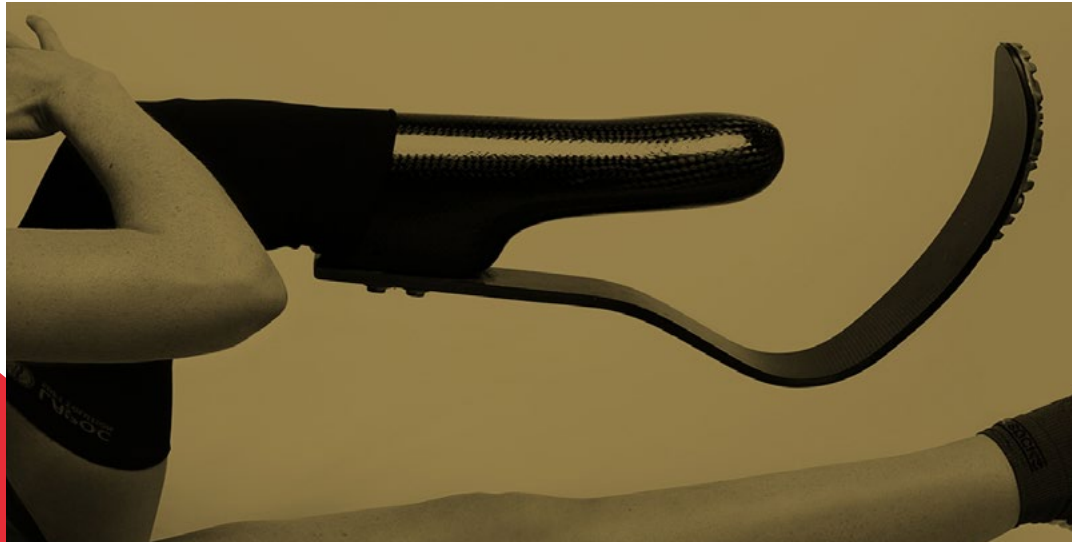
We couldn't have pulled it off without the brilliant work of our Paralympics production company Whisper, Open Mike for *The Last Leg*, the support of our sponsor Toyota and the extraordinary performance of our most diverse presenting team ever. Whether it was Ade Adepitan zooming around Tokyo, bringing us the daily highlights show from the back seat of a taxi, or Clare Balding anchoring live Paralympics action on home turf in Leeds, we brought together top-level sporting action and entertainment for our viewers – whether they were on their sofas or on social media.

Our coverage of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games was viewed by more than 20 million people – a third of the UK population. With 4.1 million views on our bespoke TikTok Paralympics Hub, we reached new and younger audiences. We used the power of the Paralympic Games to excite, educate, provoke and challenge viewers in new creative ways.

Now we are looking forward to building on this incredible legacy through the Winter Paralympics in Beijing next year and onwards to Paris 2024. And, because we're Channel 4, we won't stop innovating. We will take the baton and go even faster.

Alex Mahon
Chief Executive Channel 4

What we did



We've always wanted to make each successive cycle of the Paralympic Games even bigger and better than the last.

Martin Baker
Director of Commercial Affairs at Channel 4

The backstory

When Channel 4 was first awarded the Paralympic Games UK broadcast rights back in 2010, we saw it as a huge opportunity to challenge stereotypes by bringing disability into the mainstream. For us, the Paralympic Games wasn't a sideshow: it was the main event.

In London 2012, we showcased more hours of Paralympic sport than any other broadcaster in history and broke global viewing records for a Paralympic Games.

For the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, we went even further, with more hours of coverage, across more broadcast platforms, than our 'home' Games, and the largest team of disabled on- and off-screen talent ever seen on UK television.

For the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games – guess what? We decided to raise the bar even higher. “We’ve always wanted to make each successive cycle of the Paralympic Games even bigger and better than the last,” says Martin Baker, Director of Commercial Affairs at Channel 4. “It’s part of our commitment to keep innovating, to keep moving the dial on diversity and inclusion.”

