

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

RADIO 4

TRANSCRIPT OF “FILE ON 4” – “PARALYMPICS – GAMING THE SYSTEM?”

CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP

TRANSMISSION:	Tuesday 18 th September 2018	2000 – 2040
REPEAT:	Sunday 23 rd September 2018	1700 - 1740

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PRODUCER:	Paul Grant
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PROGRAMME NUMBER:	18VQ66279LHO
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THE ATTACHED TRANSCRIPT WAS TYPED FROM A RECORDING AND NOT COPIED FROM AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT. BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF MISHEARING AND THE DIFFICULTY IN SOME CASES OF IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL SPEAKERS, THE BBC CANNOT VOUCH FOR ITS COMPLETE ACCURACY.

“FILE ON 4”

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Reporter: Simon Cox

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MUSIC

ACTUALITY OF RACE

ANNOUNCER: Take your marks [SOUND OF STARTING PISTOL AND SHOUTING]

COX: How far will disabled athletes go to win medals? Last year, we investigated how athletes and coaches game the system in order to achieve success. What followed was a parliamentary hearing into the way Paralympic athletes are classified, and questions over whether the system was fit for purpose.

ACTUALITY OF CHEERING AND APPLAUSE

COX: And dissenting voices continued to contact File on 4 with serious accusations of bigger failures in the international Paralympic system and allegations of athletes deliberately faking symptoms in order to improve their chances of winning. But surely that can't be true, can it?

ACTUALITY OF COACHING SESSION

WATKINS: Okay, so this afternoon we're going to warm up five 300s. We need to make sure that you're working on your skills off the walls, okay, so good underwaters ...

COX: Swimming has dominated Simon Watkins' life - first as a coach in Wales, where his athletes won Commonwealth and Olympic medals, before he moved to Australia, where he has been just as successful with disabled swimmers.

WATKINS: We're going to do a bit of a sprint session, okay?

COX: After the London Olympics in 2012, a new disabled athlete showed up at his club - a 15 year old, indigenous Australian girl with a gap-toothed broad smile called Amanda Fowler.

WATKINS: I had just started coaching at a small club in Sydney and she just came to the pool and asked if I would take her into my programme. She was an S14, so intellectual disability swimming athlete.

COX: Simon's talking here about classification – where athletes with similar levels of disability are placed in categories so that there's a level playing field. In swimming, for example, they range from S1 for the most disabled up to S10 for the least disabled. But Amanda Fowler wasn't in any of these impairment categories. She had an intellectual disability, as an S14 swimmer.

READER IN STUDIO: S14 - swimmers with an intellectual impairment, typically leading to difficulties with pattern recognition, memory and slower reaction time.

COX: She had competed in this category at the London Paralympics and Simon Watkins was hopeful she could be a new swimming star.

WATKINS: She was very competitive, certainly within the country. She got better while she was training with me, and for the 2013 World Championship team, she made the team and finished top ten in the world at that meet.

COX: She had done well, but to be really successful and tap into the maximum support from funding bodies, she needed to be a medal prospect. Like many young athletes, she had strong parental support from her Mum, Kate, who was a well-known figure on the swimming circuit. But Simon Watkins began to worry about her involvement.

WATKINS: Her mother started asking questions of my wife, who was a trainee classifier, about how Amanda would go about getting a physical classification. She also started questioning a family that was in my club, a swimmer I was coaching who had a sort of rare genetic disorder that presented like cerebral palsy. And over a period of time that questioning turned into them making statements that Amanda had the same type of genetic disorder.

COX: This was news to him. During his spell as her coach, Simon Watkins says he saw no physical disability and there was no mention of any in the official athlete's biography at the London 2012 Paralympics. And what did you make of that?

WATKINS: This genetic condition - for want of a better word - was so rare that they were sort of one of ten to twenty families worldwide. And, you know, to sort of end up with two people in the same pool, one of which had just come on during that period rather than being born with, I just obviously didn't believe it.

COX: And when her mum is having these conversations with you, what are you telling her?

WATKINS: We're just saying, well, she doesn't have a physical disability, so there isn't a way that you get a classification for physical disability. There isn't one present.

ACTUALITY AT TRAINING SESSION

WATKINS: All right, let's go. Five 300s.

