

Mike Kenny

Name:

Michael Joseph Kenny

Born:

30 January 1945 in Manchester

Childhood

Mike had a sad early life as his Mum died when he was very young. He and his sister were placed into a care home for children without parents. After many years, they both went to live with a foster family. With their love, he went on to do well at school and became an engineer. In 1971, Mike fell from a ladder at work and lost the feeling in his body from the neck down. He would have to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair. At first, he was only able to move his eyes but with his wife's help, he slowly got back some use of his upper body. As he was a keen swimmer before the accident, he was delighted when the hospital suggested getting back into the pool to help him to recover. From then on Mike swam regularly in a local training pool. After a while, he was spotted by Dr Ludwig Guttman (the man who later started the Paralympic Games) and was picked for a disabled swimming team. Eventually, Mike was chosen to go to the 1976 Toronto Paralympic Games in Canada.

Achievements

In Canada, Mike won three gold medals. From there, he went on to win three more golds at Arnhem in 1980,

Olympic Games and Medals

1976 Toronto Games:

3 gold medals (25m backstroke, 25m breaststroke, 25m freestyle)

1980 Arnhem Games:

3 gold medals (25m backstroke, 25m breaststroke, 25m freestyle)

1984 Stoke Mandeville Games:

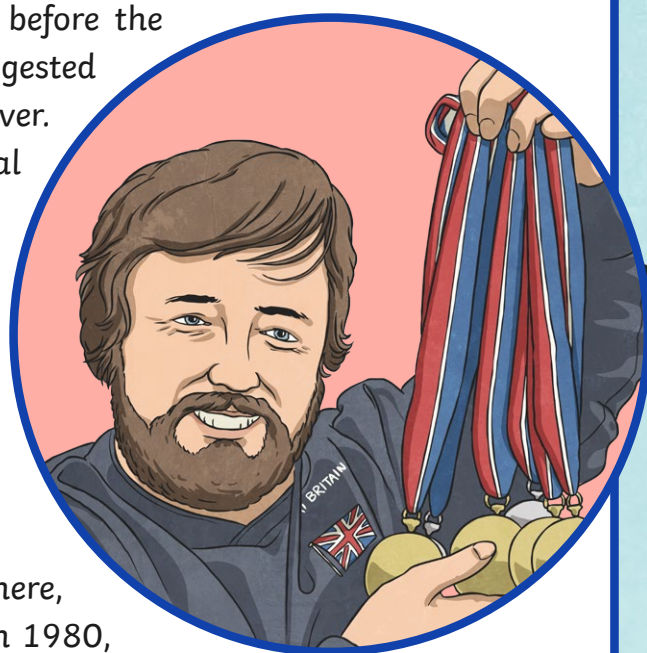
5 gold medals (25m backstroke, 25m breaststroke, 25m freestyle, 100m freestyle, 3x25m medley)

1 silver medal (freestyle medley)

1988 Seoul Games:

5 gold medals (100m freestyle, 25m backstroke, 25m breaststroke, 50m freestyle, 75m individual medley)

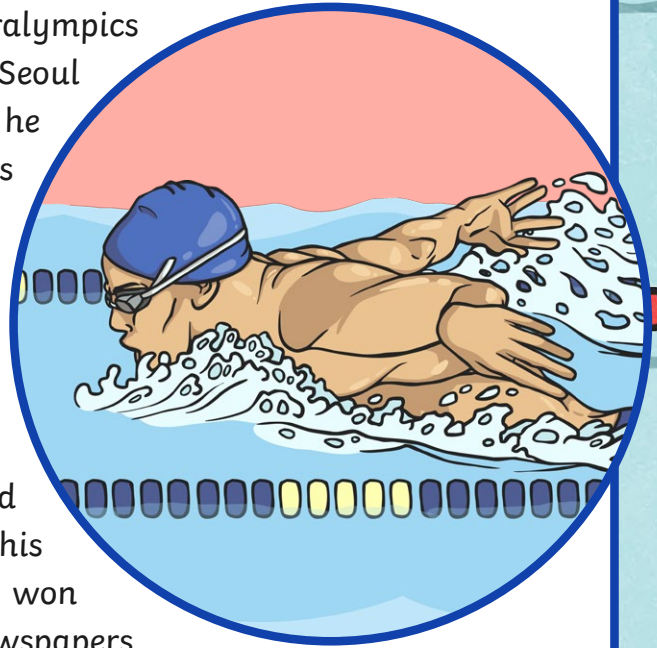
1 silver medal (3 x25m freestyle relay)



