Stretching for more

- Recap: Roland Garros, ice sledge hockey World Championships
- Preview: Athletics, road cycling and swimming World Championships
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In contrast, 46 countries sent just one athlete with the majority of them receiving a wild card in order to compete.

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On 7 September, the host city of the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be decided in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The three bid cities – Istanbul, Madrid and Tokyo – have each submitted excellent bids and I am delighted at each city’s desire to deliver the best Paralympic Games possible.

There used to be a time when the Paralympics received just a passing mention in bid books. However, thanks to the success of previous Games, bid cities are now more aware of the importance of the Paralympics. They realise that making the most of two spectacular sporting events as one 60-day festival of sport has the potential to be a real vote winner.

I wish all three cities the best of luck and thank each of them on behalf of the Paralympic Movement for their efforts.

In November, IPC members will also get a chance to meet at the IPC General Assembly and Conference in Athens, Greece, where elections will also be held for the roles of IPC President, Vice President and Governing Board members.

I’d like to take this opportunity to thank my Governing Board colleagues for their superb contributions during the last four-year term, which has seen the Movement continue to grow in size, scale and stature.

I look forward to seeing you all in Athens.

Enjoy your read.

Sir Philip Craven, MBE
IPC President

There is nothing like the satisfaction you get after a good run. Our sport prosthesis with the new 3S80 Sport knee joint makes it possible to get up and running again. Recharge on the run!

There’s no better way to increase strength and mobility while enhancing your overall wellbeing.

Only when you feel your best can you realise your potential – and truly enjoy it. Whether alone or in a group, sport is pure energy.
The latest news in the Paralympic Movement includes development progress in Burundi and Kenya, as well as the implementation of broadcast initiatives throughout Asia and the Warrior Games in America.

Brazils Andre Brasil and Canadas Benoit Huot play up their rivalry in the S10 class ahead of the IPC Swimming World Championships.

What hashtags should you use on Twitter to discuss the next major events in para-sport?

Join us as we explore the vicious cycle of athlete funding in para-sport on the road to the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games.

What should athletes with a visual impairment and athletes with a physical impairment be allowed to compete together in sailing’s three-person keelboat event?

The Sochi 2014 medals are unveiled and Rio 2016 employees get a taste of what it is like to be visually impaired.

Allow an American wheelchair rugby star to take you through an airport with a team of 12 Paralympians in wheelchairs.

The Sochi 2014 medals are unveiled and Rio 2016 employees get a taste of what it is like to be visually impaired.

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Cover photo: Gustavo Fernandez, pictured competing at Roland Garros, has helped attract attention and sponsorship to wheelchair tennis in Argentina.
Warrior Games attract international attention

US Paralympics hosted the 2013 Warrior Games in May in Colorado Springs, Colorado, attracting 260 wounded, ill and injured service members and veterans.

The event featured five US teams (Army, Marine Corps, Navy/Coast Guard, Air Force and Special Operations) and a British Armed Forces team. Great Britain’s Prince Harry attended the event to help raise awareness of the Paralympic Movement and support the rehabilitation of servicemen. The Games were opened by London 2012 Paralympic gold medallist Bradley Snyder, a former US Navy Lieutenant.

“It is tough being at the Warrior Games as an ambassador and a mentor because in my heart, I’m an athlete and a competitor. But I am so proud to be here,” said Snyder.

“Last year, I watched from the athlete section as Melissa Stockwell lit the cauldron as the honourary torchbearer, and I was so inspired. I am thankful for the opportunity this year to light the cauldron and pass the torch to these athletes, and help them find their place in a Movement that means so much to me.”

Kenya hold Agitos Foundation athletics course

The course aimed to help to develop a new wave of athletes in East Africa and allow Kenya to gain the knowledge necessary to hold an international IPC Athletics competition.

The Agitos Foundation IPC Athletics Technical Course took place from 27 May - 7 June in Nairobi, Kenya.