COX: Despite these concerns about her mum's intervention, Amanda Fowler remained as an intellectually disabled athlete with Simon as her coach. But at a training camp a few months later, he says he was approached by a senior official from the sport's governing body, Swimming Australia.

WATKINS: One of the staff approached me after a physio screening session to say, look, we could tell in there that she was trying to put on an issue with her leg and her foot, which we don't believe is a real issue. I said to them, look, you need to tackle this with the family, because I'm tackling it in my way and saying it doesn't exist, but it needs to come from, from other sources as well.

MUSIC

COX: We obviously don't know what was going on and this was just suspicion. There were concerns from other swimmers though, and their families about Amanda's classification. We spoke to a swimmer who we're calling Katy, who competed at the same time as Amanda. She is worried about any backlash, so this isn't her voice – it's an actors.

KATY: There was absolutely no sign of any sort of physical impairment. She was quite boisterous and used her arms quite a bit for emphasis when she was talking. When I first met her, she was looking at qualifying for the Australian swim team, but within a couple of months she was no longer meeting the criteria and I think that was when she began to explore other avenues and other classifications to potentially participate in.

MUSIC

COX: Simon Watkins had grown frustrated with Amanda Fowler's commitment. In 2014, he sent her home from a training camp, as he felt she wasn't working hard enough, and stopped coaching her. He didn't see her again until a swimming competition in March 2015. He says he couldn't believe it when he saw Amanda was no longer competing as an intellectually disabled athlete, but as visually impaired. She had a white stick and was in a different classification.

READER IN STUDIO: S13 – athletes with the least severe visual impairment. They have a visual field of less than 20 degrees radius.

COX: Were you surprised at that?

WATKINS: Yeah, amazed, I would say, rather than surprised. You know, this is a girl who was driving a car. To now be with a white stick, yeah, it was quite unbelievable.

COX: And what did you do after that when you saw her in this category?

WATKINS: I sort of made my views clear to the coaches around and the administration around in terms of the fact that I thought it was ludicrous.

COX: And how did they react to that?

WATKINS: In terms of all the coaching fraternity, it's been one of the big amazements and jokes, for want of a better word, because it certainly isn't funny. All the coaches, nobody could really believe what we were all seeing.

COX: Whatever he and others thought, Amanda was now classified as visually impaired. Other athletes said she told them she had given up driving. Fellow swimmer, Katy, saw her around this time at the pool using a white stick.

KATY: She would walk along with it straight out in front of her and she wouldn't move the stick at all. She also would appear as if she was able to look

KATY cont: exactly where she was going and the stick was almost a prop. You would have conversations with her and she would make direct eye contact with you for large periods of time, and then it would almost be as if she suddenly realised she wasn't supposed to be able to make direct eye contact with you and would suddenly almost put on an act as if she couldn't see you and wouldn't be able to meet your eyes directly.

COX: Katy didn't bother to challenge this because, she noted wearily, she had seen other instances of what she thought was athletes exaggerating symptoms.

KATY: She's not the only person who does it. It's almost accepted that's just the way it is and there's almost no point challenging it. It's just kind of, that's how ridiculous the situation is.

COX: When you say almost accepted in swimming, what do you mean?

KATY: Well, I mean, there are so many people in the wrong classifications, not doing the right thing by themselves, very obviously, and having it be made aware to authority figures, including the International Paralympic Committee and the Australian Paralympic Committee as well as the individual sports organisations themselves, who are essentially sticking their heads in the sand and refusing to make any improvement or even acknowledge how flawed the system is.

COX: We asked Swimming Australia about this, but they didn't respond. The Australian Paralympic Committee told us Amanda Fowler has multiple impairments and can therefore be classified with a physical, visual or intellectual disability. Her case, they said, wasn't unique. They pointed out that to achieve an international classification, all athletes must undergo rigorous medical testing, and they strongly deny any knowledge of misconduct relating to classification. We also sent detailed questions to Amanda Fowler and her mother, but they didn't reply to us. This isn't the end of her story though. There are other chapters that we'll come to later.