But these were no ordinary Paralympics. The Covid-19 pandemic meant the Games were rescheduled a year later in August 2021, which had a knock-on effect on budgets, studio locations, presenters and broadcast options. These were going to be the most challenging Paralympic Games in history to cover. Yet our ambition didn't waver. We set out to produce the best, most comprehensive, most accessible, most developed production of a Paralympic Games ever.

What we did continued

The marketing campaign

Channel 4's two multi-award-winning Paralympic Games films – *We are the Superhumans* (London 2012) and *Meet the Superhumans* (Rio 2016) – were always going to be hard acts to follow. Our latest campaign was the 'difficult third album' that needed to live up to exceptionally high standards.

Conceived by our in-house agency, 4creative, *Super. Human.* was filmed over two weeks in May. And it's bold. Unlike previous iterations of the Superhumans campaigns, the film focuses on the fragilities and day-to-day struggles facing elite athletes – putting the emphasis on 'human' over 'super'. Directed by Bradford Young, the first black cinematographer to be nominated for an Oscar, it shows the athletes bleeding, sweating, crying, vomiting and swearing. It's literally blood and guts.

"We spotted an opportunity to present Paralympians in a way they hadn't been shown before – by pointing a camera at the realities of their lives, and, as with any elite athlete, the sacrifices they make in pursuit of greatness," says Lynsey Atkin, 4creative's Executive Creative Director. "Whether that's defying medical advice, missing children's birthdays, anxiety, repetition, getting endless blisters – collectively these choices paint a story of mental determination, not of disability."

The coverage

We revved up the nation for Tokyo 2020 with shows including *Billy Monger: Changing Gear*; *Jonnie's Blade Camp*; *Michael Johnson Meets...* and *Come Dine With Me: Paralympics Special*.

We gave these Paralympic Games more coverage than ever before, with more than 300 hours of around-the-clock coverage on Channel 4 and More 4, plus over 1,000 hours on 16 live streams on our Paralympics website – capturing every single event that was covered live.

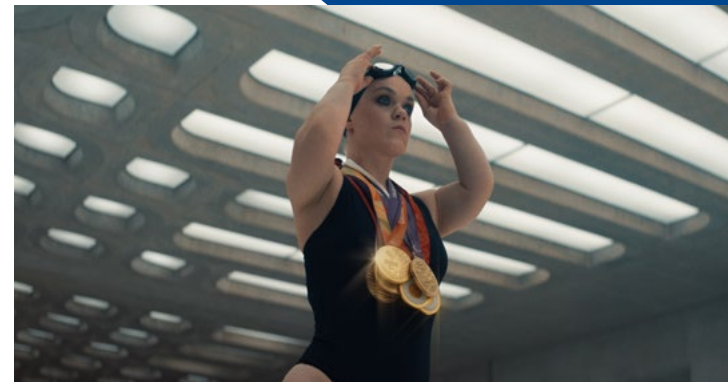
Our Paralympics programmes:

- **0730-0900 Paralympics: Breakfast**
Steph McGovern and Arthur Williams brought overnight stories to our audience and an invited audience of family and friends of ParalympicsGB athletes, live from Leeds.
- **0900-1400 Paralympics: Live**
Clare Balding anchored live Paralympics action from Leeds, where she shared in the agonies and ecstasy of success and failure with the fans and families. In Tokyo, live presenters included Vick Hope at track cycling, Sophie Morgan and Marc Woods at swimming, and Baroness Grey-Thompson, Stef Reid, Lauren Steadman and Lee McKenzie at athletics.
- **0730-1400 Live Team Sports**
More 4 became a dedicated team sports channel fronted by JJ Chalmers and Ed Jackson, live from Tokyo
- **1700-1800 Today in Tokyo**
Ade Adepitan helmed a daily highlights show in a specially rigged Tokyo Taxi.
- **1930-2000 Paralympics: Gold Rush**
Clare Balding presented ParalympicsGB and the top medal moments.
- **2200-2300 The Last Leg**
Adam Hills, Alex Brooker and Josh Widdicombe presented a daily show live from Stratford, sending up the events of the last 24 hours. Stand-up comedian Rosie Jones provided her unique take from Japan.