The course, co-financed by UK Sport, aimed to help coaches, national officials and national classifiers systematically develop the sport and its athletes, and to decrease the discrepancy between the training conditions of athletes from different countries.

Sixty-five participants from Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo attended four different sessions for visual impairment and physical impairment classification, coaching and officiating.

Each country received at least one low-cost racing wheelchair at the end of the coaching course, during which coaches learned how to train wheelchair racers.

The participating delegations will now be mentored and monitored in the implementation of the athlete performance pathway.

Burundi host first national para-sport event

Following on from Agitos Foundation development camps, Burundi hosted a national competition for sitting volleyball and goalball in April that included 17 teams from around the country. All members of the National Paralympic Committee of Burundi and a large crowd enjoyed the event, which was the result of training organised by the Agitos Foundation in Rwanda in February 2012 and Senegal in December 2012.
Iranian Paralympic archer Zahra Nemati received SportAccord’s Spirit of Sport Award in May, less than a year after becoming the first woman from her country to win Olympic or Paralympic gold. The award honours the commitment and humanitarian spirit of SportAccord members who have made an exceptional and lasting contribution to using sport as a tool for positive social change. Nemati, who won gold at London 2012 in the individual recurve W1/W2 and bronze in the women’s team recurve open, received significant media coverage in Iran that helped break down the perceptions of people with an impairment and also inspired other women to take up sport.

**Iran’s Nemati wins Spirit of Sport Award**

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**APC teams up with ABU for broadcast opportunities**

The Asian Paralympic Committee (APC) embarked on plans to develop a partnership with broadcasters in the region to help enhance television coverage for the Paralympic Games, as well as the Asian Para-Games and Asian Youth Para-Games. Through collaboration with the Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), the APC hopes to attract more public broadcasters and Free-to-Air stations. The APC initiated engagement efforts with Asian broadcasters by participating in May’s 52nd ABU Sports Conference held in Bali, Indonesia. Delegates representing more than 25 public and private broadcasting organisations as well as sports marketing agencies attended the conference.

**Allianz extends commitment with IPC**

Allianz has been a proud International Partner of the IPC since 2006 and in April confirmed its support through 2016. This is the first time Allianz has signed a long-term agreement for four years with the IPC. In addition to the global and local partnerships, Allianz will also be involved with IPC Athletics in order to create even more excitement about the Paralympic Movement. Local partnerships between Allianz subsidiaries and local NPCs are about to be signed as well in the Czech Republic and Germany.

**Oliveira named world’s 17th most marketable athlete**

Brazilian Paralympic sprint champion Alan Fonteles Oliveira was listed as No. 17 on SportsPro magazine’s 50 Most Marketable Athletes list for 2013. SportsPro saw Oliveira’s 200m T44 victory at London 2012 as a watershed moment for Paralympic sport, raising its commercial success in recent months and fostering rivalries among some of the world’s best sprinters. SportsPro wrote that Oliveira’s name is actually bigger now in Great Britain than in his native Brazil, but that Caixa Economica Federal will put 120 million reals toward Brazil’s Paralympic ambitions over the next four years to help him and his teammates succeed.

**Nicholson to lead IPC Athletes’ Council**

Todd Nicholson, a five-time Paralympian and part of Canada’s 2006 Paralympic gold-medal winning ice sledge hockey team and pictured on the far left, was elected the new Chairperson of the IPC Athletes’ Council for the next four years in May. The IPC Athletes’ Council is the collective voice of Paralympic athletes within the IPC and the greater Paralympic Movement. Its role is to provide feedback and advice and report to the IPC Governing Board on behalf and in the interest of the athletes in all IPC matters.

As Chairperson, Nicholson will be an ex officio member of the IPC Governing Board with voting rights. He will also be put forward by the IPC to join the IOC Athletes’ Commission. The IPC Athletes’ Council is made up of nine athletes – six from summer sports and three from winter sports.
#AskAnAthlete

Prior to August’s IPC Swimming World Championships in Montreal, Canada, Paralympic champions Andre Brasil and Benoit Huot talk about their rivalry in the S10 class.

