



# 8,000 Holes

## How the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay Lost its Way

All proceeds go to the Brittle Bone Society

Paul Bradshaw, Carol Miers  
and users of Help Me Investigate

# **8000 Holes: How the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay Lost its Way**

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# **Part 1: Where did the torchbearer places go?**

Jack Binstead is one of the UK's most promising young athletes: a wheelchair racer in with a chance of competing in the next Paralympic Games. Born with brittle bone disease he has, says his mother Penny, broken 64 bones in his body over just 15 years.

"At the age of nine he was a very down young boy," she explains. "He was very overweight - he didn't know which way to go. But when he went to a taster session for children with special needs, the borough's Head of Sports saw in Jack that he would be good at wheelchair racing. He recommended that Jack try wheelchair racing at a local track in Kingston called Kingsmeadow."

Jack took part in a few races - and won a few - and became hooked. "He wanted to go further. There were other athletes that were able to give Jack confidence to be the person he is. That was really good for him - it gave him self-esteem. Training twice a week helped him lose weight, he started to change and he became more of a confident person.

"Now his role model is David Weir, who will be competing in the Paralympics. They train together on the same track in Richmond Park, with the same trainer three or four times a week, and hopefully he will go on and be like David in 2016."

When the first public nomination campaign opened Jack was in hospital with a fractured hip and a broken femur. A nurse approached Penny and told her she would like to nominate Jack to carry the torch.

“I said, ‘Oh that would be really good’, and it just spiralled from there. The head of a children’s charity attached to the hospital - Momentum - she wanted to nominate him; the Head of the Brittle Bone Society - which is based in Scotland - nominated him. There is a Lord McAvoy from the society who nominated Jack too.” In the end 20 people nominated Jack to carry the Olympic torch - the maximum number allowed.

Jack’s nomination made it past the initial stages of a tough selection process. His story couldn’t be more inspirational: ranked eighth fastest in wheelchair speeds in the UK, he won a Children of Courage award in 2007 and the mini London marathon three times for the Kingston borough - twice with injuries: once with a broken leg and once with ribs broken.

“We have always brought him up to enjoy life and not to be frightened about what could happen,” says Penny. “Many children with brittle bone are wrapped up with cotton wool because their parents did not want them to actually feel the pain. But he has done everything that he wanted to do and that has made him the character that he is today.”

In November 2011 his family was informed that he had been ‘pre-selected’ for the Olympic Torch Relay. A few months later they were told that he was “down to the final

few" - but by May the long months of anticipation were at an end. He was not selected.

"Jack said: 'How come I was not picked?' and I said, well Jack obviously there are lots of inspirational people in the Borough and they were picked and obviously that is fine, it is not a problem.

"But then we found out that only three people who live in the Borough were picked. I think there is actually one guy from Dubai who is going to carry it."

This is the story of how Jack, and tens of thousands of others with inspirational stories, missed out on the opportunity to carry the Olympic torch. Of how promises made by the Olympic torch relay organisers LOCOG were not met, and how - at almost every stage of the allocation process - torchbearer places were given to board members, or to executives at commercial partners, awarded to staff for sales performance, to politicians and diplomats, journalists and media bosses - while the organisers failed to enforce their own guidelines.

It is the story of how the 'guy from Dubai' - an executive director of an Olympic energy supplier - got to carry the torch, along with half of that company's executive board. Of how two of the biggest names in retail travelled 40 miles to exchange a 'torch kiss' while a local hurdler was left out. And of how those that did carry the torch with inspirational stories found the experience of a lifetime "soured" when they realised that those carrying the torch alongside them had no such stories to tell.

## A moment to shine - for some

“The search begins today to find 8,000 inspirational people to carry the Olympic Flame on its journey around the UK next year.” As LOCOG launched the public nomination campaign at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London on May 18 2011 they appeared confident in what the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay would represent.

Each of the 8,000 torchbearers would “have a story of personal achievement and/or contribution to their local community,” LOCOG [said<sup>1</sup>](#), while half of torchbearers would be under 25.

90% of the 8,000 places would be “made available to the public”. The first stage of this process - launched the same day - was the ‘Moment to Shine’ campaign, LOCOG’s own initiative to allocate 2,012 of the 8,000 places.

To help judge and award places, LOCOG [appointed<sup>2</sup>](#) 12 regional panels made up of representatives from local government, sport, culture, education, and the voluntary and youth sectors. Importantly, these would not be told the names of the nominees, meaning that torchbearers would be selected on the strength of their nomination story alone.

That left another 5,988 places - three quarters of the total. Of these, 1,360 each would be awarded through public

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.london2012.com/news/articles/2011/05/search-begins-for-8-000-inspirational-people-to-carry-th.html>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.london2012.com/paralympics/media-centre/article=next-steps-confirmed-for-london-2012-moment-to-shine-tor.html>

campaigns by three companies which had paid millions for the rights to be ‘Presenting Partners’ - a reported<sup>3</sup> \$5-15m each at the previous Olympics. These were longstanding Olympic sponsors Coca Cola and Samsung, and newcomers Lloyds TSB. No one else could allocate torchbearer places publicly.

In the wake of the launch The Daily Telegraph published a guide<sup>4</sup> to becoming a torchbearer. “There are only 7,200 places openly available to all UK residents,” the article explained, “so competition will be strong”. In fact, the number ‘openly available’ was much lower. Almost a quarter of the torchbearer places - 1,908 in all - were to be allocated through channels outside of the open campaigns. And even within the public nomination campaigns, things were about to get complicated.

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93389797>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/8520558/London-2012-Olympics-torch-relay-how-do-I-become-a-torchbearer.html>