

= Millie Knight =

Millie Knight (born 15 January 1999) is a Paralympic athlete and student who competes at international level for ParalympicsGB in alpine skiing in the slalom and giant slalom events with a sighted guide , currently Jennifer Kehoe . When Knight was one year old , she contracted toxocariasis , diagnosed at age three , and which resulted in the loss of most of her vision by the age of six . She joined the Great Britain paralympic skiing team in 2012 , and progressed to compete at international @-@ level events . Knight and Ferrier have competed together since February 2013 , winning several times . Knight was the flagbearer at the 2014 Winter Paralympics opening ceremony , her debut Paralympics , in Sochi where , at the age of 15 , she was the youngest person ever to compete for ParalympicsGB at the Winter Paralympic games .

= = Early life and education = =

Knight was born on 15 January 1999 in Canterbury , Kent . She lived on a farm with many animals , and at the age of one , she contracted the disease toxocariasis . When Knight was three , doctors examining her eyes noticed scars on her right retina . A few trips to Great Ormond Street resulted in a diagnosis of toxocariasis , a condition developed when humans , most often young children , inadvertently consume the eggs of Toxocara , a roundworm parasite found in cat and dog faeces , which can in turn contaminate soil . The parasites , in rare circumstances such as Knight 's , migrate into the eyes , leading to vision problems . Her retina was treated with steroids and regular antibiotics . The disease was dormant until she was six , when she lost much of her vision , resulting in her being only partially sighted ; in her left eye she has 10 @-@ 20 % peripheral vision , and in her right eye she has 5 % .

As of 2014 Knight is studying for her GCSEs in tandem with her sporting career . She is enrolled at King 's School in Canterbury ; her first year studying there was 2013 @-@ 14 . The school allowed Knight two months away to compete at the Sochi Paralympics .

= = Skiing career = =

In 2006 at the age of seven , shortly before Knight lost the majority of her sight , she had been to France on a skiing holiday and was encouraged to try the sport by her mother . Her mother was Knight 's first sighted guide until late January 2013 for financial reasons . The pair competed together in visually impaired (VI) races .

In November 2012 , at age 13 , Knight began training with Great Britain 's Paralympic development squad . She raced at the Europa Cup in slalom and giant slalom. in spring 2013 . Her sighted guide at the Games , Rachael Ferrier , joined Knight in 2013 . Ferrier , who was 18 when she competed at Sochi , was a Glasgow Ski Instructor and racer who had been skiing since the age of seven prior to meeting Knight . Together the pair won two silver medals that year in the International Paralympic Committee Alpine Ski races at Landgraaf . In December 2013 , the pair won a medal at Pitztal , and then went on to win two gold medals at the annual International Paralympic Committee Alpine Skiing event , the RollRinn in Innsbruck , Austria , in January 2014 .

Knight competes in class B2 due to her lack of complete vision , a classification between being blind and visually impaired . She has been coached by Euan Bennet since 2011 , but is also assisted by national coach Tony McAllister . Knight is sponsored by SportsAid , and featured in their " I Will " advertising campaign .

= = 2014 Paralympics = =

Knight 's debut Paralympics was the 2014 Winter Paralympics in Sochi ; competing at the age of 15 made her the youngest ParalympicsGB competitor at any Winter Paralympics . She was the flag bearer at the opening ceremony for ParalympicsGB , carrying the flag at the Fisht Olympic Stadium , an honour Knight described as " a surprise " . She competed for ParalympicsGB in the

slalom on 14 March , completing both of her runs , and finishing fifth , and competed in the giant slalom on 16 March , again finishing fifth . There was not any significant expectation on Knight at the 2014 Paralympics , as her target is the 2018 Winter Paralympics in Pyeongchang .

Following the Sochi games , it was announced in April 2014 that Knight would participate in the Queen 's Baton Relay on 5 June 2014 , carrying the Baton in Kent .

The following year Knight travelled to Canada to compete at the 2015 IPC Alpine Skiing World Championships in Panorama Mountain Village in British Columbia . Her sighted guide from Sochi , Ferrier , had by this time enrolled at university and had left the sport allowing Knight to be reunited with her previous guide Jennifer Kehoe . Prior to the Championships Knight had won two gold medals on the World Cup tour and hopes were high that she may medal in the absence of British Paralympic champion Kelly Gallagher . At Panorama Knight took part in the two technical events , the slalom and giant slalom , as she was still too young to compete in the speed events . In her first event , the giant slalom , Knight took the lead in the first run with a time of 1 : 12 @. @ 90 , but despite bettering this time in her second run with 1 : 11 @. @ 49 , she was beaten into silver medal place by a third of a second by Russia 's Aleksandra Frantseva . Two days later Knight took part in the slalom , winning bronze , Britain 's only two medals of the games .