

Who is Lucie Bouron?

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Name: Lucie Bouron

Age: 15

Sport: Table tennis

- How did you begin on your path as an athlete?

I was born with a complex range of conditions/disabilities including an extremely rare skin condition. They just kept being added to the pile throughout my childhood. Then when I was 8 I was diagnosed with Brittle bones, fibrous dysplasia and chronic pain syndrome. This was when I had to start using a wheelchair; then when I was 11 I was thrown into the world of sport. I absolutely loved it. I've always been positive about what I go through, as I don't see the point in complaining. But if anyone finds it difficult to cope (everyone does sometimes, even me) I would recommend getting involved in some kind of sport. My sport career started at Stoke Mandeville through WheelPower Primary Camps, National Junior Games and Junior Camps, not only did I find out that I could get involved in sport but I also met other people (both young and not so young with disabilities. These are the type of friends that stay with you through life. I started off by playing every sport possible and I became good at a few of them. As the years went by, I played fewer sports and started to specialise. Wheelchair racing, basketball and table tennis were and are my passion. I spent a lot of time on racing; started to work my way to the top then I had problems with my classification because of the range of conditions I have. Then I started playing table tennis and basketball a lot more and realized I enjoyed these just as much. I now fill my days with as much sport as possible!

- What drives you?

My passion for sport drives me. I love sport; if I could play sport 24/7 I would be incredibly happy. I am also very competitive; I like challenges – sport provides me with challenges. I also love sport because it shows to the rest of the world that disabled people are actually the same as everyone else. They aren't stupid or incapable. We just do things in a different way.

- What does success mean to you?

Success doesn't necessarily mean winning. Yes, winning is amazing and what many people dream of – but success comes in many different ways. If I were to even represent my country at the Paralympics I would count that as successful, I don't necessarily have to win a medal. Even something like achieving a target or goal, I would consider to be successful. Inspiring other people to get involved in sport and helping them I believe to be a success as well.

- Who/ what has influenced you, and how?

Many people influence me, no one specific. People who push themselves to achieve what they want to achieve. People who have made something out of their life, despite their challenges. One person that inspired from the first day I participated in sport is Ade Adepitan. He is my role model in sport. He has played so much sport in his life, but also has been a TV presenter which shows people disabled people are able to do a job like that. One other thing I like is that he has helped other children get involved in sport through his success; he's coached me for wheelchair tennis and we've even had a game of tennis! He wants other people to experience the passion he has for sport.

- How inclusive has your experience of sport been? (In terms of funding, opportunities, facilities, and attitudes)

In my experience, you have to work hard to find out how to get involved in disabled sport and where to get involved in it. It isn't advertised much or least in the right places. My mum was a blessing as she spent a long

time contacting people to find out how I could get involved in disability sport, when I started to need a wheelchair. Funding is very hard to come by in disabled sport (even more so when you are over 18- I have friends who are no 1 in the UK in their sports and play internationally as juniors and funded – they have turned 18. lost their funding and this means they cannot continue with their sport, which I personally thinking is silly as disabled people need more equipment (and more expensive equipment at that) and have to travel on average at least 40 miles to find appropriate coaching, training and team sports, than able bodied athletes. Facilities are okay to find out about, if you do your research thoroughly.

- How do people react when they find out you play sport?

Is there a difference between the responses of disabled or non-disabled people? Is there a difference if they do not know you are disabled?

Sometimes people are surprised that I play sport; and even more surprised that I compete at a high level. It's as if they have an image of a disabled person – and every disabled person is the same as another. Disabled people aren't surprised at all unless they are young and sometimes think that they can't join in. Non-disabled people are surprised, but in a good way. Their response is normally 'wow, that's so cool'.

- Why do you play the sport you do?

I love sports that are fast and challenging. I also play wheelchairbasketball and am a wheelchair racer. I love having challenges in my sport and seeing that I'm improving. Sport makes me forget about my disabilities, monthly hospital visits and ongoing treatments, which is a blessing. I would recommend sport to anyone with a disability; it improves your life so much!

- What do you want to achieve in the future?

I want to represent my country in International competitions. I would love to go to the Paralympics and win a medal or two for my country! ☑

I would also like to work in the sport industry. I want sport to be in my life 24/7 – I would like to give something back to sport as it has given me so much, and I would love to inspire other disabled young people to get involved in sport.

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