



OFFICIAL RIDER BIOGRAPHY
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Ricky Balshaw

- Date of birth:** 10 November 1986.
- Lives:** Lawley Village, Shropshire.
- Major achievements:** Ricky's talent was spotted early and he was asked to join the British Paralympic squad aged only 14. This provided Ricky with best training and guidance until he was 16 and old enough to compete internationally as a member of the British team.
- He made his debut in Finland in 2002, finishing third in all three tests. That year, he also competed in Ireland, Holland and Belgium. The following year he was a member of the British team for the 2003 World Championships for Disabled Riders and finished fifth in the grade II freestyle. In 2004, Ricky was first reserve for the Athens Paralympics. In 2007, he rode as an individual at the World Para Dressage Championships and won individual bronze in grade 1b. He qualified for the British Dressage (BD) National Disabled Rider Championships every year from 1998-2007.
- Ricky won silver in the grade 1b freestyle at his first Paralympics, the 2008 Games, where he was selected to ride as an individual.
- Ricky also competes at novice and elem level in able-bodied competitions.
- Current competition horses:** Deacons Giorgi, a 16.2hh bay gelding by Giorgione out of Amber Express, born 1996 and owned by Ricky Balshaw and Julia Lazzari.
- First competitive experience:** "A regional Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) show when I was about five or six. At that stage, I still had people holding me on either side of the horse, so that I didn't fall off."
- Trainer:** Michel Assouline and Joss Edwards.
- Superstitions:** "I don't wear green when I'm riding. I was once told that green is an unlucky colour and it stuck in my mind. One day I borrowed a green whip and ended up being bucked off; I haven't worn green since."
- Most admired riders:** "Lee Pearson for what he has achieved in Paralympics and able-bodied competitions."
- Qualities looked for in a dressage horse:** "The main thing is that it has brakes, so that I can stop. I like well-built horses and go for warmbloods."
- Favourite dressage venue:** Moorsele, Belgium.
- What other career would you have chosen:** "I am working in the hotel industry part-time, but riding is my priority."
- Favourite meal:** Chicken tika balti.
- Favourite drink:** Toffoc.

Ricky has cerebral palsy and used to have a lot of spasticity in his muscles until he had a 9½hr operation when he was 10, followed by a 10-week stay in hospital. This operation reduced the spasticity in his muscles and stopped the disability getting worse.

“It is hard to move my limbs individually,” he says. “I don’t use any special tack except jumping reins as my grip is not great. I also use elastic bands on my stirrups to hold my feet in place as I can’t get the stirrups back if I loose them.”

Ricky’s physiotherapist recommended he took up riding when he was aged four as it helps to learn balance and stretch muscles.