

METRO PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

in association with **BRITISH AIRWAYS** 

# You've been amazing

As we say farewell to London's golden summer, Metro and BA pay tribute to the unsung heroes – **THE PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN** – the millions of supporters who united behind the Olympic and Paralympic teams and made Home Advantage truly count

**S**ome said we couldn't do it, that the Games would be a disaster. On the night of Friday, July 27, the British public turned on their TVs and held their breath. However, within a few moments of Danny Boyle's opening ceremony and the first of the 7,500 volunteer performers flooding into the Olympic Stadium, the country knew what we know now – it would be a resounding success.

Boosted by a home advantage, Team GB had its best Olympic result in more than a

century, finishing behind only China and the US. What's more, public transport didn't seize into a knot that couldn't be untangled and Jessica Ennis's stomach inspired a nation to go to the gym.

The coverage of the Paralympics has been unprecedented, with record TV audiences

and 3.6million viewers tuning in on the first Friday. South African superstar Oscar Pistorius even said Britain's enlightened approach to the event would help change perceptions about disability.

But this success, according to London mayor Boris Johnson, was not just down to the athletes but the 'Olympic army' – the biggest peacetime mobilisation of volunteers in British history. A quarter of a million people applied to be Games Makers, the term for the Olympic and Paralympic volunteers, with around 70,000 being successful. A total of 8million volunteer hours steered the Olympics and Paralympics over the course of the summer, with more than 1million hours of training delivered by 150 trainers.

'The true spirit of London was encapsulated

during our fantastic 2012 Games, with visitors receiving a resounding welcome by our army of magical Olympic volunteers,' says Johnson. 'As well as the electric atmosphere in the sporting venues, they helped create a positive buzz across the capital, ensuring the excitement spread to all Londoners.'

So, as the sun sets on one of Great Britain's most historic summers, we look back at London 2012.





# WINNING FORMULA

**W**ith a capacity of 80,000 people, the centrepiece to the Games was the Olympic Stadium.

The arena is the third-largest in Great Britain and stands cheek to jowl with Anish Kapoor's serpent-like Orbit, the tallest art structure in the country. Surrounding the stadium are myriad other purpose-built grounds, including the Aquatics Centre, Basketball Arena and Velodrome.

The festival atmosphere blended with a uniquely British well-mannered approach, as Londoners welcomed overseas sports fans with open arms. Jit Sandhu lives in Singapore but flew to Britain to witness the Mexico vs Brazil men's football final at Wembley Stadium.

'Everyone was in carnival mood – people were high-fiving strangers and getting their pictures taken with pretty Brazilian ladies and cowboy-Mexicans,' he says. Alastair Newman, from Horeditch, east London, went to the Paralympics five times, including to see Hannah Cockroft win Britain's first Paralympic

gold in the T34 100m. 'This really brought home the enormity of all the athletes' achievements,' he says.

## Positive attitude

Far from being the chaotic, unadorned, the Olympics

dictated the way even the most cynical Londoner thinks. While the ever-smiling volunteers set the tone for the Games, the people of the capital were praised for being good-natured in the face of disruption.

'The Olympics is believed to lead to national pride, cohesion and well-being,' says Dr Ashley Goff, principal psychologist at Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. 'By hosting the Games and being so successful in winning medals, it helps us to feel good about ourselves by association.'

As well as making the country happier, the Games have made us healthier too. There has been a 24 per cent rise in people taking part in

triathlons this year, according to Menkind.co.uk. And more than half of eight to 12-year-olds said the Olympics made them want to do more sport, says MediaCom UK.

Liam Barrett, owner of The Fit Scene, reveals the Olympics has driven an upsurge in the number of Brits wanting to get fit. 'One female

client has always been adamant against any sort of boxercise training but now wants to do nothing else

**Glued to the screen:** Fans watch the cycling at BA Park Live (above); Sir Paul McCartney and a young fan cheer on the athletes (left)

after seeing Nicola Adams win gold for Britain,' says Barrett.

## Home advantage

The success of the British Olympians is down, in part, to hard training sessions on cold, dark mornings (and

around £264million of investment). But psychologists believe the home advantage gave the athletes the extra edge, as they were buoyed by the seas of British fans who turned out to support them.

'Research tells us a home advantage can lead to greater levels of team and self-confidence as well as lower levels of anxiety for both competitors and coaches,' says HarleyStreet.com clinical psychologist Dr Michael Sinclair. 'Furthermore, larger supportive crowds rooting for a home team have been proven to positively affect performance in competitive sports.'

For those not lucky enough to get a ticket to the Games, there was a plan B. Throughout Britain were a number of huge screens that went

some way to matching the stadium

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atmospheres, including BA Park Live, an area for up to 10,000 fans.

‘Park Live was a great success and exceeded our expectations,’ says British Airways sponsorship manager Luisa Fernandez. ‘It provided fans with the perfect location to relax and enjoy fantastic sporting moments’.

Jesse Hubbard, from Tower Hamlets, east London, got tickets for the Olympic Park. ‘The atmosphere was so amazing and it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,’ he says.

### **Tweets and commentary**

In a world of rehearsed sound bites, the Olympics is as live as it gets. This meant we got an endless stream of memorable commentary. The top moment had to be when Beth Tweddle finally got the bronze. Presenter to Beth Tweddle’s parents:

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**Sporting delights: (from top left) Fans cheer on Bradley Wiggins; BA Park Live is bathed in red, white and blue; Prince William, Lord Coe and Prince Harry watch in awe**

‘Just tell me what you’ve been going through this past week.’ Tweddle’s dad: ‘I’ve been laying a patio.’

On top of the obvious pressure, Britain had the responsibility of being the first Twitter Olympics. OK, it gave us a laugh when things went wrong but people could learn more about the Games and connect with athletes. The stats were staggering: 150million tweets posted about the Olympics; 9.66million mentions of the opening ceremony on Twitter in a single day; and 80,000 tweets per minute about Usain Bolt’s 200m gold win. #amazing.

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## RECORD BREAKERS

■ Channel 4's coverage of the Paralympic opening ceremony attracted a peak audience of 11.2million viewers.

■ The busiest day for BA Park Live was August 4, known as Super Saturday, when it was filled to capacity with 10,000 enthusiastic sports fans.

■ The biggest cheers at BA Park Live, measured by the 'cheerometer', came when Mo Farah, Sir Chris Hoy and Jessica Ennis won their gold medals.

■ The Games recruited 70,000 volunteers from 250,000 applicants, making it Britain's biggest post-war volunteer recruitment campaign.

