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Koen Jansens is a gold and silver medal-winning former Dutch Paralympian.

Competing in wheelchair basketball, he won gold in 1992 at the Barcelona Paralympics and silver in 2000 at the Sydney Paralympics.

Now 50, Koen lives in Manly, New South Wales, with his wife, Australian Paralympian wheelchair basketballer, Donna Ritchie. He and Donna met at the 1996 Atlanta Paralympics and Koen moved to Australia a year later.

Koen is an NDIS participant, and his funding has helped him continue his passion to play and coach wheelchair basketball.

In 2022, with support from LiveBig, a specialist therapy provider for people with disability, Koen formed the Manly Wheel Eagles, a wheelchair basketball team he’s also coaching.

The team entered the National Wheelchair Basketball League for the first time this year and were excited to make the quarter finals.

While they did go down to the Perth Wheelcats, Koen said everyone was thrilled to get as far as they did.

‘We couldn’t have done it without LiveBig, our major sponsor,’ he said.

‘Thanks to them, we had a pretty good year. To scrape through to the finals was great.

‘We know what we’re up against now and what we have to do, so next year we will be back better than ever!’

Koen grew up in the Netherlands and was introduced to team sports at an early age.

‘I soon figured out able-bodied sport wasn’t working well for me,’ he said.

‘I knew wheelchair basketball was played near where I lived, so I went along and was introduced to it. I never looked back. It’s been great for me physically and socially.

‘It’s also a really good way, especially for young people, to learn from others in similar situations,’ he said.

‘Wheelchair basketball is such a fast game. The rules are similar to basketball, the only difference is the travel rule, which has been slightly adjusted. Apart from that, the hoop height, the court size, everything is the same.’

Koen said the NDIS helps him to keep playing and coaching the sport he loves.

‘It was hard to manage doing it all before the NDIS. Now Donna and I have support workers who help with certain things. We get support to maintain our home, we have car modifications, and therapies and equipment to help us stay fit and healthy.

‘It’s been a massive help. It’s been life-changing,’ Koen said.

‘It’s incredibly important for anyone with a disability to stay active, especially if you’ve been in a wheelchair for a long time, and as you age.

‘All our support means we will be able to stay independent and active in our community for a long time,’ he said.

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