

57-year-old Belgian athlete proves alpine skiing not only for the young

By Global Times

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Belgian alpine skier Linda le Bon wins the fifth place in the Alpine Combined for the Visually Impaired on March 7, 2022. She is the oldest of all the competitors in the alpine ski events at the Beijing Paralympic Games. Photo: Screenshot from CCTV

When Belgian alpine skier Linda le Bon sped downhill alongside her daughter, who stepped in at the last minute to be her guide, at the Beijing Paralympic Winter Games on Monday, she proved to all ski lovers that the sport is not just for the young.

Born in 1964, the 57-year-old Le Bon is the oldest of all the competitors in the alpine ski events at the Games in Beijing. She won the fifth place in the Alpine Combined for the Visually Impaired on Monday.

"I'm almost in my 60s, so I have to be careful. I can't really see where the future goes," Le Bon said after Monday's competition. Yet she told the media that she wanted to let other people know that skiing is not just limited to the young generation.

Earlier on Saturday, Le Bon took 6th place in the downhill, and came in at No.7 in the Super-G for the Visually Impaired on Sunday.

During Saturday's downhill, Le Bon was guided by her daughter, who stayed meters ahead of her mother during the competition.

In the ski events for the visually impaired, ski guides play a very important role

in serving as the eyes for the athletes. During each competition, a guide will begin before the athlete, and two of them will communicate through a walkie-talkie to provide all the information that the athlete needs such as speed and terrain changes.

The first Belgian athlete to be selected for the Paralympic Games, Le Bon is making her Paralympic debut at Beijing 2022. She began training as a visually impaired skier around 15 months ago.

"It is very difficult and cold, but the whole process is quite nice," she noted in an interview after the competition on Monday.

Her original guide was Winter Olympian Pierre Couquelet. However, due to an administrative error, he wasn't able to be at the event with Le Bon, so her daughter took up the role on the day before her competition.

"I'm very happy that I could [do] this with my daughter who is 22. My daughter is my new guide since four days [ago]. We never skied together before, but it was very great," Le Bon said after the race on Monday.

Talking about the impairment free facilities in the competition zone Le Bon told CCTV in an interview that they are "very good and very convenient."

Le Bon has been participating in alpine ski events since she was in her 20s. She was diagnosed with visual impairment in 2012. Before that, she was a ski coach.

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