I will swim five individual events and two relays. I will try to do my best to win seven medals, and I’m hoping for a minimum of four golds.

What do you hope to achieve at the World Championships?

It’s a very unique opportunity that I have to be able to compete at home in front of friends and family. I am looking forward to showing Montreal what para-swimming is all about. It will be great to increase the visibility of para-sports in Canada.

What music do you listen to before a race?

I don’t really listen to music. I like to talk with the other swimmers to get excited about the race.

What do you think of your rival?

We have become good friends over the years and I am lucky to have him as a competitor. He made me a better athlete by pushing the limits in our sport to another level.

What’s your best swimming stroke?

I would think freestyle is my best stroke, but I love the individual medley. It’s a fun race because there is a little bit of strategy in the event, and it’s fun to be able to train for four swimming strokes.

I love to swim freestyle. It’s an amazing stroke. No matter how fast I’m swimming it, I always feel like climbing another step.

What goes through your mind when you hear your national anthem on top of the podium?

“The Pretender” by the Foo Fighters.

Benoit is more than a rival, he is my friend and an idol to me. He showed me how amazing this sport is.

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The first two IWAS Wheelchair Fencing Grand Prix events took place in Canada and Italy, and the final event will take place in Hong Kong in December.

At the first event, France won five titles and claimed podium places in all 11 events. A highlight of Montreal was when France’s Romain Noble beat Poland’s Norbert Calka to secure victory in the category A epee event, while in the equivalent category B competition Marc Andre Cratere beat compatriot Alim Latreche to the title in an all-French final.

Poland’s Marta Fidrych beat France’s Delphine Bernard to take home the category A title in the epee discipline with Simon Briese-Baetke, a silver medallist at London 2012, coming up victorious in the category B event.

Italy’s Beatrice Vio continued her meteoric rise in the sport in Montreal with a win over London 2012 bronze medallist Marta Makowska of Poland in the final of the category B foil competition. Then, she made the most of her home advantage in Lonato del Garda, beating London 2012 silver medallist Dani Gyongi of Hungary in the final to firmly establish herself as one of the sport’s top performers this year.
IPC Powerlifting Open European Championships

Russia put on a show as the host nation of May’s IPC Powerlifting Open European Championships in Aleksin, topping medals table with 11 gold and 18 overall medals.

Iraq finished second with three gold and five total medals, followed by Poland with two gold and eight total medals.

Ten world and 20 European records were broken among athletes at the sport’s biggest event this year.

The Championships included IPC Powerlifting’s new weight categories, which took effect on 1 January this year, changing the structure of weight classes and meaning several new world and regional records were set. This followed an extensive review of all bodyweight category trends across major competitions.

DUBAI TO HOST 2014 WORLDS

The IPC announced that the 2014 IPC Powerlifting World Championships will be from 5-11 April in Dubai, UAE.

Hosted by the Dubai Club for the Disabled, between 250-300 athletes from 50 countries are expected to participate in the World Championships – an event required for athletes wishing to compete at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games.

ITF Wheelchair Tennis singles rankings (as of 1 July)

France’s Stephanie Houdet retained her men’s singles title and Germany’s Sabine Ellerbrock won her first Grand Slam title at June’s Roland Garros event in Paris, France.

Japan’s Shingo Kunieda took Houdet to a final-set tiebreaker in the men’s singles final, but Houdet, world No. 2, was able to hang on to clinch a 7-5, 5-7, 7-6 (5) victory.

Following that final, Houdet then partnered with Kunieda to win their second men’s doubles title together at Roland Garros, fighting back from a set down to beat second seeds Gordon Reid of Great Britain and Ronald Vink of the Netherlands, 3-6, 6-4 (10-6).