and also five golds and a silver when the Paralympics returned to England in 1984. In his last games in Seoul in 1988, not only did he win another six medals, he broke several world records. So many that he says he lost count! Throughout his career, he competed without any funds or prize money, and his wife Marcia acted as his coach and trainer.

The Forgotten Paralympian?

Despite being one of Britain's most successful Paralympians, Mike never became a household name and many people have never heard of his successes. Even on the night in 1976 when he won his first three gold medals, his wife called the newspapers in the UK to tell them but she was told there wasn't enough interest in disabled sports for them to make it a news story. Mike retired in 1988 and just a year after The British Paralympic Association (BPA) was set up. From that point, Paralympic sport started to become much more recognised. In 1989, Mike traveled to Buckingham Palace to receive an MBE in recognition of his services to paraplegic sport. Without a doubt, Mike Kenny paved the way for the many Paralympians that came after him, who today receive the fame they deserve for their achievements. Mike's grandchildren are now working hard to promote their grandfather's name and highlight all that he achieved for Britain in the world of Paralympic swimming.



Mike Kenny Questions

Answer the following questions using full sentences that give as much detail as possible.

1. Why did Mike have a sad childhood?

2. Why did Mike's life change in 1971?

3. Why was Mike delighted when a hospital suggested getting back into a swimming pool to help him recover?

4. How many Paralympic medals did Mike win during his career?

5. Name three places that Mike competed in Paralympic Games.

6. I would describe Mike Kenny as a 'brave' person. Explain why.

7. The text says, 'Mike never became a household name'. What do you think that means?

8. What year was The British Paralympic Association (BPA) set up?

Mike Kenny Answers

1. Why did Mike have a sad childhood?

Mike had a sad early life as his Mum died when he was very young. He and his sister were placed into a care home for children without parents.

2. Why did Mike's life change in 1971?

In 1971, Mike fell from a ladder at work and lost the feeling in his body from the neck down. He would have to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair.

3. Why was Mike delighted when a hospital suggested getting back into a swimming pool to help him recover?

Mike was delighted because he had been a keen swimmer before the accident.

4. How many Paralympic medals did Mike win during his career?

Mike won sixteen gold medals and two silver medals in his Paralympic career.

5. Name three places that Mike competed in Paralympic Games.

Three answers from either Toronto, Seoul, Stoke Mandeville, or Arnhem.

6. I would describe Mike Kenny as a 'brave' person. Explain why.

Pupils' responses may include; he overcame losing his Mum at a young age, he won eighteen Paralympic medals, or he overcame his disability after initially being told he would never regain any feeling in his upper body.

7. The text says, 'Mike never became a household name'. What do you think that means?

It means that people don't really recognise his name and that he's not famous despite his success.

8. What year was The British Paralympic Association (BPA) set up?

The BPA was set up in 1989 - a year after Mike retired.

