

Transcript – Ellie Simmonds: Paralympic champion 'hated swimming but found love for it again'

ELLIE SIMMONDS: I just hated swimming, I hated everything about it. I just thought, I don't want to do this, I've got no objectives. Like, there's nothing that I want to do in the pool, I've achieved my dream, was to get a Paralympic gold medal and I've been to three Games.

[PIANO PLAYING]

[TEXT ON SCREEN: Five-time Paralympic champion Ellie Simmonds thought about retiring after Rio 2106. Instead, she decided to take a year off to travel.]

I just needed that time away to figure out what I wanted in life. And I had an amazing year where I went travelling on my own to so many different places- Thailand, Australia for a month, I went to South Africa for a month working for a charity. I just found myself. I love just being around people and it was just so nice. I realised that I didn't want to retire. I still want to keep going and train as much as I can. And I found my love for swimming again.

[POOL SOUNDS]

[TEXT ON SCREEN: 23-year-old Simmonds has been in the public eye since she won Paralympic gold aged 13.]

There's always that pressure. And I'm very lucky that I've got a personality that can cope with it. But to be honest, it's exciting when people expect me to do something. I just want to go out there and prove something, so it gives me a buzz as well.

[PIANO PLAYING]

[TEXT ON SCREEN: Simmonds hopes to regain her place on the GB team in time for the European Championships in Dublin in August.]

I know that it's going to be really tough to get back on the team. And the world is moving forward, and that's so good for Paralympic sport and Paralympic swimming. And especially in Britain, we've got the likes of Ellie Robinson still, Maisie Summers-Newton, who's new in the category and she's a youngster in the Essex [INAUDIBLE]. So it's good that those youngsters are coming through because I'm not going to be around all the time. And it's nice for me to have the home rivalry.

[PIANO PLAYING]

[TEXT ON SCREEN: Simmonds has Tokyo 2020 in her sights before she hangs up her cap and goggles.]

I'd just love to go to a fourth Games and to be back on that podium and to be on top. Just to go to a Paralympics, just to represent my country again and just to wear that tracksuit and to say that I've been to my fourth Paralympic Games would be a huge honour. I'd love to go out on a high in Tokyo yeah, that would be my main goal. But it's still- it's two years away and I'm just taking each day as it comes and just enjoying.