

## **PARTNERS FOR PARALYMPIC PERFORMANCE: ANDREA ESKAU AND TOYOTA MOTORSPORT GmbH**

Friday 27 October 2017

Motorsport technology refined at the Le Mans 24 Hours will power German Paralympic athlete Andrea Eskau to Paralympic Games in PyeongChang and Tokyo, thanks to an expanded relationship with TOYOTA Motorsport GmbH (TMG).

Andrea, 46, will compete in the PyeongChang Games next year with a new ski sled which uses cutting-edge motorsport technology to reduce weight and take her performance to a new level.

TMG and Andrea have worked together already for five years, including her gold medal-winning performances in Paralympic summer and winter events. The latest chapter of that partnership sees the Cologne-based company creating bespoke equipment for Andrea with the ultimate target of Paralympic gold using TMG technology at TOYOTA's home Games in Tokyo 2020.

"We are proud to continue supporting Andrea in her quest to fight in the next winter and summer Paralympic events in PyeongChang and finally in Tokyo," said Gerard Winstanley, whose Composite department at TMG has been instrumental in the partnership. "It's not only the technology which makes it interesting to support her; working with Andrea is a pleasure and very inspiring indeed. She is very ambitious, has a big will to fight and never gives up. She has a continued drive for improvement and development of existing technology and this is something we understand very well from our motorsport projects."

Andrea, who lives close to TMG's technical centre, home to the TOYOTA GAZOO Racing team in the FIA World Endurance Championship, has a hunger to constantly push the limits and perform better. This motivated her to focus on improvements to her equipment in much the same way a racing driver seeks constant development of his car to improve lap times.

"Physically I quickly developed a high level of performance," she explains. "But I realized that equipment is immensely important for at such a professional level. At some point you simply cannot go further with pure training. I got to know TOYOTA Motorsport GmbH through a friend and they were unbelievably open-minded to support me with my issues."

Born on 21 March 1971 in Apolda in East Germany, Andrea is a professional psychologist and was a keen amateur athlete as a young woman, competing in cycling and triathlon events. In 1998, a cycling accident caused a severe spinal injury and left her unable to use her legs.

After first experimenting with wheelchair basketball, she found her sporting passion in road racing and then Nordic skiing, and she explains her sporting origins: "Initially I only bought sports equipment to be more mobile after my accident. After a time, when I felt more comfortable, I started to compete; my first event was the Cologne Marathon but only for fun. I finished third at my first attempt and my ambition in sport was aroused. I wanted to get better. Now I have more than 20 World Championship titles and six Paralympic gold medals."

Adding to that tally is the target of TMG's cooperation with Andrea. For her new ski sled, weight reduction was a major focus and TMG's designers used advanced carbon fibre lay-up processes to minimize the amount of material needed whilst retaining strength in all key areas. This achieved an incredible weight reduction of more than 30% which has a direct performance benefit for Andrea as it reduces the mass she must propel around the 6km course using her upper body strength alone.

Andrea explains how the development process progressed: “We started the process by exchanging ideas and possibilities. The first step was a sled adapted for me by TMG which brought me two gold medals at the 2014 Paralympics in Sochi. Going even further, TMG was willing to build an entire new sledge this year for me, which is even lighter, more functional and suits my needs even more than the old one. This means I can also focus on biathlon with the difficult shooting discipline; it allows me now to shoot without technical limitations.”

But the development process is far from a one-way conversation, with Andrea contributing strongly, as TMG’s project leader Norbert Schäfer says: “Andrea has a very good technical understanding and a lot of ideas, so at each meeting we created good solutions together. Her approach is clearly improvement-related in order to get the most possible performance out of the athlete and her tools, in this case her ski sled. This is exactly how we operate in motorsport as well.”

Together, Andrea and TMG have already reached the first milestones on the journey to PyeongChang and ultimately Tokyo 2020. TMG will follow Andrea’s progress closely over the next months with regular video features; the next episode will come in late November when we look in more detail at the development and testing of her new ski sled.

Rights-free video footage of Andrea’s story, plus photographs, are available at:  
<https://goo.gl/6WALZc>

### **About TOYOTA Motorsport GmbH**

TOYOTA Motorsport GmbH (TMG) has been based in Cologne, Germany since 1979 and built its reputation in motorsport, beginning with two decades of FIA World Rally Championship success. TMG’s facilities and capabilities expanded significantly during its time in Formula 1 (2002-2009). Since the end of that era, TMG has combined works motorsport participation in the FIA World Endurance Championship with research and development support for TOYOTA Motor Corporation and a thriving business as a supplier of high-performance services to the automotive and motorsport sectors. Additionally, TMG has built a growing customer motorsport business covering activities in rally and circuit racing, with all activities inspired by TMG’s vision of *Creating Excitement Through Team Spirit and Advanced Technology*. [www.toyota-motorsport.com/](http://www.toyota-motorsport.com/) / [www.facebook.com/toyotamotorsport/](https://www.facebook.com/toyotamotorsport/) / [@TMGOfficial](https://twitter.com/TMGOfficial)

**Media contact:** Alastair Moffitt, Marketing & Communications Manager: [alastair.moffitt@toyota-motorsport.com](mailto:alastair.moffitt@toyota-motorsport.com)

### **About Andrea Eskau**

Born on 21 March 1971 in Apolda in East Germany, Andrea is a professional psychologist and was a keen amateur athlete as a young woman, competing in cycling and triathlon events. In 1998, a cycling accident caused a severe spinal injury and left her unable to use her legs. After first experimenting with wheelchair basketball, she found her sporting passion in road racing with a hand bike. In 2008, 10 years since her life-changing accident, Andrea won Paralympic gold in Beijing, in the road race and defended that title four years later in London, where she also won road time trial gold. At the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro, Andrea won a third road race gold. By then, she had become a force in winter sports as well. Her first Paralympic Winter Games medal came in Vancouver 2010 with bronze in the individual sitting biathlon, but she became a winter sports champion in Sochi four years later in the 6km biathlon, earning silver in the 5km cross-country skiing as well. [www.andreaeskau.de](http://www.andreaeskau.de)