Mike Kenny

Name:

Michael Joseph Kenny

Born:

30 January 1945 in Manchester

Childhood

Mike had an upsetting early life. His Mum, who was a single parent, sadly died when he was still very young, which meant he was placed in an orphanage with his sister. After many years, they both went to live with a foster family. With their love and support, he went on to do well at school and became an engineer. In 1971, Mike tragically fell from a ladder at work and became paralysed. Initially, he was only able to move his eyes but with his wife's help, he slowly got back some use of his upper body. As he was a keen swimmer before the accident, he was delighted when a hospital physiotherapist suggested getting back into the pool to build up his upper-body strength. From then on, Mike swam regularly in the training pool at Stoke Mandeville. After a while, he was spotted by Dr Ludwig Guttman (who is often referred to as the father of the Paralympic movement) and was picked for a disabled swimming team. Eventually, Mike was chosen to represent Britain at the 1976 Toronto Paralympic Games.

Achievements

In Canada, Mike won three gold medals. From there, he went on to win three more golds at Arnhem in 1980, and

Olympic Games and Medals

1976 Toronto Games:

3 gold medals (25m backstroke, 25m breaststroke, 25m freestyle)

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3 gold medals (25m backstroke, 25m breaststroke, 25m freestyle)

1984 Stoke Mandeville Games:

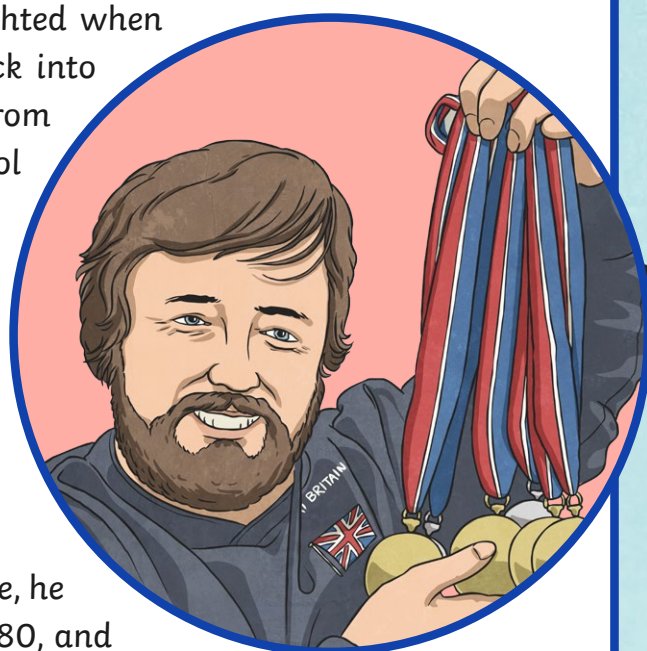
5 gold medals (25m backstroke, 25m breaststroke, 25m freestyle, 100m freestyle, 3x25m medley)

1 silver medal (freestyle medley)

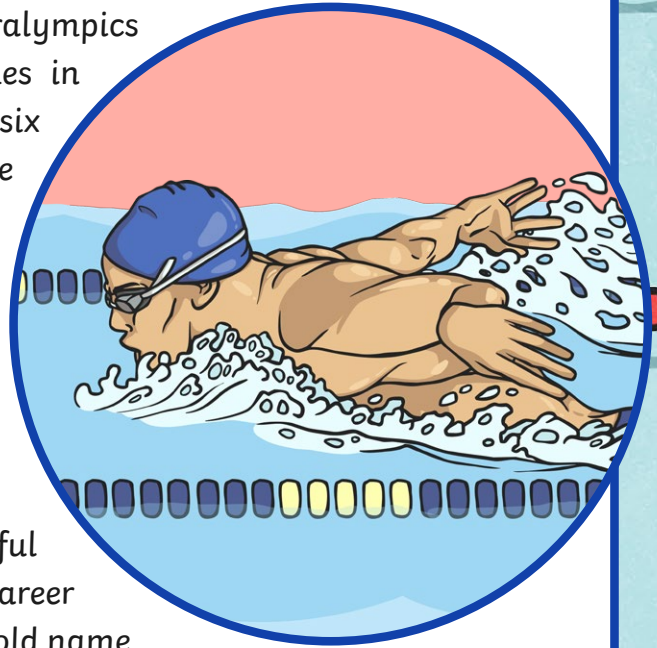
1988 Seoul Games:

5 gold medals (100m freestyle, 25m backstroke, 25m breaststroke, 50m freestyle, 75m individual medley)

1 silver medal (3 x25m freestyle relay)



also earned five golds and a silver when the Paralympics returned to England in 1984. In his last games in Seoul in 1988, not only did he win another six medals, he broke so many world records that he says he lost count – but at least seven, according to his Wikipedia page! Throughout his career, he competed without any funds or prize money, and his wife Marcia acted as his coach and trainer.