After finishing runner-up to then-world No. 1 Aniek van Koot of the Netherlands in her first Grand Slam final at January’s Australian Open, then-world No. 3 Ellerbrock ended Roland Garros having beaten both of the world’s top two players on the women’s side.

Following her 6-4, 6-4 semi-final win over van Koot, the German claimed a 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 win against Dutch then-world No. 2 Jiske Griffioen in the final to reverse the result of last year’s Paralympic bronze-medal match.

The duo of van Koot and Griffioen, however, sped past Ellerbrock and Dutchwoman Sharon Walraven to cruise to the women’s doubles title with a 6-2, 6-3 victory.
Last year, The Paralympian discussed the rapid growth of Paralympic Games sponsorship and broadcasting in the lead-up to London 2012.

In a follow-up feature, we explore a part of the Movement that is struggling to keep up with that growth on the road to Rio 2016 – the vicious cycle of athlete funding.
t is 2013, and yet again, South African para-equestrian rider Philippa Johnson finds herself searching for a way to fund her career at the stables. The 39-year-old, a three-time Paralympian, originally made her international debut in 2002, delving into her life savings and riding on a borrowed horse just to take part. She received a big break after winning gold at the Beijing 2008 Paralympics, when the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASOC) chose to fund her next Paralympic cycle, paying for her living, training and sports scientists. But after failing to medal at London 2012, she lost all of that.

Everything on the road to Rio 2016 must now come out of her own pocket. She is left wondering what she can do to carry over the momentum she once had into the next Paralympic cycle. “We’re trying to align ourselves as much as possible with the able-bodied part of the sport,” Johnson said. “But when we compete internationally, we get prizes of blankets and bunches of flowers, whereas the able-bodied riders are getting cash. But our expenses are just as much, if not more expensive.”

Many Paralympians claim athlete funding and sponsorship has struggled to grow as fast as other aspects of the Paralympic Movement over the past few years. But why? “The Paralympics and sport for the disabled is becoming much more high-profile, and people are starting to see that these are not just cripples trying to do sport, these are serious sportmen and women,” Johnson said. “But still, our sponsorship isn’t there. Unfortunately, it’s a vicious cycle. We don’t get the sponsorship because we don’t get the publicity. We don’t get the publicity because there’s no sponsorship behind us. It’s a vicious cycle. Which came first, the chicken or the egg?”

Where to start? It is a constant challenge to maintain the visibility of athletes in the eyes of sponsors, the government and media between Games, making it difficult for some athletes to fund their way to the top. They are not alone. Some Olympic medalists face the same issue, losing sponsorship or funding once a Games conclude. Within this vicious funding cycle, National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) and national federations are expected to help fund athletes en route to their major events. Many of them have instituted specific and detailed funding programmes, such as SASOC’s Operation Excellence (OPEX), which provides four years worth of financial and logistical support to potential Olympic and Paralympic medal hopefuls. “We were getting funding six months before a Paralympic Games at one point,” Johnson said of South African medal hopefuls. “You can’t win medals with six months training. It’s four years training that it takes to get a medal. Luckily, South Africa did realise this and they chose a couple of elite athletes to target, fund and help, and they really, really reaped the benefits of it come London.”

Of the 48 athletes on the OPEX programme for Rio 2016, 23 of them – or 32 per cent – are para-athletes. To give this some context, 33 per cent of the athletes South Africa sent to London 2012 last year were for the Paralympics.

In some cases, NPCs have even partnered with external programmes that can indirectly provide athlete assistance. NPC Ghana, for example, works with the “Right to Dream” programme to enable athletes in their country to reach their full potential and take part in international competitions during the year.
**Greek sport funding**

Olympic vs. Paralympic funding from the Greek government in 2013:

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**Fluctuating funds**

Meanwhile, many NPCs receive funding from their governments to help support these initiatives, but with the world’s economy on a constant precipice, the amount of those funds is always fluctuating.

For instance, NPC Greece receives its funding from the Ministry of Sports and the General Secretariat of Sports, which are responsible for funding for all sport federations and associations in the country.

