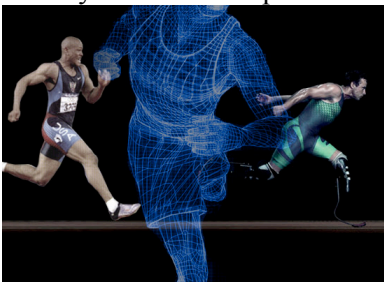


The Cheetah Flex Foot

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Van Phillips, was then a 21-year-old student in Arizona and nobody could have predicted how many lives would be changed as a result of that terrible accident. He lost his left leg in a water skiing accident in 1976 and was frustrated with the unresponsive and ill-fitting prostheses available at the time. Phillips switched his studies to prosthetics, graduating in 1981. One year later, he enlisted the help of an aerospace company to analyze a carbon fiber material cut like a J-shaped foot, to be attached to a sole below and a prosthetic socket above. When weight was applied by landing on the heel, it was converted into energy that literally put spring into the step, simulating the spring action of the normal foot and allowing the wearer to run and jump. This device marked the first real innovation to lower-limb prosthetic devices in recorded history.

The history of amputee sprinting is short, and as more athletes have taken to the track it is perhaps unsurprising that records have fallen so dramatically. One of the biggest factors in the record breaking has been the use and adaptation of technology. The first sprinters used their own standard prosthetic legs, which were not designed for sprinting. The Flex-Foot has many different versions. A version of the Flex-Foot, the Cheetah, is used by more than 90 percent of Paralympics track



athletes.

There has been dispute over this innovative design. Oscar Pistorius, a bilateral amputee from South Africa. He is a world champion sprinter who has broken his own world record 27 times and is the first ever Paralympian to win Gold in each of the 100, 200 and 400 meter-sprints. In January 2008, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) banned him from competing against able-bodied runners on the grounds that his prostheses give him a technical advantage. It has

been alleged that the "blades" he uses are longer than is necessary, allowing him to cover more ground in each stride.

Initially the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) banned him from participating on the grounds that his prostheses give him an advantage over able-bodied runners



On May 16, 2008, the CAS made its ruling, concluding that there is insufficient evidence that Pistorius gained any advantage from his prostheses, and overturned the earlier ruling. It marked a significant day in the world of elite athletics – disabled and able-bodied.

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