The Forgotten Paralympian?

Despite being one of the nation's most successful Paralympians and having a glorious Paralympic career that lasted 12 years, Mike never became a household name and many people have never heard of his successes. Even on the night in 1976 when he won his first three gold medals, his wife called the national newspapers in the UK to alert them but she was told there wasn't enough interest in disabled sports for them to make it a news story. Just a year after Mike retired in 1988, The British Paralympic Association (BPA) was set up and Paralympic sport started to become much more recognised. In recognition of his services to paraplegic sport, Mike was invited to Buckingham Palace in 1989 to receive an MBE from The Queen. Without a doubt, Mike Kenny paved the way for the many Paralympians that came after him, who now receive the recognition they deserve in today's society. Mikes' grandchildren, who feel frustrated and angry that their grandfather's achievements are not well-known, are now working hard to promote his name and success as Britain's most decorated athlete.

Mike Kenny Questions

Answer the following questions using full sentences that give as much detail as possible.

1. Why did Mike have a traumatic childhood?

2. How did Mike become paralysed?

3. Why was Mike delighted when a hospital physiotherapist suggested getting back into a swimming pool to build up his upper-body strength?

4. How many Paralympic medals did Mike win during his career?

5. Give one reason how Mike's wife played a massive part in his success.

6. Which adjective would you use to describe Mike Kenny? Explain why.

7. Why did the UK national newspapers not want to publish a story about Mike's achievements in the Toronto Games? Would this happen today?

8. Why is the last sub-heading titled 'The Forgotten Paralympian'?

Mike Kenny Answers

1. Why did Mike have a traumatic childhood?

Mike's mum died when he was very young, which meant he was placed in an orphanage with his sister. They remained there for many years.

2. How did Mike become paralysed?

In 1971, Mike tragically fell from a ladder at work and became paralysed.

3. Why was Mike delighted when a hospital physiotherapist suggested getting back into a swimming pool to build up his upper-body strength?

Mike was delighted because he had been a keen swimmer before the accident.

4. How many Paralympic medals did Mike win during his career?

Mike won sixteen gold medals and two silver medals in his Paralympic career.

5. Give one reason how Mike's wife played a massive part in his success.

Pupils' responses may include; because she helped him regain his upper body strength after his accident, she acted as his coach and trainer throughout his career, she telephoned the press to try and earn Mike some recognition after his Paralympic success.

6. Which adjective would you use to describe Mike Kenny? Explain why.

Pupils' responses may include; hard-working, determined, courageous, ignored or inspirational with appropriate reasoning relating to the text.

7. Why did the UK national newspapers not want to publish a story about Mike's achievements in the Toronto Games? Would this happen today?

The UK national newspapers did not want to publish a story as they did not think their readers would be interested in reading about disabled sport. Pupil's own responses to the second part of the question will hopefully refer to the fact that the Paralympics are now deservedly much more recognised in today's society.

8. Why is the last sub-heading titled 'The Forgotten Paralympian'?

The title is used because Mike's achievements have been relatively forgotten. He isn't a household name like other more recent successful Paralympians.