Greek athletes are funded and supported by their respective national sport federations, but state funding has decreased steadily for NPC Greece in the last few years due to the country’s financial crisis, leaving a lot of athletes’ careers in question.

“This happened mainly because of the financial crisis that led to rapid budget cuts that have also affected Paralympic sport,” said NPC Greece President Georgios Fountoulakis.

“During the last two years, because of the rapid budget cuts, there were individual instances where athletes had to cover their travel expenses.

“We are afraid that in future this will be more frequent if state funding decreases at the same rate it has the last four years.”

With government funding in flux, several NPCs such as Greece have relied on sponsors and donors to provide most of the funds needed to send their teams to events.

“It is encouraging that corporate sponsorship plays a more important role and has given us strong support,” Fountoulakis said.

“However, the challenges will also be there for the corporate sponsors, since in a more competitive and economically difficult environment they will also decrease or cut their sponsorship budgets.

“A positive notion is that in the last years we have also seen an increase in sponsor funding, especially from OPAP, our National Lottery Company. This is very positive, and we hope it will expand over the four years of the Paralympic cycle and will not be limited only to Paralympic years where the media interest is very high.”

**The athlete’s role**

While NPCs attempt to increase or stabilise funding, athletes constantly reach out to potential sponsors to fill in the gaps and ensure their participation in major events – some having more luck than others.

Heading into July’s IPC Athletics World Championships in Lyon, France, two notable sprinters – the Netherlands’ Marlou van Rhijn and the USA’s Jarryd Wallace – have had success in getting their names out there.

After countless media and public appearances and having a Barbie doll modeled after her, van Rhijn has now picked up three major sponsors – Ottobock, Frank Jol and Nike.

And that was before she became the world-record holder in the 100m, 200m and 400m T43 sprints.

Wallace, a T44 sprinter, has seen major success with his “A Leg in Faith Foundation” and self-marketing efforts, picking up sponsorship from Oakley, Back2Motion Physical Therapy, Georgia Sports Chiropractic and Procare Prosthetics and Orthotics.

“Big companies need to actually start having the balls to sponsor disabled athletes, and not only just go for the big names because that’s where the TV cameras are.”

“Greek boccia athlete Greg Polychronidis (far left), long jumper Anthi Karagianni (left) and Christos Stefanakis with pilot rider Konstantinos Troulinos (below) are all trying to fund their way to the next Paralympics with little support from the Greek government.”

“You’d think that if you’re a world-record holder and a Paralympic silver medallist, there’d almost be a company willing to throw some clothes at you, but that’s not happening unfortunately.”

Australian Paralympic sprinters Scott Reardon and Evan O’Hanlon have found it more difficult, though, and have taped up all logos on their shoes until they receive a sponsor.

“You’d think that if you’re a world-record holder and a Paralympic silver medalist, there’d almost be a company willing to throw some clothes at you, but that’s not happening unfortunately,” Reardon said.

Johnson has run into the same problems in equestrian.

“Our sport has come into parallels with the able-bodied sport so fast, but things like prize money and funding haven’t,” Johnson said.

“Big companies need to actually start having the balls to sponsor disabled athletes, and not only just go for the big names because that’s where the TV cameras are.”

**What does a typical competition cost for South African para-equestrian rider Phillipa Johnson?**

- **Entry fee**: €350
- **Stable fee**: €110
- **Accommodation**: €520
- **Transportation**: €650
- **Coaching**: €1,000
- **Groom**: €390
- **Training prior to competition**: €1,820

**Total**: €4,600
If the aim is to bring the world to Rio in 2016, IPC President Sir Philip Craven claims the Paralympic Movement’s visibility must span the entire globe on a regular and consistent basis prior to the Games.

“The IPC has made major steps forward in the last eight years that have shown the first results,” Fountoulakis said from an NPC’s point of view. “However, a lot of that progression has been isolated within Great Britain and Europe, and if the aim is to bring the world to Rio in 2016, IPC President Sir Philip Craven claims the Paralympic Movement’s visibility must span the entire globe on a regular and consistent basis prior to the Games.”