MUSIC

COX: Classification is the bedrock of Paralympic sport. It's carried out by volunteers, who classify athletes based on how their disability affects their performance. Athletes first have to present medical documents from a doctor confirming their condition. They do tests on them, then they are assessed by a technical classifier, often a coach in that sport, and a medical classifier, such as a physiotherapist.

ACTUALITY OF CLASSIFICATION TESTS

SHEPHERD: Put your arms out to the side.

COX: Yep.

SHEPHERD: And I want you to bring one hand in, and with the index finger touch your nose.

I'm Robert Shepherd, always known as Shep. I used to be a classifier with IPC and also with UK Athletics.

That's it. Keep going fast, keep going fast now. I'm coming closer. Quicker, quicker, quick. And now again, further ... that's it. Fine. Right, and relax. Okay.

In the case of a cerebral palsy athlete, that would be a very difficult test.

COX: Robert Shepherd took me through my paces.

SHEPHERD: That's it. Move, move.

COX: Okay.

SHEPHERD: Right, now stop.

COX: These exercises are part of the physical test to determine classification. The next stage is watching the athlete perform and then compete. So at this vital stage, can a classifier get it wrong? After his experience at a training event at the International Paralympic Committee headquarters, Robert Shepherd says they can.

SHEPHERD: I was once asked by the International Paralympics Committee to emulate a cerebral palsy athlete. They didn't have one of this particular condition, so they asked me would I do it. And at the end of the programme, when we'd finished, the classifier, who is a very, very esteemed lady, came to me and said, if you had presented like that, I'd have given you a classification. So it can't be that difficult, because I'm able bodied, but having done it for twenty years I know how they present, I know what their foibles are.

COX: And what did that tell you, when you have a, as you said, really experienced classifier who you could have conned?

SHEPHERD: I thought I must be a better actor and I've probably missed my vocation, but also that maybe there have been occasions where I've been tricked a bit. I don't know.

COX: So this is a former top classifier, concerned that he may have been duped. Part of the role is trying to spot what's called intentional misrepresentation - or cheating - where an athlete exaggerates the level of their disability so they can be placed in a category where it's easier for them to win medals. It's the equivalent of doping in able bodied sport. In the 20 years he was a classifier, Robert Shepherd noticed attempts to cheat becoming more common.

SHEPHERD: When I first started classifying, I don't think I saw one for years, and then I started seeing more and more. The majority of people who go into athletics with a disability are doing it for their own welfare to start with and then get the bug for the running or the jumping or the throwing. They're not out to cheat. It just so happens that there's so much money to be made these days that I think people would, if you could say I've got a silver medal, they're more likely to get sponsorship for things and so it has become more prevalent.

COX: Marc Woods is a former Paralympic swimmer. He won gold at the Athens games in 2004, competed in three Paralympics and was at the London and Rio games as a commentator. He is still actively involved around Paralympic sport and in regular contact with athletes.

WOODS: There are going to be people that will game the system, whether they're able bodied or disabled. And to assume that disabled people won't do it because they're all nice is naïve, and there are probably a similar percentage who will game the system as there are within an Olympic sport.

COX: We heard in our previous investigation how athletes had gone to astonishing lengths to make their disability worse, such as strapping up their arms in the weeks running up to testing. Marc Woods says there are other, more subtle ways to game the classification system.

WOODS: There are various ways that that you could attempt to do it. I think that the red flag for me would be if you see somebody who goes to classification heavily fatigued, if you heavily fatigue somebody, certain disabilities will be affected by that and they will appear more disabled than they are when they're not fatigued. Also, within the classification, typically the people are asked to perform their sport, and you could have somebody in a throwing event not throwing as far by a long way or in a wheelchair racing event not pushing as hard, or in a swimming race not going as quick over a given distance. That is a big red flag for me.

COX: If you are put into a different category, how important can that be? What difference can that make to you?

WOODS: It could be huge. If you can imagine Anthony Joshua coming down a category to fight, what would those fights look like? I mean they look pretty brutal already. I mean, if he was down a category, it would be a no contest. And that's probably the best analogy that I can bring is that by shifting yourself into a different category, you can be considerably more successful.

