



Wairakei Resort Taupo's Jayne Craike celebrated for Paralympic Successes

Benn Bathgate, originally published by [Stuff, June 24 2019](#)

Pioneering Taupō equestrian, three-time Paralympian and Waiakei Resort Taupo Food & Beverage Supervisor Jayne Craike was among a group of 18 Paralympians recognised at an event to mark 50 years of Paralympic history.

Craike joined fellow Paralympians at the Hamilton event to acknowledge the 209 Paralympians that have represented New Zealand since 1968 - scooping a staggering 221 medals between them.

Craike competed at three Paralympic Games; Atlanta in 1996, Sydney in 2000 and Athens in 2004, taking home gold and silver medals from the Sydney games, which she described as the high point of her sporting career.

"I had this surreal feeling, like the Matrix movies, where everything slows down," she said.

"It was just like that. I could hear every footfall of the horse. It was a five-and-a-half-minute test and it felt like half an hour... when I finished and looked up, suddenly I saw there were all these thousands of people in the arena that I hadn't noticed when I came in, such was my focus."

Craike's career, which includes more than 40 national and regional championship titles, is even more remarkable as there was a time when she believed she would never ride again, and possibly not even walk.

She was 17-years-old when the horse she was riding reared and flipped backwards in a cobblestone yard, smashing her right leg underneath it.

What followed was a blur of 54 operations, infections, skin grafts and a leg that would never be fully functional again.

She said at that time, if anyone had suggested to her the sporting success to come, she would have thought they were mad.

However, in 1992 Craike made the decision to have her damaged leg amputated below the knee.

Ten days later, at the pony club she had been teaching at, she was back in the saddle.

"It was the first time I could sit on a horse again, so I did, and away I went."

She said that first ride felt "weird" as she didn't yet have her false leg.

"The more I developed as a rider, I realised you don't need a huge amount of leg. You need to train your horse properly."

That horse, Showfields Crusader, sparks the one regret about her decision two years ago to retire.

"I lost my best friend," she said.

She said she took her time to find the right home for her old friend, and the process was "a good closure for me".

She also said she doesn't have any regrets as the Tokyo 2020 event looms.

"I've made peace with that. I've achieved a huge amount, been all over the world. It was a good time for me to retire."

She also revealed the iron will it takes to secure Paralympic Gold success.

"You have to believe in yourself, even when things are down. You've got to be a glass half full person."

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