Sir Philip commented: “Although London was a huge success, the importance of athlete development was again underlined by the fact that just 10 countries supplied 45 per cent of all athletes. In contrast, 46 countries sent just one athlete.

“The Agitos Foundation aims to change this in future years by supporting and, if necessary, taking the lead in global athlete development.”

The Agitos Foundation aims to be the leading global organisation in developing sport activities for people with an impairment as a tool for changing lives and contributing to an inclusive society.

In the long-term the Foundation will improve athlete funding situations at the grassroots level.

Namibian sprinter Johanna Benson is a clear success story of the IPC’s organisational development initiatives. After winning her country’s first Olympic or Paralympic gold in the 200m T37 race at London 2012, she arrived home a sponsored superstar. The Namibian government rewarded her with a diplomatic passport, a house worth NAD 1.7 million (EUR 15,000) and a NAD 170,000 (EUR 15,000) grant. She was even nominated for the Laureus 2012 World Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability Award.

Benson’s success story proves it is possible to emerge from the aforementioned vicious funding cycle.

All three parties – the athlete, NPC and IPC – must join forces to show sponsors, media and governments that the Paralympic Movement does not regenerate a pulse around the world every four years. It is alive every day.

You just have to know where to look to be inspired.
Peacock recently being challenged by the USA’s Richard Browne, All four became Paralympic champions for the first time last year, with Marlou van Rhijn and American wheelchair racer Tatyana McFadden.

Notable stars to watch include British and Brazilian sprinters Jonnie Peacock and Alan Fonteles Oliveira, as well as Dutch double-amputee Put the Netherlands’ Marieke Vervoort, who is the defending Paralympic champion and world-record holder in this event, but Namibia’s new star in Johanna Benson will look to knock her off her pedestal to claim the gold.

Elsewhere on the women’s side, Belgium’s MarielleVervoort will challenge Canadian veteran Michelle Stilwell in the T52 wheelchair sprints and China’s Paralympian sensation Na Mi will look to triumph in the F37 field events.
The road to Rio 2016 for para-swimmers starts in Canada’s second biggest city from 12-18 August at the 2013 IPC Swimming World Championships in Montreal. It will be the largest gathering of swimmers since London 2012, featuring around 650 of the world’s best athletes from 60 countries in the specially adapted Parc Jean-Drapeau complex. A huge temporary structure will be built around the pool, effectively turning it into an indoor arena. The venue has a rich history for hosting international sporting events, including the 1976 Olympic Games and 2005 FINA World Aquatics Championships.

Host nation Canada, as well as Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand and the USA have all announced strong teams already.

Australia will send their most successful ever Paralympian in Matt Cowdrey, who already showed great form at the German Internationals in late May, when Australia picked up 11 medals. Local Montreal legend Benoit Huot will go up against Brazil’s Andre Brasil following their clashes at London 2012, and the pair will also need to watch out for up-and-coming American Ian Silverman, who broke two world records at the 2013 Spring CanAms.

Canadian Valerie Grand’Masion will chase American Kelly Becherer to avenge the 50m and 100m freestyle S13 wins that Becherer claimed in London, while the USA’s Jessica Long and New Zealand’s Sophie Pascoe will look to dominate the women’s S8 and S10 classes.

Great Britain will send four-time Paralympic gold medallist Ellie Simmonds, who returns for her third World Championships at 18, as well as 16-year-old Josef Craig, the youngest athlete to medal in London.

The Netherlands’ Marc Evers, New Zealand’s Sophie Pascoe and the USA’s Jessica Long are all on the IPC’s Ones to Watch list for Montreal 2013.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Following the conclusion of three World Cup events, the UCI Para-Cycling Road World Championships will draw the sport’s biggest stars to Baie-Comeau, Canada from 28 August - 1 September.