COX: There has been concern about cheating through intentional misrepresentation for some time. Before the Rio Olympics in 2016, the International Paralympic Committee investigated eighty athletes, but none were found to have deliberately exaggerated their disability. And a review by UK Athletics last year said the system for British para-athletes was robust but 'could be abused' and there was some concern it was 'open to exploitation'.

MUSIC

COX: What the Australian swimmer, Amanda Fowler, is accused of is an extreme version of this. When we last heard about her, she was competing as a visually impaired swimmer. By late 2015, that was no longer the case - she was now a physically disabled athlete: an S8 swimmer.

READER IN STUDIO: S8 - swimmer with an amputation of one arm or significant restrictions across hip, knee and ankle joints.

COX: The general belief was that she had cerebral palsy. Her former coach, Simon Watkins, was astounded when he saw her competing again.

WATKINS: She walked as if she had some type of impairment. I was just completely amazed by the whole situation. And at the same time, at this meet now, her vision has returned, so she can see clearly now, but now she's got a physical impairment.

COX: Did you hear about anyone else raising any concerns at that event?

WATKINS: Everybody was just in complete amazement, especially to the point of when she got on the blocks and looked at a swimmer next to her who had the disability that she was presenting with and copied how she stood on the block.

COX: She copied her?

WATKINS: Yeah, looked straight at her and copied exactly what action that swimmer was doing. And then the mother of that swimmer confronted her and her mother, she was so upset about it.

COX: And after this meeting, are you thinking, it's now 2015, you must thinking the Paralympics are coming up – was that a concern?

WATKINS: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. The whole idea of para sport is to give a level playing field to people who otherwise wouldn't have one. So to see somebody potentially taking spots on teams or even medals away from athletes who already have enough to deal with, yeah, it was very, very worrying.

COX: He decided that he had had enough and wrote to the governing body, Swimming Australia, to officially complain. Could you read some of it, what you'd actually said to them?

WATKINS: So I say, 'This email has taken a few weeks to write, because I've tried to let the initial disgust and anger subside before I contacted you. The absolute joke that the Fowler family from New South Wales have made of the classification system and specifically the integrity of the system in Australia has astounded me and makes the country a joke on the international scene.'

COX: He left the authorities in no doubt about his concerns. Swimming Australia told him the classification for Amanda was ongoing and shortly after this, she disappeared from competitive swimming, having not won any medals. We asked Swimming Australia about this but they didn't reply.

MUSIC

COX: Now all swimmers are now being reclassified, as the International Paralympic Committee tries to beef up the system, making the tests in the water more rigorous and objective.

ACTUALITY AT POOL

TRAINER: Okay, so Steph, you've got your target times that you need to be making sure you're hitting there. You're going to be doing the free to back, which is five 100s ... and they are on 150. Ready, go!

COX: Stephanie Millward is hoping to make it to the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 to swim for Britain once again. She has the most common form of multiple sclerosis, where symptoms flare up and then disappear. This year she went through the new classification system and was placed in the less disabled S9 category.

READER IN STUDIO: S9 - athletes with joint restrictions in one leg or with double below-the-knee amputations.

COX: She accepted the decision, but questioned how some other athletes had been moved into more disabled categories.

MILLWARD: Some are a little dubious, so you do question why some people have gone down when perhaps they shouldn't have done. But then, if everyone's doing the same test, it should be fair and therefore everyone should be in the right class.

COX: When you say a bit dubious, what did you mean?

MILLWARD: A few people have moved down and if you look at them in comparison to anybody else, you wouldn't have moved them down. There's no way.

COX: What has that meant for them? That they're much better than everyone else?

MILLWARD: Yeah, which seems weird but, you know, there must have been a reason they moved down, so I just don't understand it. It's very strange.

COX: Having gone through the changed system, is there a way, do you think, it can be gamed?

MILLWARD: I would definitely like to say no, but I think that some people are, they don't have as much of a conscience as myself, so I think you could slightly push it one way or another. I would love to say no, but unfortunately I think that people can get away with just about anything.

COX: But Stephanie has also faced criticisms about her own classification. For most of her career, she was an S9 swimmer, but shortly before the Rio Olympics, she was reclassified as a more disabled S8. She went on to break the world record and won her first gold medal at the Rio Paralympics, which led to questions about whether she was in the right category.