We spotted an opportunity to present Paralympians in a way they hadn't been shown before – by pointing a camera at the realities of their lives, and, as with any elite athlete, the sacrifices they make in pursuit of greatness.

Lynsey Atkin
4creative's Executive Creative Director



What we did continued

Social media

Thanks to our multi-platform broadcasting rights, we could bring the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games to the broadest audience possible, showcasing the most captivating moments on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. "We wanted to connect young people to the Paralympics," says Martin Baker. "We knew we couldn't just stick an advert on a bus stop and expect them to tune into the Games on telly. We had to go to where they are – and that's on social media. "We had five daily social shows, which highlighted and supplemented our broadcast coverage: *While You Were Sleeping*; *Today in Tokyo*; *Mini Gold Rush*; *Paralympics Rewind*; and *Daily Top 5/10s*.

Talent

We brought together the largest team of disabled talent in UK television history. On screen, more than 70% of our presenters and pundits were disabled. Behind the cameras, 18% of the production team were disabled, ranging from producers and floor managers to editors and researchers – and 29% were alumni of our very own production trainee scheme.

The Last Leg of Tokyo 2020

Accessibility

From including subtitles on all Channel 4 and More 4 coverage to having signed and audio-described versions of the launch trailer, *Today in Tokyo*, Paralympics: *Gold Rush* and *The Last Leg*, we made Tokyo 2020 the most accessible Paralympic Games ever. In a media first, we also teamed up with the charity RNIB and six major advertisers – Airbnb, BT Broadband, Experian, Virgin Media, Gillette and Oral-B – to do an audio description ad-break takeover. During two ad breaks on 24 and 25 August, we repurposed and graphically treated the brands' normal ten second ads, distorting the visual experience and making them hard to see, demonstrating what it's like for someone with sight loss to watch TV. The audience could hear and engage with the audio description, recorded by presenter and comedian Alex Brooker. David Clarke, former Paralympian and Director of Services at RNIB, described it as "a massive turning point in breaking down the barriers that still exist for people with sight loss".



On screen,
more than
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and pundits
were disabled.

How we did

We vowed to make Tokyo 2020 the biggest, best and most accessible Paralympic Games ever. And we nailed it. Here are the stats to prove it.

Super. Human. Campaign



The Last Leg of Tokyo 2020

Super. Human.

Our acclaimed marketing campaign **Super. Human.**, made by Oscar-nominated cinematographer Bradford Young, reached **81%** of the UK population.

How we did continued

Michael Johnson Meets...



Games times

Our coverage of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games was viewed by **over 20 million viewers** – a third of the UK population (**33%**) and a fifth of young people aged 16-34 (**22%**).

It was Channel 4's biggest weekly share of TV viewing since 2016 and our biggest daytime share since 2012.

Digital

The Channel 4 **Paralympics Microsite** had more than **800,000** page views and **120,000** unique visitors.

Our bespoke Paralympics Hub on **TikTok**, showcasing the most captivating moments throughout the Games and **#C4paralympics**, generated **4.1 million** views.

The @C4Paralympics Twitter account achieved half a billion global impressions during the Games. The hashtag **#C4Paralympics** was used over **15,000** times.

Our C4Paralympics Facebook page had **24 million** impressions during the Paralympic Games. We saw an **8.9%** growth of likes/followers (**3,500**).

Paralympic Games videos posted on the Channel 4 Sport YouTube channel produced **771,000** views.

#C4Paralympics



Michael Johnson Meets...



Jonnie's Blade Camp

How we did continued

Come Dine With Me: Paralympics Special



The Paralympic Games coverage

Nearly half of viewers found our coverage of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games thought-provoking (**46%**) and informative (**49%**).

80% of viewers credited Channel 4 for bringing important but difficult issues to a mainstream audience.

77% of viewers said the Paralympic Games made them think about the challenges faced by disabled people in a different way, and **49%** thought the coverage showed a view of disability not seen before on TV.

75% of viewers thought the Paralympic Games were inspiring, rising to **81%** of disabled viewers.