This year’s World Cup circuit includes stops in Italy, Spain and Canada, with each event drawing well over 200 competitors, including Italy’s former F1 driver Alex Zanardi and Canada’s visually impaired tandem rider Robbi Weldon.

The season will conclude in Baie-Comeau, which previously hosted the World Championships in 2010, becoming the first North American city to do so at that point in time.

Athens, Greece will stage the IPC General Assembly and Conference from 22-24 November, where elections will take place for the IPC President, Vice President and Governing Board.

The General Assembly is the supreme authority of the IPC which meets every two years.

More than 300 attendees are expected at the event and all National Paralympic Committees, International Federations, Regional Organisations, International Organisations of Sport for the Disabled and friends have been invited to attend.

Paralympic Media Award Categories

Broadcast
Written (print and online)
Radio
Photo

Paralympic Sport Award Categories

Best Male Athlete
Best Female Athlete
Best Team Performance
Best Male Paralympic Games Debut
Best Female Paralympic Games Debut
Exemplary Paralympic Games Official

The Paralympic Sport and Media Awards, in conjunction with Allianz, will be a part of the event, honouring the performances of athletes, teams, officials and the media from the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

The last IPC General Assembly and Conference took place in Beijing, China in 2011.
**Issue of the season**

**ISSUE**

Should visually impaired and physically impaired athletes compete together in the three-person keelboat event?

**Background**

Sailors are classified with a sport class from 1 to 7, with 1 indicating the most severe and 7 indicating the least severe eligible impairment. For example, a sailor with complete tetraplegia most likely competes in class 1 and a single above-the-knee amputee likely competes in class 7.

Athletes with a visual impairment are put in classes 3, 5 or 7, with 7 indicating the highest level of visual ability.

Each crew is allowed a maximum of 14 total points.

**Dror Cohen**

Beijing 2008 Paralympic champion

Physically impaired

I don’t care.

Why should we make so much noise about this?

As long as each team has athletes that make up the 14-point system, I’m ok with that.

Disabilities are never equal to each other, and there’s always going to be a grey area in Paralympic sport. You’re never going to get the sailing classification system – or the system for any sport – perfect.

Within each side, there’s range of disabilities, so we must use our abilities to our advantage.

Athletes with a physical impairment should help navigate the boat more and athletes with a visual impairment should help with the physical aspects more.

**Tsuneo Aso**

London 2012 Paralympian

Visually impaired

I believe the mixed three-person keelboat event is completely based on the co-operation and integration of the different types of impairments.

The combined-impairment event is actually a necessary recipe for success in disabled sailing.

I started sailing in 2002, and ever since, I’ve been fascinated with the sport because of the high speeds and being able to control the boat as a member of a three-person team.

Sailors with lower limb impairments, for example, have limitations on their movement in the boat, while those with a visual impairment such as myself have difficulties understanding what situations and circumstances we are in on the water.

Therefore, I try my best to control the majority of the heavy physical work, while my teammates inform me of our weather and race conditions, directing me what to do with the boat.

Essentially, they’re my guide runners, similar to what visually impaired sprinters or skiers have.

They are the navigators behind the strength.

I’ve taken the time to read sailing texts to further understand the reasoning behind these rules, as I’m really proud of myself for becoming a Paralympian and want to learn new lessons through my sport.

Now that I am over 60 years old, I’ve decided to leave the sport to make way for a new visually impaired sailor who I hope can share the same viewpoint as myself.

**ATHLETE CONCLUSION:**

Classification is never perfect in any sport, but both athletes agree the three-person keelboat makes for a fair race.
Paralympic Friends Programme takes flight

Rio 2016’s Organising Committee launched the Paralympic Friends Programme in May in order to mould attitudes toward para-sport integration within the organisation.

Visually impaired journalist and football 5-a-side player Marcos Lima led the first session, which gathered employees from each functional area for a blindfolded exercise and informative lectures about a visually impaired person’s daily routine.