MILLWARD: I think it's a good thing that there were people questioning whether I was in the right classification or not, because if people are saying, no, I don't think you should be in an S8, And I'll say, no, but if you have a look at my body in comparison to, you know, the S9s, I'm 100% different than they are, I'm much less able than most of them. So if you look at the body and you look at me walk, then look at me move, you would see that, you know, I should have been an S8 on that occasion, you know.

COX: We spoke to the International Paralympic Committee, who told us they were confident the system used to classify swimmers is robust. When an athlete is classified, they said they must now provide medical evidence that can be verified.

MUSIC

COX: Hundreds of para-athletes are members of the British Athletes Commission - the voice of elite sport. Ian Braid ran the Commission for four years and during his time in charge, he had noticed growing anger at abuse of the system

BRAID: The perception of the fact that there was something wrong with the classification system was becoming a louder voice. There was a lot of noise about trying to clean the system up because it was open to abuse.

COX: And what were the concerns the athletes were expressing to you?

BRAID: There was a strong feeling that athletes were being manipulated, athletes were just commodities as opposed to individuals. There was a feeling that athletes were being coerced into their classification. There was also a degree of anger and frustration, I guess, because some athletes felt that they were being denied places in

BRAID cont: squads, ultimately denied chances of getting on the podium and getting funding because there were people in their class that arguably shouldn't have been there.

COX: He says these repeated concerns about athletes cheating culminated in a bizarre spectacle involving the squad of a major UK sport turning on their own team mates.

BRAID: I was told that in one team event, members of the British squad were cheering for another nation and another nation's athlete because they believed that a member on their team was in the wrong class.

COX: So that one of their own athletes was effectively cheating?

BRAID: That's what they believed, yes.

COX: That's pretty bad, when a British team would cheer for the opposition rather than one of their own because they're cheating. I mean, that sounds pretty extreme.

BRAID: It's not about British per se, that's not how the British behave. It is just shocking whether they're from any nation whatsoever, it's just incredibly saddening, I agree.

COX: The vast majority of athletes aren't involved in cheating, but it's difficult to know exactly how many are. In our previous investigation, we were told that in 2017, the IPC was investigating a number of athletes and coaches suspected of intentional misrepresentation. They wouldn't tell us how many, but said it was fewer than ten. Now we have learned that a British Paralympic medallist is currently being investigated for possible cheating. The investigators have spoken to former British Paralympic swimmer, Marc Woods.

WOODS: I was personally contacted by a lawyer that was acting on behalf of the IPC investigating a British athlete. For me, the big deal would be if there is evidence that shows that it wasn't the athlete doing it on their own, but if there is a systematic group of people helping that athlete make poor decisions, then that is, that's a big deal.

COX: He is sure athletes aren't gaming the system on their own. He is worried about a toxic culture where young, vulnerable sports stars are being manipulated by older coaches to think they are more disabled than they actually are, in order to get them classified into a more favourable category

WOODS: I think the way that a coach could achieve that would be to spend a lengthy period of time talking to the athlete, saying that their disability is maybe deteriorating, becoming worse, they're presenting differently, they're not able to do what they used to do. And if that goes on over a number of months or years even, eventually that athlete is likely to maybe believe that. That's classic grooming, I suppose. It's a word that sends shivers down my spine. But I think that there can be a process where coaches are using a dialogue which will eventually lead to an athlete thinking they maybe should, are being hard done by and should be categorised differently.

COX: Grooming is a charged word, but others within Paralympic sport have told us similar stories - of coaches coercing athletes over the level of their disability. We wanted to speak to the IPC, but they told us they don't comment on ongoing investigations. The British Paralympic Association introduced a new classification code earlier this year, making clearer what the responsibilities of athletes and of sporting organisations are. How often does its Chief Executive, Tim Hollingsworth, think that cheating is happening?

HOLLINGSWORTH: I don't think it's there in any sort of meaningful or major way at all, and that's for two reasons. On the one hand, I think fundamentally athletes would find that offensive. I think they recognise that their disability and therefore their classification is a fundamental part of their sporting life. But secondly, also I think we've got a very much better system and processes in place to deal with the potential for intentional misrepresentation, and we can feel confident, therefore, that those two combined factors make it, in my view, not the issue that others suggest that it is.

