

David Brown and Jerome Avery

See the Impossible

November 08, 2019



When Para Track & Field Athlete and Team Toyota athlete [David Brown](#) wins gold, he doesn't stand up on the podium alone. His good friend and guide runner, [Jerome Avery](#), stands by his side and accepts a gold medal too.

“To see the smile on his face when we're on that podium, that's an amazing feeling,” Avery says. “If he wins, I automatically win. And that's how we approach everything we do.”

Diagnosed with Kawasaki disease when he was 15 months old, Brown began losing his sight to glaucoma and was completely blind by 13 years old. From an athletic family, there was never a time when Brown considered quitting sports.

“It was always something like, ‘Okay. How can I adapt and stay active and competitive with my friends?’” Brown says. “And that was running. Sprinting, getting into foot races with them, because so long as I wasn't bumping into anything, I can beat you in a foot race.”

Brown was first selected to be a part of the Paralympic experience after winning an essay contest to attend the Paralympic Games Beijing 2008. In 2012, he was invited to live and train at the Olympic Training Center in

Chula Vista, California. He competed in the Paralympic Games London 2012 and the world championships in France before getting paired with Jerome Avery in 2014.



“I met him on the track,” says Brown. “Here I am, this little dude, not knowing anything about sprinting or guiding. I didn’t know there was a technique to guiding, or even to sprinting. I would just run fast.”

Poetry in Motion

Paralympic blind sprinting looks almost like a three-legged race: the runner and the guide hit the ground with their outside foot at the same time, then the inside foot and so on. The pair’s arms and legs must move together, perfectly in sync, in order to shave off precious tenths of a second.

“You definitely have to have the rhythm in order to run with guys like David Brown, who are extremely fast,” says Avery. “I have to mimic the way he runs—I have to run exactly like him.”

Avery essentially retaught Brown how to run, encouraging his partner to focus on the techniques of stride and arm swinging, rather than just brute force. Having entered the Paralympic world in 2004, Avery has trained with multiple other para athletes and is considered a veteran guide.

“I don’t take my job as a guide runner lightly,” Avery says. “I know at this moment in time in my life, I was put here for a purpose — to see for someone who can’t see. I don’t know if there’s any other feeling like that,

knowing that you had a part in someone else's successes.”

With Avery by his side in 2014, Brown became the first athlete who is totally blind to run the 100m in under 11 seconds, a world record that he still holds. The pair has won gold at the Parapan American Games, multiple IPC Athletics World Championships and the Paralympic Games Rio 2016.

“There are athletes where it's just guide and runner,” Brown says. “But Jerome and me, we're like brothers. We don't have to have a friendship off the track, but we do because our personalities just match.”

And that seems to make all the difference. Brown and Avery train together twice a day, six days a week.

“Teamwork, partnership, working together, and definitely building and improving over the years,” Avery says. “Every year, we just get better and better.”

Now, these brothers are chasing the Paralympic dream together.

“We're both doing exactly what we dreamed of doing, and that's winning a gold medal,” says Brown. “He had Olympic dreams of his own, but he put himself aside to help me reach my dreams.”

“It's an incredible feeling to have this guy up there beside me, to have him happy for me, but then me happy for him because it's like, ‘Hey, we got here together.’”

To learn more about David Brown, [click here](#), or to learn more about Jerome Avery, [click here](#)