Mario Azevedo, who participated in the exercises on behalf of Rio 2016’s commercial department, said: “The main goal is to promote the Paralympic Movement. I usually say that the Olympic Games are where heroes are made, but that the Paralympic Games are where heroes go, which is quite a different thing.

Airport accessibility assessed

The Rio 2016 Organising Committee recently delegated six professionals to Antonio Carlos Jobim International Airport to check the mobility and accessibility improvement opportunities in a place that will receive a great number of people with an impairment in a short period of time.

The operations department’s arrivals and departures specialist, Jose Magessi, co-ordinated the visit and insisted on going through the entire airport in a wheelchair.

“We saw the airport from a different point of view, a different perspective,” Magessi said.

“We followed a traveller’s normal path,” Magessi explained. “We started at the pavement, went through the check-in area, went up to the food court on the third floor, came back for boarding through a jet bridge, visited a few toilets and tested the use of telephones, check-in kiosks, drinking fountains, 24-hour banks. Then, we followed the usual arrivals route. After that, we repeated the same process done at Terminal 2.”

Medals unveiled for next Paralympic Winter Games

The Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games medals were unveiled at the SportAccord Annual International Sports Convention in May in St. Petersburg, Russia.

The presentation ceremony was opened by Sochi 2014 President and CEO Dmitry Chernyshenko, who gave the audience the main facts and figures about the medals, which feature the Sochi 2014 “Patchwork Quilt”, a mosaic of national designs from the various cultures and ethnicities of the Russian Federation.

The medals have been carefully crafted to depict the landscape of Sochi from the sun’s rays reflecting through the snowy mountain tops onto the sandy beaches of the Black Sea coast. These contrasts in Russia’s natural landscape are embodied in the medals and will be an everlasting souvenir for the champions.

One side of the medals features the Paralympic Agitos, while the reverse displays the logo of the Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games and the name of the competition in English. The official name of the Games in Russian and English is engraved on the medal rim. The awards also contain inscriptions in Braille for the visually impaired.

A CLOSER LOOK

Weight: 686 grams
Thickness: 10mm
Designer: Adamas
(Russia’s leading jeweler)
Time to create each medal: 18 hours
So what are you guys here for? A race or something?"

“No, we’re actually ballet dancers.”

This was one of my exasperated teammates’ satirical responses to what may have felt like the thousandth time of being mistaken for wheelchair racers in an airport, a common occurrence for all wheelchair athletes.

Travelling with a team of wheelchair athletes – which we just did to June’s Denmark Wheelchair Rugby Challenge – is an experience unlike any other.

For most, travelling is routine, with the occasional hiccup in weather or plane malfunctions.

With a wheelchair rugby team, however, any number of things can happen.

Baggage claim is always fun as well. A confused looking airline employee will often wander up to one of us, often looking disoriented, and begin to mumble “There’s a bunch of … um … wheelchairs … are they yours?”

It’s typically a safe assumption that the 12 sport wheelchairs in baggage claim are going to the 12 people in wheelchairs waiting in baggage claim. But I suppose never assume anything.

But there are also perks to travelling with a wheelchair team. We always board planes first, which sometimes results in glares from first-class passengers, but since we also leave last, it evens out.

I call us the Marines of commercial travel. First in, last out. People are often genuinely interested in what we do as well, and travelling gives us the opportunity to connect to people across the world to spread awareness for the Paralympic Movement first-hand.

Chuck Aoki
Nationality: American
Profession: USA wheelchair rugby player
Most well-known for: Helping USA win bronze at London 2012

Wheelchairs can be lost. Everyone is patted down and searched in security. Equipment can be broken.

The eyes of gate agents widen when they see 12 large wheelchairs rolling toward their check-in desk, and you can see them visibly exhale before helping us.

I’m not sure why we stir such trepidation in airline agents, but most do enjoy getting to be a part of our journeys.
“To enable Paralympic athletes to achieve sporting excellence and inspire and excite the world.”