COX: We've had people though who have said to us at the top of para sport, who have competed, talking about a toxic culture, with some athletes, with coaches encouraging them to be more disabled than they are. I mean, that is worrying, isn't it, where you get someone talking about a toxic culture?

HOLLINGSWORTH: Yeah, and I think the danger there is actually the extent to which that is something that can be demonstrably shown to be the case, because in isolation, yes, it's worrying. But actually, where is the evidence? Can we see more proof of that so that we can actually do something meaningful with it? There is a danger here again, to say that is not complacency, that is not believing that things should not be considered or taken seriously. But at some point you have to recognise there has to be a legitimacy to these complaints for them actually to be taken forward, and my own view is that I don't see that. I don't see that from the conversations that we have with governing bodies. I don't see that from the conversations that we have with athletes. I think we have a very live, active membership of our own Athletes Commission, who would certainly be keen to bring issues forward if they thought they were of merit to us, and hopefully, therefore, there's no blockage to that happening.

MUSIC

COX: Which brings us back to the case that has drawn most attention to this - the swimmer, Amanda Fowler. In her short career, she had competed as intellectually disabled and then a visually impaired athlete. In the Rio Olympics, she was a physically disabled athlete in a new sport.

ACTUALITY OF CYCLE RACE

COX: She had swapped her goggles for pedals, competing as a cyclist. She didn't need her white stick anymore - there were no signs of her visual impairment. Now she was classified as a C2 cyclist.

READER IN STUDIO: C2 – rider with upper or lower limb impairments and moderate to severe neurological dysfunction.

COX: This wasn't the only difference. She changed her name to Amanda Reid. In interviews, she began discussing how she had cerebral palsy from birth, although she hadn't mentioned this when she was at London 2012. As a physically disabled cyclist, she did better than ever, winning a silver medal. If you look at footage of the medal ceremony at Rio, Amanda Reid is walking with one of her feet turned in and holding one of her arms - similar to signs of cerebral palsy - and her success troubled other Australian athletes, especially those who had known her before. We spoke to one who we are calling Peter. We've got an actor to say his words as he's worried about repercussions.

PETER: It was quite a shock to me to see how much things had changed.

COX: Was there a lot of chat in the Australian team about the change?

PETER: Yes, definitely. Everyone was well aware of it, all these people having known her for many years and seen her present one way as a physically able bodied person. They were shocked, very shocked to see her now with CP. I'm not exactly sure of her disability, a neurological impairment. I guess everyone was surprised, and silver is an incredible achievement in a Paralympic Games, and you would hope for her competitors and for Amanda that everyone's classifications were as close to being correct as possible. But I think there was a lot of doubt going from not medalling in swimming to being a silver medallist at Paralympic Games, which is an incredible feat in such a short amount of time. It's virtually unheard of, so I guess there's always going to be a dubious aspect to that.

COX: Cycling's governing body, the UCI, said she had followed the normal classification process, although they didn't say whether that was for multiple impairments or just one. They said they will assess whether they need to investigate the allegations about her classification. When we asked Amanda and her mother about this they didn't respond. The concern among some athletes was the apparent variation in her physical disabilities. So is this possible with cerebral palsy?

ACTUALITY EXAMINING SCANS

GRUNEWALD: So this is an MRI scan of somebody with cerebral palsy with rather subtle abnormalities. And here is a much bigger area of damage and that looks like a blocked blood vessel, a major blocked blood vessel in the brain. Richard Adam Grunewald and I'm Clinical Director of Neurosciences at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

COX: Richard Grunewald isn't an expert in disabled sport, but he is a leading neurologist who has treated many patients with cerebral palsy. Could you be in a situation where you don't have any symptoms of cerebral palsy until maybe into your teens, then you have very severe symptoms and then they go away?

GRUNEWALD: The idea that you would suddenly be diagnosed as having quite severe cerebral palsy – ie that is something that would cause a weak arm or a visual impairment, and that only become apparent in your teens is not really plausible, and the idea that it might then get better or perhaps come and go isn't really feasible. The damage of cerebral palsy is permanent brain damage. It doesn't come and go.

COX: And could you, with that scenario, be in a situation where you could in some way get a medical diagnosis for that? That in a way that you could fool doctors?

