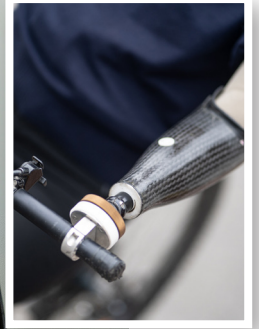
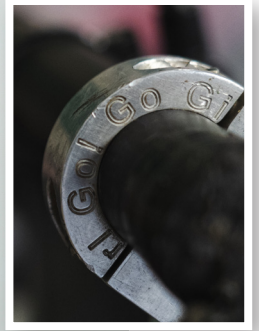


Elsie's Story

Five years ago, Elsie Hughes was just eight years old and determined to be a champion bike rider, ruling the trails of Yorkshire with the support of her parents who also love the sport. Whilst a lot has changed since then, her passion for cycling remains and is stronger than ever, especially for Cyclo-cross and her recent venture into Velodrome racing.





Case Study Elsie Hughes

"You don't have to win it to enjoy it. You've just got to ride it."

In our last interview, Elsie was having her new bike modified to accommodate her socket and enable her to compete in more advanced competitions, and compete she has! With many medals now under her belt, she's getting ready to move up in the league again to the under-14 group, so to celebrate Women in Sport, we sat down with Elsie again to find out more about what she has achieved over the past five years with the support of her prosthetist, Steve Carter, and what the future holds for this talented cycling superstar.

Elsie is occupied all year round with road and mountain biking in the Summer, and Velodrome and Cyclo-cross in the Winter, Cyclo-cross being her standout favourite. She explained, *"Cyclo-cross is like cross country on a bike. Imagine you're on a road bike with thin, knobbly tyres and you're in a grassy farmer's field, with lots of hills, bumps and dips. The field is also filled with obstacles, like steps, so you've got to get off your bike and carry it around the course all while racing against the clock. It's quite aggressive but it's so much fun!"* To perfect her run, the past five years have been dedicated to trialling a range of new and custom-built setups to find what works best for Elsie and her upper limb difference. Now, she's ready to take it up a notch and compete nationally!

The move comes with an increase in course size, higher equipment costs, and heightened pressure to perform. It's a level where people tend to leave the sport, but Elsie's enthusiasm remains, *"Last time we spoke I was riding more for fun but I'm taking it a lot more seriously now."* Her ball and socket setup has proven to be effective - she's won many races in her own league and against other riders with more experience - but as she grows and progresses through the sport, new challenges arise. One unavoidable issue was that of sweat building up in her socket liner. While it's turned into a bit of a "party trick" for Elsie, it's certainly not ideal for her performance. Her dad, Paul, said, *"We tried talcum powders, antiperspirant blocks, all sorts but nothing was strong enough. She likes to do jumps but if her arm got too sweaty in the liner, it would lose its stick, and her arm would pop out of the socket and suddenly you'd see her on the floor. Falling off is expected to a degree in cycling, but if her arm comes out*

as well she then has to spend time repositioning it and that could cost her her place." To help combat this, her prosthetist Steve prescribed her the SoftSkin Air silicone liner which features a distinctive structure and special micropores to reduce the build-up of sweat and draw moisture away from the residual limb.

The cycling community and more specifically, her club here in Yorkshire, are Elsie's biggest supporters. One member of her club has helped by building her a custom frame with additional length to compensate for discrepancies in her handle position, and another member engraved her socket with "Go girl, go!". Paul said, *"If anyone, of any level or ability, is thinking about getting into the sport, definitely go and speak to people at your local bike shop or your local club. All the people we've met in the community have been so knowledgeable and very helpful."* Her club are also making a conscious effort to support women and girls entering the sport and has noticed numbers increasing over the past 4/5 years with the introduction of women-only races. Elsie said, *"I've met so many friends through my club and they keep me motivated. I think I'd find it hard to want to go and train all the time if I knew I was going to be the only girl there."*

Elsie's own piece of advice for women and girls wanting to get into cyclo-cross and other competitive cycling sports is, *"You don't have to win it to enjoy it. You've just got to ride it."* Something she'll be reminding herself as she faces new challenges rising up the ranks.

Elsie's future is looking brighter than ever. Her name is already on the lips of many throughout the industry with the para-cycling team inviting her to in-house development camps and in just two years, she'll be ready to race adults at national para-cycling events. We look forward to working alongside Elsie providing optimal prosthetic solutions for her cycling as she continues to rule the track.

**To find out more about Elsie visit
www.steepergroup.com**