70% of disabled viewers felt that the Paralympic Games coverage was accessible and easy to watch.

65% of viewers agreed that Channel 4 is the best broadcaster at representing different groups in society.

Super. Human. Campaign

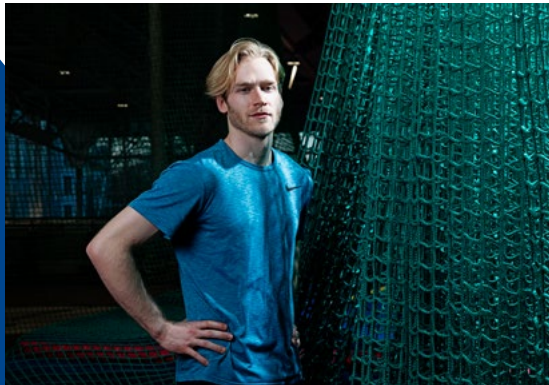


Super. Human. Campaign

How we did continued

In your words

Jonnie's Blade Camp



It sends a positive message and also emphasises that parasports are entertaining and gripping in their own right.



Channel 4 has opened my eyes to the lives of people very different from mine.



Without this channel, British society would be all the poorer.



Super. Human. Campaign



High quality, in depth and varied.



Well informed, not patronising.



Super. Human. Campaign



A thoroughly joyful experience to share with friends and family.

Research method: 482 viewers, comprised of respondents who watched any part of Channel 4's Paralympics coverage, undertook a self-completion online survey via our Core4 panel (which is made up of All 4 registered users).

The TikTok tie-up

TikTok

When 19-year-old Maisie Summers-Newton achieved her childhood dream of winning a Paralympic gold medal in the SM6 200m individual medley, her moment of triumph in Tokyo – and her coach's emotional reaction back home in Northampton – were captured on Channel 4's TikTok Paralympics Hub. Posted in a split-screen format to show both moments simultaneously, the clip was viewed more than 300,000 times over the two-week Games period.

Channel 4's bespoke sponsor-branded Paralympics Hub was a social media first. Never before had coverage from the Paralympic Games – or the Olympics – been showcased on TikTok in this way.

"The Hub felt like a great opportunity to support our ambition to make Tokyo 2020 our most accessible and discoverable Games ever, to engage with the TikTok community and super-serve young audiences," explains Emma Dowling, Social Strategist, 4Studio. "A huge number of the ParalympicsGB team were already active on TikTok. This was a way to amplify their content, and improve visibility and understanding of disability."

The Hub gave fans and at-home spectators a new and creative way to feel connected to the excitement of Tokyo 2020. Throughout the Games, the 4Studio team created daily, gold medal-worthy content especially for the TikTok community, including behind-the-scenes footage, events and medals highlights and intimate moments with athletes. The narrated short-form videos used TikTok's 'text-to-speech' feature so users with visual and reading impairments could enjoy the content too.

To give the Hub extra exposure, there was a banner on TikTok's Discover page and tailored push notifications around big moments in the Games.

And it worked. In August this year, Channel 4 TikTok video views were up 223% versus the previous 28 days. So far, the content has been viewed a whopping 4.1 million times (and counting), with the most popular posts including a vertical video compilation of Anastasia Pagonis, the 17-year old TikTok star and the first American Paralympian to win gold in Tokyo; and a clip of Ibrahim Hamadtou's amazing table tennis performance – playing only with his mouth.

"This was reactive social media content at its very best," adds Emma. "We served up content from the Paralympics that young people might not have expected. It spoke to them. It challenged them. And it inspired them. As Paralympian Kadeena Cox put it, after she stormed to victory in the C4-5 500m time trial and smashed the world record: 'If you don't see someone, you don't think you could be it.'"