Mike Kenny

Name:

Michael Joseph Kenny

Born:

30 January 1945 in Manchester

Childhood

In his early childhood, Mike lived with his Mum, who was a single parent, in Greater Manchester. Sadly, his mum died when he was still very young, which meant he was placed in an orphanage with his sister. After many years, they both went to live with a foster family. With their love and support, he went on to do well at school and earned himself an apprenticeship to become an engineer. In 1971, Mike tragically fell from a ladder at work and became paralysed. Initially, he was only able to move his eyes, but he slowly regained some muscle function in his upper body with the help of his wife. As he was a keen swimmer before the accident, he was delighted when a hospital physiotherapist suggested getting back into the pool to build up his upper-body strength to aid his recovery. From then on, Mike swam regularly in the training pool at Stoke Mandeville, which is the historic home of disability sport. After a while, he was spotted by Dr Ludwig Guttmann (who is often referred to as the father of the Paralympic movement) and was picked for a disabled swimming team. After winning several international tournaments, Mike was chosen to represent Britain at the 1976 Toronto Paralympic Games.

Olympic Games and Medals

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3 gold medals (25m backstroke, 25m breaststroke, 25m freestyle)

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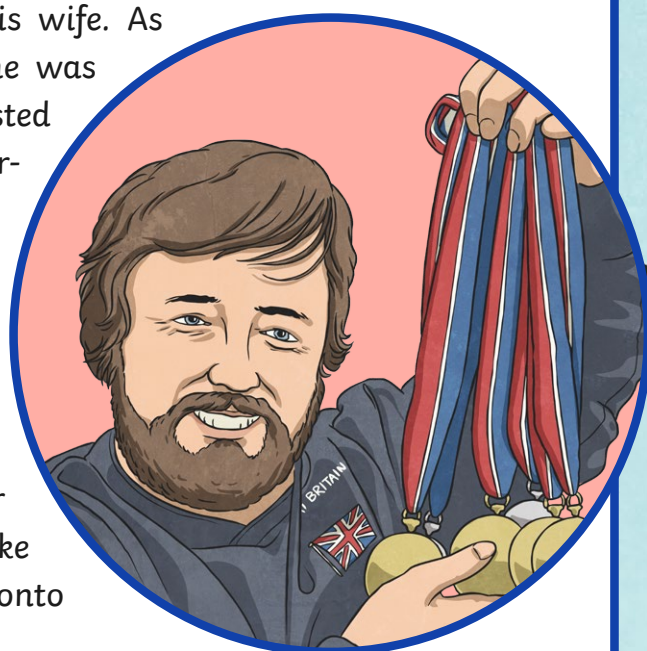
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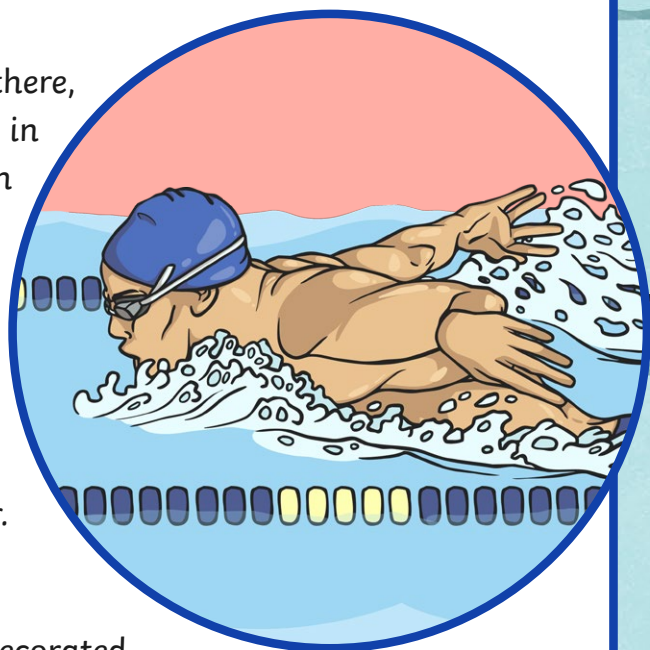
5 gold medals (100m freestyle, 25m backstroke, 25m breaststroke, 50m freestyle, 75m individual medley)

1 silver medal (3 x25m freestyle relay)



Achievements

In Canada, Mike won three gold medals. From there, he went on to win three more golds at Arnhem in 1980, and bagged five golds and a silver when the Paralympics returned to England in 1984. He replicated that feat at his last Games in Seoul in 1988. He broke so many world records that he says he lost count – but at least seven, according to his Wikipedia page! He competed without any outside funding, and his wife Marcia acted as coach and trainer throughout his career.



