

Despite tragedy and pain, Janine Shepherd pushed herself to the limit, defied a medical prognosis that she was likely to die and turned a dream to fly into a reality. A promising athlete, Janine became a partial paraplegic after being hit by a car. However, through determination and willingness to take risks, she managed to cheat death and reach incredible heights.

Instead of representing my country at the Winter Olympics—the dream of every athlete—I found myself in a spinal unit with extensive and life-threatening injuries.

After major spinal reconstruction and almost six months in hospital, I was sent home to my parents' new house in a wheelchair...

Sitting at the kitchen table with my mum and hearing an aeroplane fly over one day, the seed was planted.

“That’s it, Mum,” I said casually, “I’m going to learn to fly.”

As ridiculous as it seemed, it became a driving passion. It was flying that was to get me back on my feet again. It was flying that was to become my dream.

I had nothing to lose so I threw everything I had into flying. At times I was terrified by the thought, what if I couldn’t do it? But then again, I told myself, what if I could?

Each new manoeuvre took time and patience to get right but flying aerobatics gave me an outlet for pushing myself as far as I could, to be the best pilot I could. It brought me back to life and gave me something to work for.

I might not have been able to walk properly, but that didn’t matter, because I could fly!



Literal Comprehension

- 1 What put a stop to Janine's dream to be an athlete?
- 2 What was the original prognosis after the accident?
- 3 What triggered her desire to learn to fly?
- 4 What got her "back on her feet again"?
- 5 What thought helped her overcome the terror that she sometimes experienced when flying?
- 6 How did she get each new manoeuvre right?
- 7 What did flying aerobatics help Janine do?

Inferential Comprehension

- 1 What words could be used to describe Janine Shepherd's spirit?
- 2 Why did Janine's initial desire to learn to fly seem ridiculous?
- 3 What words could be substituted for the word "manoeuvre"?
- 4 In what ways did Janine push the boundaries?

Reflection

- 1 How important do you think it would be for a person, who faced the same type of injuries as Janine, to find new interests to pursue?
- 2 What are some of the challenges Janine would have faced when she first returned to her parents' home?
- 3 If Janine lived life by a particular motto, what might it be?
- 4 How do you feel about people setting out to achieve what others believe is impossible?



Activity Card 1

Some of the earliest aircrafts were designed around the box kite. Look up pictures of box kites and, keeping in mind that kites need to be light and able to catch the wind, write a procedural text that outlines how to construct a box kite. Include materials required, numbered steps and a detailed, labelled diagram.

Activity Card 2

History was made when the knowledge of aviation combined with that of medicine, and the Royal Flying Doctors Service commenced. Research this Australian service and draw up a time line that records its history from its inception to the present day.

Activity Card 3

After Janine Shepherd's accident her parents were told she may not survive and that if she did, she would probably never walk again. Through resilience and courage Janine regained partial use of her legs. Imagine you were a bystander the day she piloted her first solo flight and you were eager to tell others about her achievement. Use the text to help you write a newspaper report that captures the moment and explains to readers what you witnessed.

Activity Card 4

Millicent Bryant, Charles Kingsford-Smith, Lawrence Hargrave and Nancy Bird-Walton all pushed the boundaries of Australian aviation. Research one of these individuals and compile a detailed profile about them and their achievements.

The Question of Change

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7

If you look back to the origins of many competitive sports, you will see they were male-dominated for a long time. In the case of the early Olympics, women were not even allowed to be spectators, let alone compete.

Over time though, the role of women in society began to change and with this came a changed attitude towards women's sporting abilities and their right to compete in various arenas. Women started competing in individual and team sports but only against other women, not against males.

Today, the majority of sports are still played in that way—male competitions separate from female competitions—and there are still people who question women's participation in certain sports. These people, while accepting of women's involvement in sports such as swimming, tennis and hockey, have **reservations** about women being involved in contact sports such as wrestling, boxing and football.

However, there are women determined to prove themselves against any would-be opponent, regardless of their gender. They are adamant they can compete at the same level as their male **counterparts** and believe they should be allowed to take part in the same competitions.

