

Nathan Young GB Deaf Swimmer

“As a GB Deaf swimmer I have competed and represented my country 6 times internationally. The highlight of my career being a Bronze medalist at the 23rd Deaflympics in Samsun, Turkey in 2017.

After countless years of witnessing and competing against fully funded swimmers from other countries I've seen the constant support these athletes receive from their nations and how this impacts not only their performance but also their motivation and hopes for the future. It's a very different experience to myself. Firstly, I would guess 99% of our country has never heard of the Deaflympics.

Why? Why is the second oldest multi sporting event in the world is not known to the majority of Britons? First the Olympics was created which was then followed by the Deaflympics in 1924 and then 36 years later came the Paralympics in 1960.

Due to this lack of awareness, growing up I did not have any deaf role models, did not know deaf sport even existed till I was 15. I always imagine how different my life would have been if had that one deaf person to look up to and say I want to belike them.

Deaf Athletes have constantly looked at our Paralympics peers and see the amazing support they have received. Our Government and UK Sport fund GB Olympic and Paralympic pathways for our athletes and their competitions but those under the DeaflympicsGB umbrella receive no funding or just as important, no acknowledgement.

The Prime Minister and Culture Secretary announced £232 million investment for GB athletes for Paris 2024 and Deaflympics received £0 again towards Tokyo 2025.



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The support and training network they receive and the continuous superior alliance guiding them to their future dreams and goals. That is something I do not have and have never had.

Individual sports organisations have told us that they are unable to support deaf athletes due to them following government guidelines. Isolating a whole disability, a theme so common to the deaf community.

For the last 10 years have I trained 20+ hours a week, attended university and worked - all the while having to fund all my training and competition costs, relying heavily on my parents and those who kindly donate. I have put a potential role in the Audiology profession on hold to continue to represent my country and inspire as many deaf children as I can. All because I am deaf.

At the World Deaf Swimming Championships (SC), I came 4th, and the athletes who finished 1st, 2nd and 3rd, represented countries with government funding. GB deaf athletes' potential is limited because of the sacrifice made to training due to having to fundraise. The mental impact of knowing that these athletes are funded and supported to the highest level and most importantly their country treat them fairly and equally is irreversible and so wrong.

Deaf Athletes for years have missed out and been treated like a fallen branch, left on the ground open to the elements. This cannot be allowed to continue. I want our future deaf children to look up to their Deaflympians. To have hope that when standing on the block, competing in their first club swimming gala that they have a dream that one day they may themselves compete in the Deaflympics. Most importantly that their country is behind them, respected and proud.”



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