The Forgotten Paralympian?

Despite being one of the nation's most decorated Paralympians and having a glorious Paralympic career that spanned 12 years, Mike never became a household name and has been all but forgotten since his retirement in 1988. Even on the night in 1976 when he won his first three gold medals, his wife called the national newspapers in the UK to alert them but she was told there wasn't enough interest in disabled sports for them to make it a news story. Mike's relative obscurity may also be due to bad timing. The British Paralympic Association (BPA) was only set up in 1989, a year after he retired, and there is some uncertainty surrounding the records kept prior to its foundation – although Mike's golds are verified by the International Paralympic Committee. In the same year, Mike was invited to Buckingham Palace to receive an MBE from The Queen in recognition of his services to paraplegic sport. But without a doubt, Mike Kenny paved the way for the many Paralympians that came after him, who now receive the recognition they deserve in today's society. Frustrated, Mike's grandchildren cannot understand why their grandfather, the most decorated British athlete of all time, is not a well-known figure in British society. Therefore, they are now working hard to promote his name and achievements so that he receives the recognition and respect that he deserves.

Mike Kenny Questions

Answer the following questions using full sentences that give as much detail as possible.

1. Why did Mike have a traumatic childhood?

2. How did Mike become paralysed?

3. How many Paralympic medals did Mike win during his career and over how many years?

4. Give one reason why Mike's wife played a massive part in his success.

5. Which two adjectives would you use to describe Mike Kenny? Explain why.

6. Why did the UK national newspapers not want to publish a story about Mike's achievements in the Toronto Games? Do you think this is fair?

7. 'He broke so many world records that he says he lost count – but at least seven, according to his Wikipedia page!'

Why has the author used an exclamation mark to end this sentence?

8. The text says that Dr Ludwig Guttman is often known as 'the father of the Paralympic movement'. Conduct some research and find out why he is such an important man in the history of the Paralympic Games.

Mike Kenny Answers

1. Why did Mike have a traumatic childhood?

Mike's mum died when he was very young, which meant he was placed in an orphanage with his sister. They remained there for many years.

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Pupils' responses may include; because she helped him regain his upper body strength after his accident, she acted as his coach and trainer throughout his career, or that she telephoned the press to try and earn Mike some recognition after his Paralympic success.

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Pupils' responses may include; hard-working, determined, courageous, ignored or inspirational with appropriate reasoning relating to the text.

6. Why did the UK national newspapers not want to publish a story about Mike's achievements in the Toronto Games? Do you think this is fair?

The UK national newspapers did not want to publish a story as they did not think their readers would be interested in reading about disabled sport. Pupil's own responses to the second part of the question will hopefully refer to the fact that the Paralympics were not held in the same regard in 1976 as they are today and that was unfair that the Paralympians achievements went virtually unnoticed.

7. 'He broke so many world records that he says he lost count – but at least seven, according to his Wikipedia page!' Why has the author used an exclamation mark to end this sentence?

The author has used an exclamation mark to show surprise that Mike can't remember how many world records he broke.

8. The text says that Dr Ludwig Guttmann is often known as 'the father of the Paralympic movement'. Conduct some research and find out why he is such an important man in the history of the Paralympic Games.

Pupil's own responses after research task - should refer to Guttmann being one of the founding fathers of organised physical activities for people with disabilities, who established the games, which went on to be referred to as the Paralympics, right back in the 1940's.