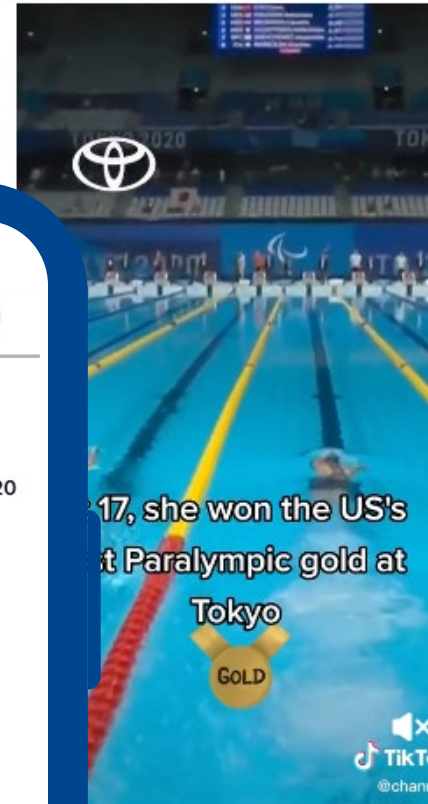
TikTok

Search accounts



channel4 Channel 4 · 8-27

We just love @anastasia_k_p 🍷 #C4Paralympics #Paralympics #Tokyo2020 #TeamUSA #Toyota
🎵 FEEL THE GROOVE - Queens Road, Fabia



TikTok

Search accounts



channel4 Channel 4 · 8-26

Who's cutting onions in here?! 😭 Maisie Summers-Newton is making us all so proud 🇬🇧 🏆
#C4Paralympics #Paralympics #TeamGB #Tokyo2020 #Toyota
🎵 original sound - Channel 4



11.5K



117



The Paralympian: Aaron Phipps

Aaron Phipps, wheelchair rugby gold medallist

When Aaron Phipps was 15, he came home from school feeling unwell with a fever and chills. Later that night, he collapsed and was rushed to hospital, where he was put on life support and given a 20% chance of survival. He had meningitis C and meningococcal sepsis.

“One minute I was a healthy teenager; the next I was in intensive care and learning about amputations. It was completely overwhelming,” he says. Due to septicaemia, he had to have both legs removed below the knee and lost his fingertips.

After spending a year in hospital recovering and rehabilitating, he went to college and his life started to return to ‘a kind of normality’. “I didn’t know anyone else who was disabled,” he says. “I was self conscious and always wore jeans to hide my prosthetic legs.”

It wasn’t until he was in his mid-20s that he discovered disabled sports. “Back then, the Paralympics had next-to-no profile so it just wasn’t on my radar,” he says. “My wife saw a demonstration of wheelchair basketball in a local shopping centre and encouraged me to give it a go. I loved being around people who were like me and just trying to get on with their lives.”

Aaron then started wheelchair racing, completing a 10km wheelchair race for Meningitis Research Foundation (MRF) and two London Marathons, before being introduced to the GB wheelchair rugby squad. “I was never going to be an elite wheelchair basketball player (my hands are no good) or a top wheelchair racer (I’m too big). But

with wheelchair rugby, something just clicked,” he says. “It scared the crap out of me but I loved the contact and the camaraderie.”

He was selected to represent Great Britain in the London 2012 Paralympic Games and starred in Channel 4’s *Meet the Superhumans* campaign. He recalls the first time the rugby team watched the ad. “Our jaws hit the floor. There was hip-hop music. Explosions. Car crashes. It was seriously cool. Disabled people had never been portrayed like that before. It made the entire nation sit up and think differently.”

After coming fifth at the 2012 Games, and scoring more than half the team’s points, Aaron took a break from wheelchair rugby to be with his family. When he returned for the Tokyo Paralympic Games, he noticed an even deeper shift in attitudes towards disability.

“In some countries, the Paralympic Games get little more than a one-hour highlights show. In the UK, they get 1,300 hours of coverage on 16 live streams, with disabled presenters and pundits,” he says. “People now stop me on the street to chat about wheelchair rugby. They know the specifics. They’re becoming even more engrossed in sport and even more comfortable with disability.”

“Britain has become one of the most inclusive countries in the world – and Channel 4 has played a huge part in that,” he adds.

Having helped the Great Britain wheelchair rugby team to win their first ever Paralympic gold medal in Tokyo, Aaron is back in training for Paris 2024, hoping to make history again.