GRUNEWALD: Yes, I think so. If you're talking about weakness of a limb, well that's actually quite easy to feign. All you have to do is adopt a posture where your arm is flexed and so you can't move it very well, and I think a lot of people would accept that. If you go to a neurologist even and say to them, I've had cerebral palsy, I was born with a weakness down my right side, and you're holding your arm in a semi flexed position and you don't move it very much, most people just wouldn't think twice about accepting that diagnosis. So yes, you could certainly do that. There's a sort of unwritten contract between patients and doctors that you believe each other, and you're not really geared up to suspect that's not the case.

COX: At the Rio Olympics, Amanda Reid appeared to have cerebral palsy like symptoms, but we were passed video footage from a year later, in 2017, which has also been sent to the IPC. I'm watching it now, and the athlete who had a

COX cont: disabled arm and leg at Rio is now walking to her car. She is wearing flipflops and shorts. She throws her bag into her car boot before casually getting into the driver's seat. I showed it to the former classifier, Robert Shepherd.

ACTUALITY WITH VIDEO FOOTAGE

COX: We see in front of us the car park and then you just see that same athlete just on the edge of the picture, and I'll just play you it. So you can see she's ...

SHEPHERD: She's walking in flipflops.

COX: What's strange about flipflops?

SHEPHERD: It's very, very difficult for a cerebral palsy athlete to keep their feet in an elevated position when they lift their foot up, so the flipflop would just drop. It's just unusual. I've not seen it before. I have never seen a CP athlete in ... sandals, yes, but flipflops no.

COX: And then we can see she's opened the back door of the car and is chucking her bag in there.

SHEPHERD: But without any loss of balance at all.

COX: And would you expect ...

SHEPHERD: I would. I would expect a balance issue. No matter what cerebral palsy level it was, it would be unusual to take a heavy bag off your shoulder and just throw it without holding on for stability somewhere. If you look at her feet, they're, she's shifting from heel to toe on flipflops and then walking quite comfortably to get in the car. Most CP athletes couldn't do that. She seems to have improved dramatically since taking the medal for cycling in Rio and that video there.

COX: Have you ever seen an athlete like that, where they would improve so dramatically with cerebral palsy?

SHEPHERD: Cerebral palsy tends to be fairly linear. It often changes a little bit around puberty, but then it is linear. You have got cerebral palsy, it's not really possible that you will improve, and it is very unlikely that you'll make that degree of improvement. Maybe she is cerebral palsied, but the presentation that we've seen on these videos makes me doubt that she is of a level that would give her the classification she's got.

COX: The Australian Paralympic Committee told us Amanda Reid's classifications in swimming and cycling have followed the international rules and been conducted by classification panels. They said the panels follow a very thorough process both in and out of competition. Simon Watkins hasn't seen the video of Amanda - he can't bear to watch her anymore. Having gone through this case, he sees the classification system that underpins disabled sport as fundamentally flawed.

WATKINS: It's always going to be an imperfect system. There are so many conditions and you can't have classes for every condition, so somebody is always going to feel like they have more of an impairment than somebody else who is the same class. But the process of gaming that or faking that or over-exaggerating an ailment that you have - or completely inventing one, in some cases - it's just not the whole ethos of why the Paralympic movement is there, and it's just very hard to watch and disgusting to see.

COX: The International Paralympic Committee told us if an athlete moves between any of the ten sports they cover, they can monitor those changes, and they were exploring whether to create a centralised system to track athletes across all Para sport.

MUSIC

COX: This isn't about one high profile athlete. It's about a system where classifiers worry that they can be duped and allegations about athletes moving between sports to get the most preferential category, where governing bodies are failing to act on warnings about exploitation, and where Marc Woods says it means some athletes are losing faith in the integrity of Paralympic sport.

WOODS: Within Paralympic sport, there are those who feel that playing the system is part of the game, and it ruins the credibility of the sport. We've worked for decades trying to ensure that Paralympic sport has some credibility, and there are people out there who don't really care about that. They just need to make sure that they win the next medal. Paralympic sport was born in this country. I'd like to think that we can do the right thing by it to make sure it's still fit for purpose over the next sixty years.