

Jaco van Gass

BOARD MEMBER

South African born Jaco van Gass was a member of the British Armed Forces Parachute Regiment – SFSG (Special Forces Support Group).

It was during Jaco's second tour of Afghanistan in 2009, after five and a half months and with just two weeks to go when Jaco sustained severe life changing injuries. Jaco and his platoon were engaged by Enemy Forces and after an intense 45 minute fire fight, Jaco was hit by an RPG (Rocket Propelled Grenade). The injuries he sustained included the loss of his left arm at the elbow, a collapsed left lung, shrapnel wounds to his left side, punctured internal organs, blast wounds to upper thigh, a broken tibia and a fractured knee. Jaco had 11 operations and intense rehabilitation.

Despite the physical and mental trauma endured, Jaco became a first-class downhill skier, and multiple marathon runner. He was a member of the record-breaking team of wounded soldiers to trek unsupported to the North Pole (joined partly by Prince Harry), and he's also climbed Alaska's 6000m Mt Denali, and Everest (narrowly missing the summit due to adverse weather). He has overcome adversity and is taking on the world.

Jaco has been a member of the GB Para-Cycling team, competing internationally at the World Championships in 2013, 2014 and 2015. He has become a National Champion Cyclist on the road multiple times. Jaco raced in the Para-Cycling Track World Championships in March 2018 and won a bronze medal in the C4 4K Pursuit.

In 2020 Jaco became a Triple World Champion in Track Cycling at the Track

World Championships in Milton and also won two silver medals. Jaco most recently competed in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games and became a double Paralympic Champion and a three times World Record holder.

As a keen adventurer, Jaco has reached the North Pole, attempted Everest and summited a number of mountains. Jaco is now also a member of Adaptive Grand Slam Team, a team of disabled adventurers who are on a mission to be the first disabled team in history to complete the notorious Grand Slam. Very few adventurers have completed all stages of this impressive feat, which entails summiting the highest peak on each of the 7 continents and walking unsupported to the geographic North and South Poles.

Jaco is very excited to announce the release of his book, *Unequivocal*. It's his life story, sharing all the highs and lows that he's had to date and all the emotion that came with it. It's a true rollercoaster journey, facing adversity and many challenges along the way, with the most severe being his injury in Afghanistan.

Jaco hopes that it will inspire people to live life to the full, never give up and take on every challenge that comes their way. Anything is possible and his book *Unequivocal* shows that.