Britain has become one of the most inclusive countries in the world – and Channel 4 has played a huge part in that.



Viewpoint: Tom Whiteside, UK sponsorship lead, Toyota

Toyota



Here's something you might not know: Toyota started out as a company that made weaving looms almost 100 years ago. We did what many people thought was impossible and went from building looms to building cars. Now we're transforming into a mobility company, creating products and services beyond just passenger cars which help people to move around more freely. As Toyota's president Akio Toyoda puts it: "We are determined to create new ways to move and connect our customers, whether that's across the country, across the town or just across the room." We're committed to unleashing human potential through the power of movement, which is why we're a proud partner of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

We know that people with a disability are twice as likely to be inactive as those without an impairment. So, in 2018, we launched parasport.org.uk alongside the British Paralympic Association – a fun and vibrant online community that informs, inspires and connects people to local inclusive activities. We also set up the Toyota Parasport Fund in partnership with ParalympicsGB, Sport England and the Home Nations Disability Sports Organisations. So far, we've distributed more than £600,000 to activity providers, helping them to improve the quality and quantity of accessible sport.

For Tokyo 2020, we teamed up with Channel 4, sponsoring their world-leading coverage of the Paralympic Games. It's a natural collaboration. Like Toyota, Channel 4 wants to create a fairer and more inclusive society.

To bring our mobility vision to life (in a very British, tongue-in-cheek way), we created a short film starring four Toyota ambassadors: swimmer Alice Tai; sprinter Jonnie Peacock; cyclist Laura Kenny; and rock climber Shauna Coxsey. Appearing alongside the Paralympic Games coverage and in a series of Channel 4 idents, the ad showed the athletes taking delivery of a Human Support Robot to help with their training for Tokyo 2020. Instead of taking advantage of the robot's full capabilities, they put it to work on daily chores including walking the dog, doing the ironing and carrying the shopping.

Viewpoint: Tom Whiteside, UK sponsorship lead, Toyota continued

Billy Monger: Changing Gear

We also created a new documentary called *Billy Monger: Changing Gear*. Over the summer, racing driver and double amputee Billy Monger met and trained with some of the stars of ParalympicsGB. Produced by Whisper, the one-hour special sees Billy learn to run again for the first time since his accident under the expert guidance of Jonnie Peacock; he swims in open water with para swimmer Alice Tai; he canoes with fellow double-leg amputee Charlotte Henshaw; and he takes on a high-speed challenge at the wheel of a Toyota GR Supra 3.0 Pro. The film aired on Channel 4 on 21 August, and reached 1.4 million people via linear viewing.

Thanks to continuity announcements and dedicated branding on Channel 4's Paralympics website, we saw a massive spike in traffic to parasport.org.uk, attracting 35,000 unique users throughout August, up from a monthly average of 12,000.

We know that mobility goes well beyond cars. Movement is a human right. At Toyota, we believe that when we move, we can create the impossible.

Billy Monger: Changing Gear



3 in 4 viewers

feel better about Toyota because of the sponsorship. This increases to 90% if they watched the Paralympic Games every day

70%

of respondents are more likely to consider buying Toyota

35,000

unique users to parasport.org.uk in August

Viewpoint: Mike Sharrock, CEO, British Paralympic Association

British Paralympic Association



It has been a real privilege to lead the British Paralympic Association through these uniquely challenging times and to have been at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games to witness the extraordinary performances of our athletes. They were all the more extraordinary given the circumstances in which the Games took place, and a testimony to the skill, dedication and resilience of each and every member of the team.

We are immensely proud of our history-making ParalympicsGB athletes who did so much to inspire and unite the nation through their performances in Tokyo – 124 medals, second in the medal table and winning medals in 18 different sports, the most ever achieved by any nation – the Tokyo 2020 milestones go on and on. But equally important are the memorable stories of the athletes and their own personal journey to be ready to compete at Tokyo. Who can forget the power of Ellie Robinson's post-race interview as she revealed her struggle with a debilitating illness in the lead-up to the Games and her determination to end her career on her own terms?

