



Linda Le Bon guided by last-minute replacement: her daughter

Belgium's vision impaired skier Le Bon, 57, raced the downhill at the Winter Paralympics with her daughter stepping in to guide her.

 6 min

By Ed Knowles

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Paralympic Games



(Getty Images)



Linda Le Bon finished an emotional downhill para alpine skiing race guided by her daughter who stepped in at the last minute as a reserve on Saturday (5 March).

The Belgian veteran is 57 but still very competitive in the vision impaired category. She had finished in second place in the downhill at the recent 2022 Para Snow Sports World Championships in Lillehammer, Norway.

Her original guide was **Pierre Couquelet**, a 1984 Winter Olympian in Sarajevo, but an administrative error left Le Bon without her first choice on the first day of competition at the **Beijing 2022 Winter Paralympic Games**.

Up stepped her daughter, **Ulla Gilot**, to take up guiding duties.

The new partnership hampered Le Bon's medal hopes and she finished sixth overall behind Slovak star **Henrieta Farkasova** who claimed her 10th Paralympic gold medal.

But the family experience was unforgettable.

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



(2022 Getty Images)

The pair have **barely had any time to train together**. When Le Bon first heard the news that she couldn't have her first-choice guide, she was upset.

"I was very angry in the very first moments. Very, very, very angry and disappointed and everything... But, at each training day that we have, [we] will be better. Unfortunately, the speed [events] are the best for me, and [we are] starting with this."

The results may not be what Le Bon had been dreaming about for the past four years, but for Gilot it was **a day to remember**.

"I've skied races before, but I've not skied with my mum behind me, I'll say that's a bit exciting! And it's a great experience and I'm happy to be here."

Farkasova celebrates 10th Paralympic title

Henrieta Farkasova completed a hat-trick of triumphs in the women's vision impaired downhill to cement her reputation as **one of the greats of para alpine skiing**.



The 35-year-old had three knee operations after the 2019 World Championships and, like Le Bon, had to strike up a new partnership ahead of the Games.

She added, "My guide had an injury one month ago at the world championships and I needed to find a new guide. Martin (Motyka) is very good and I am happy I can race with him."



(2022 Getty Images)

Paralympic bronze medallist Millie Knight praises Linda Le Bon



Bright was full of praise for Le Bon and her longevity in the sport.

“Linda's performance in the World Championships was unbelievable. She was rapid. It's a shame that she has not been able to have that this time. But [being 57 and still competing] that is an incredible feat.”



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Knight has also beaten the odds to be on the start line with her guide **Brett Wild** after a series of injuries and concussions meant she was questioning her participation in the sport.

“When I heard Brett scream, I just knew that it was a good result and it's one of the best runs that we've ever had in our lives.

“We came into these Games thinking that we would never win another medal in our lives. And here we are with our first race and a bronze medal. I never thought that we would be in this position again with the concussions and crashes that we had.”

Fellow Brit **Menna Fitzpatrick** finished in fifth place. She also faced a guide-related setback in the lead-up to the Games.



and we would love to be here with her. But I've got Gary [Smith]. He's a great and really experienced guy."

Katie Guest is the sister of Charlie who competed for Team GB as an Olympic alpine skier at Beijing 2022.



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Ebba Aarsjoe's bittersweet bronze in the women's downhill standing



“I am an emotional person, but it's just for now. I was aiming in our training for the gold and I didn't make it. So, it hurts. But still, I am proud I got a medal.”

But don't expect to see Ebba still lining up like Linda Le Bon at the age of 57.

“As long as my leg is OK with it, I'm taking it year by year. Hopefully, I will do another Paralympics. I cannot do this for many years because of the leg. And definitely not when I am over fifty!”

Mollie Jepsen of Canada took gold with **ZHANG Mengqiu** of China in second place after French favourite Marie Bochet lost her ski early on.

The Chinese home crowd were especially pleased to welcome three Paralympic medals in total at the first day of para alpine skiing for Beijing 2022. China had never won a single Paralympic medal in the discipline before today.

“I am very happy, because I did not think I could get the second place today. My original goal today was to finish third,” Zhang said.



(2022 Getty Images)



NEW ZEALAND

Weeks after Zoi Sadowski-Synnott won New Zealand's first Winter Olympic gold medal, and Nico Porteous followed her to the top of the podium, **Corey Peters** has secured more Kiwi glory on the slopes.

Despite not competing internationally since the 2019 World Championships, in part due to Covid restrictions in his homeland, 38-year-old Peters won the men's sitting downhill by 1.26 seconds from Norway's reigning world champion **Jesper Pedersen**.

The PyeongChang 2018 bronze medallist said, "I put down probably the run of my life, and it showed on the scoreboard."

Referring to his rivals, most of whom are in their early 20s, Peters added, "For me to be able to show them I've still got some pace and can still do it, it's a good feeling. I can still hang with the young guys and maybe you get better with age in the downhill."

MORII Taiki of Japan took bronze ahead of USA's defending champion **Andrew Kurka**.

Peters' compatriot **Adam Hall** was 19th in the standing downhill as France's **Arthur Bauchet** took gold.




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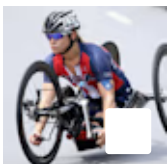
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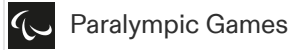


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