In support of this argument, in April 2008, Danica Patrick of America became the first-ever female Indycar winner when she won the Indy Japan 300 race. This historical victory saw her defeat her fellow male competitors to stand on the victory podium. Three years prior, Danica had become the first female ever to lead the Indianapolis 500, although she eventually finished that competition in fourth place.

When asked if there was any disadvantage for women in the male-dominated sport of motor-racing, she replied, "I think that the disadvantage to overcome was just that I hadn't won yet." Such was her determination and belief in her abilities.

So, can women compete equally with men in sport? Should there be more opportunities for mixed competitions? As we contemplate these questions it is also worth considering whether things are different when an athlete's drive is to be *their* best, as compared to when their ultimate aim is to be *the* best?

Literal Comprehension

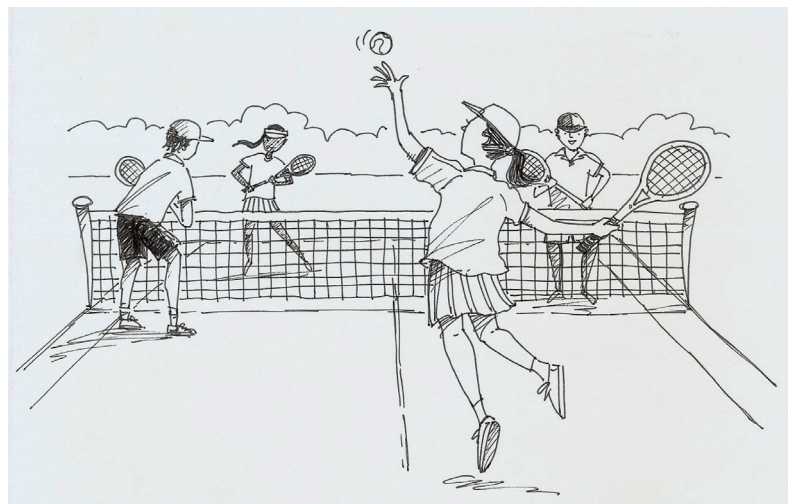
- 1 What stance was taken during the early Olympics that proved sport was male-dominated?
- 2 How are most sporting competitions separated?
- 3 What reservations do some people have about the involvement of women in sport?
- 4 What historical event took place in April 2008?
- 5 What did Danica Patrick regard as her disadvantage?
- 6 In what different ways may athletes be driven?

Inferential Comprehension

- 1 What is the focus of this discussion text?
- 2 What was the link between the role of women in society and women in sport?
- 3 What did Danica Patrick mean by her response to the question about disadvantages for women in motor-racing?
- 4 Give your own definitions of the text words “dominated”, “counterparts”, and “podium”

Reflection

- 1 Do you believe women should be allowed to compete in all sports? Give reasons for your answer.
- 2 If there were three sports in which women would never be allowed to participate, what do you think they should be? Why?
- 3 Men and women have separate competitions in many sports, such as golf, tennis and basketball. Do you think they should compete against each other instead? Outline reasons for your answer.



Activity Card 1

Sport has changed over time. Rules have been altered and developed. New games have been invented. Membership regulations have been revised.

Imagine a new sport has been introduced throughout the region in which your school competes. This sport is only allowed to be played by either boys or girls (not both). Prepare a speech that you would make to the school principal, teachers and students giving your opinion of this rule.

Activity Card 2

Choose a competitive sport and research its history. Create a fact file about your sport that outlines when and where it was invented, rules, equipment, and any changes that have taken place over the years including who was/is permitted to play.

Activity Card 3

Performing in front of an audience or group of spectators can be a daunting experience. It can take great courage and a huge effort to perform at peak level. So often, boundaries are pushed by people determined to achieve or prove something to themselves and others, and in doing so they push their personal boundaries, too. Write a narrative about someone who goes to incredible lengths to push their personal boundaries in order to fulfil a dream.

Activity Card 4

Create ten slogans designed to inspire people to believe in themselves, to take risks and to push boundaries.