Covid-19 created a unique level of complexity for ParalympicsGB and to have performed as we did is not only testament to the athletes, but also to our incredible staff, in Tokyo and in London, who went above and beyond to deliver their personal bests.

It was so important that the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games took place: to bring the world together and to bring our country together – to celebrate sport and the very best of humanity and put a smile back on people's faces after such a challenging time for all of us. Disabled people have been disproportionately affected by the Covid pandemic. The Paralympic Games, covered so brilliantly by Channel 4, helped once again to put disabled people at the forefront of everyone's minds and to continue to challenge our notions of disability and ability.

Our *Impossible to Ignore* campaign is all about tapping into the unique power of Paralympic sport to challenge perceptions and break down barriers for all disabled people. Channel 4 play such a crucial role in this. They represent the very best of public service broadcasting with their innovative, creative and challenging approach. Their commitment to show more live coverage than any other nation, their amazing award-winning presenting team (70% of whom were disabled), the unique The Last Leg team, and their ground-breaking marketing campaigns have done so much to elevate the way Paralympic sport is seen in this country.

My first experience of a Paralympic Games was at Beijing 2008. I can remember very clearly that feeling of being challenged and, at the same time, being completely overwhelmed by the incredible sporting performances of the athletes. Tokyo 2020 brought that all back to me and I still feel that same inspiration today as I did back then.

Our involvement and activities

#WeThe15

On 19 August this year, the world turned purple. More than 125 iconic landmarks across the globe, including New York's Empire State Building, Malaysia's KL Tower, Rome's Colosseum and London's Houses of Parliament, were illuminated in the international colour for disability.

The global light-up marked the start of WeThe15, sport's biggest ever human rights movement to end discrimination and transform the lives of the world's 1.2 billion disabled people.

Launched just ahead of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games – when the world was watching – the decade-long campaign is spearheaded by the International Paralympic Committee and International Disability Alliance. It brings together the biggest coalition ever of international organisations from the worlds of sport, human rights, policy, business, arts and entertainment to initiate change for the world's largest marginalised group who make up 15% of the global population.



WeThe15 aspires to be the biggest ever human rights movement for persons with disabilities and aims to put disability right at the heart of the inclusion agenda, alongside ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. It could be a real game changer.

Andrew Parsons, President, IPC



We, too, wanted to shine a (purple) light on the campaign. To support the launch, Channel 4 created a #WeThe15 on-air ident with an overlaid purple filter that covered 15% of the screen. Throughout the day, there were accompanying continuity announcements and social media posts. To fuel conversations on disability, we also re-surfaced the We Don't Dis-ability collection, putting it on the homepage and driving a 2,000% spike in visits to the collection compared to the previous day.

Over the following month, we aired the WeThe15 campaign ad. Created by adam&eveDDB, it features a montage of disabled people going about their everyday business – pushing prams, accidentally killing houseplants, watching reality TV, going on dates – reminding viewers that 'Only when you see us as one of you – wonderfully ordinary, wonderfully human – can we all break down these barriers that keep us apart'.

Matt Roberts, Executive Producer, Whisper

Behind the scenes



Imagine a Paralympics version of *First Dates*. After competing in the Games, athletes arrive at a cool rooftop bar in Tokyo, where their friends and family are eagerly waiting. Over drinks, they chat about the highs and lows of the Games – and it's all filmed live.

That was our original idea for Tokyo 2020. All our presenters and a 250-strong production crew were due to fly out to Japan to capture the excitement of the Paralympic Games and create this new show. And then Covid-19 hit. The Games were postponed by a year. Spectators would be banned. Restrictions would be in place. Athletes would be living in a bubble. We had to dramatically rethink our plans.

At the start of this year, we made the decision to move production to the UK. With only six months to go, we had our work cut out.

In the run-up to the Games, we did a lot of green-screen filming with Paralympians so we had plenty of footage in the can. We let them explain their event classifications and tell their own backstories, painting a more complete picture for viewers.

We also worked with Timeline to build a brand new state-of-the-art studio and broadcast facility in Ealing, West London, with ten edit suites, seven voiceover booths, two galleries and facilities to handle complex remote productions.

