

Talan Skeels-Piggins MA., PLY.

Talan Skeels-Piggins is a Children's Author, Athlete Mentor, Double World Champion, European Champion and Winter Paralympian. His achievements are testament to his resilience, determination and self-belief. He gives his best in all he does and is both an inspirational and motivating individual.

Paralysed from the chest down in 2003, Talan was an active PE teacher and a serving Lieutenant in the Royal Navy Reserves. After just eight days of being paralysed, Talan claimed he would learn to ski, get into the National Team and represent Great Britain at the 2010 Winter Paralympics. Seven years later he became Britain's top placed male skier in the Giant Slalom and Super G events at the 2010 Vancouver Paralympic Games. The following year he won his first International Gold medal for GB and went on to become the European Champion for Super G. Moving to ParaBoarder-Cross, Talan won Silver in Lake Tahoe and then chose to become a Coach/Instructor in both Para-Alpine and Para-Boarder Cross.

In 2006 he claimed a landmark ruling by becoming the first paraplegic to be retained in the Royal Navy on active service. He continued to serve with NATO taking charge of Navigational Safety advice at NATO HQ in Northwood during maritime exercises. This ruling enabled more disabled military personnel to continue to serve their country.

Talan entered the history books again on 21 June 2012 when he became the first paraplegic to race a motorcycle in an able-bodied race. This has changed the course of motorsport forever, having overcome great odds to achieve something that many thought was impossible. Since then, he has twice become the World Champion 600cc (paralysed class) and became the first paraplegic to become a licenced Motorcycle Race Instructor. In 2019 he set the fastest lap for a paralysed rider on the famous Isle of Man TT Mountain Course, with an average speed of 90mph over the 37.73mile course on his very first attempt.

After getting back on a motorcycle in 2008, he began to ride at various race tracks around the country. The feeling of freedom was intoxicating and Talan realised that there had to be more people who would love to ride a motorcycle, but didn't know where to begin. Therefore, in 2011 Talan founded The Bike Experience Charity, the first charity in the world to teach disabled people how to ride a motorcycle. Since then, various other countries have copied the charity's ethos and have their own not-for-profit organisations helping disabled people to enjoy the freedom of two wheels. Since that time he has helped over 450 disabled people to increase their self belief and self confidence by achieving something that they have considered impossible.

Over the past five years he has volunteered as an Athlete Mentor for The True Athlete Project. The charity matches elite performers (Olympian/Paralympian/World Class athletes) with young athletes in a year long mentoring pairing. He acts as both a mentor for athletes and a mentor liaison for a group of other

mentors. His mentees have included GB representatives in Swimming, Archery, Fencing and Boccia, along with Paris 2024 Gold medal winning Paralympian.

In recognition of Talan's achievements he has been awarded an Honorary Masters in Sporting Excellence from Chichester University. He was voted BANES Sports Personality in 2010 and was part of the London 2012 Olympic Torch Relay and the Paris 2024 Paralympic Flame Relay.

Timeline and Achievements

8 March 2003 - Run over by a car and paralysed from the chest down. Given a 30% chance of survival, told he would spend two years in hospital due to severity of injuries.

20 March 2003 - Makes a claim to learn to ski and get into the GB Team.

26 Sep 2003 - Leaves hospital after only 6.5 months.

Feb 2004 - First ski trip with Back Up in Winter Park after being paralysed for just 11 months

March 2004 - Wins Bath Half Marathon (Wheelchair division)

April 2004 - Selected to join GB Disabled Ski Team (Development Squad)

Dec 2004 - First race for GB at Pitztal, Austria

June 2006 - First Paraplegic in history to be retained on active service in the Royal Navy

Sep 2006 - First paraplegic to get to the edge of the Victoria Falls

March 2010 - Represents GB at Vancouver 2010 Winter Paralympics (top placed GB Male sitting skier in GS and Super G)

Dec 2010 - Wins ERUOPA CUP Super G at Pitztal

2010-2011 Winter Season - European Champion Super G

May 2011 - Founds The Bike Experience Charity

June 2012 - First Paraplegic in history to race a motorcycle in an official able-bodied motorcycle race

Feb 2013 - Silver medal in Para-SBX

Aug 2015 - Wins 600cc World Cup (Paralysed Class)

2016 season - Competes in Porsche Club Championship (First paralysed person in history to ever hold Car and Motorcycle race licences)

Mar 2017 - First Paraplegic in history to become a qualified ACU Race Instructor and teach able-bodied motorcycle racers

Sep 2018 - Wins 600cc World Cup (Paralysed Class)

Jul 2019 - Gains Solo Gliders Pilots Licence

Aug 2019 - Sets fastest lap of IOM TT course (Paralysed Racer) - 90mph average

Aug 2021 - British Barebow Champion (Masters)

Sep 2021 - Surrey County Champion Barebow (Sets new County record)

Prior to 2003

Talan Skeels-Piggins grew up in Cornwall, and attended Truro School. At school he was made Prefect and was Captain of Hockey and Head of Sailing. He had a passion for sport at an early age and represented the school at Rugby, Football, Hockey, Tennis, Badminton, Sailing and Windsurfing. He

Captained the 1st XI Hockey to County Champions. Played for Truro 1st XI Hockey team and represented Cornwall U18 Hockey. He won the U18 Cornwall Windsurfing Championship and was a Windsurfing Instructor in his holidays.

After leaving school (and having a gap year sailing and working) he joined the Royal Navy as a Midshipman in Jan 1991. During his time he served on both surface ships and submarines. As a Lieutenant, he finished his career as the Fighter Controller onboard HMS YORK, part of the 3rd Destroyer Squadron. He travelled from the Arctic Circle to the Falklands, from the Caribbean to Singapore, and included deployments to the Gulf. Whilst in the RN he was usually the Sports Officer onboard and represented ships in Rugby, Tennis, Basketball, Sailing. He was also selected for the RN Ski Team having finished fourth overall in the 1995 RN ski championships (his first ever ski race - beating over half of the established RN ski team).

Leaving the RN in 1996 he traveled around Australia before returning to the UK and training at Chichester University (1998 - 2002) to become a PE teacher. At Uni he represented the university in Rugby, Football and Hockey.

After graduating he joined St Laurence School as a PE teacher in September 2002. He was paralysed in March 2003.

In Nov 2002 Talan had joined the Royal Navy Reserves as a Lieutenant, based at HMS FLYING FOX in Bristol. He continued to serve until 2010 when commitments to the GB Para-Alpine ski team became too much.