Ade Adepitan

Meanwhile, we booked the *Steph's Packed Lunch* studio in Leeds for the summer, installing high-speed fibre and giving it a Paralympics makeover. From there, Clare Balding presented the live sports finals, while Steph McGovern and Arthur Williams fronted *Paralympics: Breakfast*. We also brought athletes' friends and families into the studio, and had a roving camera across the UK to capture the reaction of loved ones as they watched from home. When Reece Dunn won gold in the men's S14 200m freestyle, for example, we were in his hometown of Plymouth cheering with his family.

We sent a scaled-down team of 50 to Tokyo. With a remote camera set up in the Athletics Village, plus presenters at the Izu Velodrome, the Tokyo Aquatics Centre and the Olympic Stadium, we were able to catch the moments of joy, pain, agony and ecstasy.

Capturing the atmosphere on the ground in Tokyo was one of the trickiest challenges. We weren't allowed to film on the streets so, instead, we put Ade Adepitan in a Tokyo taxi, kitted out with point-of-view cameras for a *Carpool Karaoke*-style highlights show. The Covid-safe set-up meant Ade could travel around the city, commentating and interviewing from the back seat against a skyline of skyscrapers, Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines.

This was, undoubtedly, the hardest Games that we've ever worked on. But it was also the most rewarding and most diverse, with 70% disabled on-screen talent and 18% behind the cameras.

When people think back to Tokyo 2020, they won't remember the restrictions and the challenges. They'll remember the extraordinary sports. The thrill and emotion. The athletes' grit and determination. The moments that mattered.

What's next?

Interview

Pete Andrews,
Head of Sport, Channel 4



That can shift the dial in attitudes amongst the audience – and that filters into society.

Q Covering the Paralympic Games in the midst of a global pandemic was no easy feat. What are your reflections on Tokyo 2020?

A The pandemic presented a unique challenge to all sporting events in a very busy year – and none more so than the Paralympic Games. We had to step back and re-evaluate how we could make the Games special, how we could keep our coverage as big as possible, and how we could still bring Tokyo to the widest audience at home. We never shrunk from the task or decided to settle for second best. Just sending the footage back was never good enough for us. I'm super proud of how the team pulled together such ambitious coverage across multiple locations. Rigging up a special taxi for Ade Adepitan to beat the Covid rules in Tokyo was so original and led us to a highlights show with top-drawer production values. We stayed live at the athletics stadium, on the cycling track and by the pool. It took real commitment from the whole team, not least our brilliant group of presenters and pundits.

Q So, what's next? What's in store for Paris 2024?

A Since 2012, Channel 4 has showcased more hours of Paralympic sport than any other broadcaster in history and created household names of both athletes and presenters. We want to build on that legacy and keep pushing ourselves to get better. We will take the best ideas. We will continue to challenge perceptions. We will be a responsible broadcaster and put sustainability right at the heart of our decision-making process. And we will keep evolving our coverage.

Paris 2024 is the first Paralympics in a favourable time zone for a while. Paris is so close that it feels like we can make this our own Games: this is a huge opportunity to capture the spirit of London 2012, when we started this journey. Our main goal is always to make sure the coverage has a positive impact on everyone in the UK. We can't wait to get started.

Q&A

Q What are you doing to bring in new disabled presenting and production talent?

A Channel 4's 2020/21 production trainee scheme brought 16 young disabled people into the industry and many of them got to work on the Paralympic Games. But this is an ongoing process: we must continue to bring new talent in and up through the ranks into more senior roles. And it's not just about sport. We have to make sure disabled people get opportunities on all types of programmes.

Q Why is sport so crucial to transforming perceptions of disability?

A Sport has a broad appeal and Paralympians are the very best in the world, competing in a spectacular competition. No one can watch the action and fail to be impressed by the skill and dedication of everyone involved. That can shift the dial in attitudes amongst the audience – and that filters into society. The more we talk about the issues that face disabled people, the more we can educate the audience (and ourselves) on how to create a more respectful and inclusive environment for all.

