Paralympian
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Paralympic Winter Games Special Edition

Road to Sochi

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paralympic games

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“We must ensure that the athletes remain at the heart of the Movement and that everything we do contributes toward the IPC vision.”

Dear readers,

Welcome to the first edition of The Paralympian of 2014, a significant year for the Paralympic Movement for, on 22 September, the IPC will celebrate its silver jubilee.

When you look at the size and scale of the Paralympic Movement today, it is hard to believe what has been achieved in the last 25 years.

The IPC now boasts over 200 proud members, acts as the international federation for nine sports and is responsible for the world’s third-largest sporting event, selling millions of tickets and attracting billions of TV viewers.

A lot has been achieved in a limited timeframe, and every single IPC member should be proud of their contribution to this fantastic success.

We should not sit back on our laurels, however.

That is why this October I have invited the whole IPC membership to Berlin for a three-day conference. Although we will rightly celebrate the achievements of the last 25 years whilst there, the main aim of the event is to share, discuss and debate ideas about how the IPC and Paralympic Movement can enjoy even greater success over the next quarter of a century.

To achieve this, I believe three key areas are fundamental to future growth:

- World and regional events – increase the standard of sporting events between Games.
- Athlete development – increase the number of athletes and countries practicing para-sport
- Paralympic Games – maintaining the momentum generated by London 2012

Before October’s event, we have a busy sporting calendar ahead of us which includes March’s Paralympic Winter Games and 11 World Championships in summer sports.

The Sochi 2014 Games, which are previewed in this edition, are set to be the biggest ever in terms of athletes and sporting disciplines. Thanks to a number of new and enhanced broadcast agreements, they are also set to break all viewing records, exceeding the figures set by Vancouver 2010.

The stars of the show in Sochi will be the athletes and, as we embark on a busy year, we must ensure that athletes remain at the heart of the Movement and that everything we do contributes toward the IPC vision: ‘To enable Paralympic athletes to achieve sporting excellence and inspire and excite the world.’

I hope you enjoy this copy of the magazine, which also includes the regular mixture of news and features.

Enjoy the Games.

Sir Philip Craven, MBE
IPC President
PARALYMPIC NEWS

The latest news in the Paralympic Movement covers the NHK Paralympic broadcast deal in Japan, Iran’s National Paralympic Week and BP’s support of the African Wheelchair Basketball Championships.

FEATURE: RECIPE FOR GOLD

Take a journey with some of the world’s top visually impaired athletes to see how they adapt to their sports by using guides on a daily basis for training and competition.

ISSUE OF THE SEASON

What are the best ways for National Paralympic Committees in the Americas region to experience growth in the lead-up to the Toronto 2015 Parapan American Games and Rio 2016 Paralympics?

UPCOMING EVENTS

The IPC Athletics season kicks off with the second year of the Grand Prix, while several other summer sports are set to stage World Championships.

WORLD SPORT ROUNDUP

Take a look back at the IPC Nordic Skiing World Cup and IPC Wheelchair Dance Sport World Championships.

FUTURE GAMES

Brazil marked 1,000 days to go until the Rio 2016 Paralympics and IPC staff held a Paralympic Orientation Seminar for the Tokyo 2020 Games.

GUEST COLUMN

IPC Athletes’ Council member and Dutch sitting volleyball player Elvira Stinissen shares why athletes deserve a voice in the Paralympic Movement’s decisions.
IPC launches ‘All About Ability’ video

To mark the UN Day of Persons with Disabilities on 7 December, the IPC launched a new video called “All About Ability,” which celebrates para-athletes’ contributions as agents of change in the communities they live.

The film looks back on the history of the Paralympic Movement and celebrates the milestones achieved in athlete participation, sport development, and increased commercial support and media coverage.

It ends with the call to action that “Together we are spreading a message of respect and equal opportunity for all individuals.”

The video also highlights the work that the Agitos Foundation, the IPC’s development arm, is doing to create sport opportunities for all. The theme of the day, “Break Barriers, Open Doors,” provided developing nations a chance in the spotlight, as they do not always get the chance to showcase their work because of a lack of resources and low awareness of para-sport locally.

Iran celebrate National Paralympic Week

Iran held its first National Paralympic Week in December, which involved thousands of children with an impairment in cultural, social and sport events across seven days. The aim of the festival was to encourage more people to take part in para-sport, particularly at the grassroots level.

Funding for the festival came from the Agitos Foundation’s Grant Support Programme, which gave EUR 630,000 to development projects around the world in 2013.

During the week, athletes introduced para-sports in schools, universities and to the media, and a series of events focusing on women in sport were run to increase female participation numbers. The first Asian women in Sport Committee was held, with members meeting politicians to see how they could provide women with more para-sport opportunities in the region.

The week culminated at Tehran’s Azadi Sport Complex, where more than 8,000 children and their families celebrated para-sport with presidents of national federations, football players, Olympians and film stars. The event was shown live on national television.

NHK to show Sochi 2014 and Rio 2016

The IPC awarded the exclusive broadcast rights in Japan for the Sochi 2014 and Rio 2016 Paralympics to the country’s only public broadcaster, NHK.

This is part of Japan’s commitment to push the Paralympic Movement forward in the lead-up to hosting the Tokyo 2020 Games.

NHK plans to broadcast more than 29 hours of coverage from Sochi and 46 hours from Rio on two free-to-air terrestrial TV channels.

In addition, NHK will show live coverage of the Opening Ceremony and will screen daily 30-minute highlights programmes during the Sochi Games. For Rio 2016, the highlights shows will be extended to one hour each day of competition.

NHK also has the option to broadcast World Championships staged by IPC sports between now and the end of 2016, including athletics, swimming, alpine skiing, Nordic skiing and ice sledge hockey.

Tasker replaces Hartung as APC President

After serving for 16 years, Greg Hartung retired from his post as the President of the Australian Paralympic Committee (APC) and Glenn Tasker was elected to fill the role.

Hartung guided the APC through a period of rapid growth which saw it become one of the leading National Paralympic Committees in the world. During Hartung’s leadership, Australia competed at eight Paralympic Games, finishing fifth or higher at each of the summer Games. He was elected as an IPC Governing Board Member in 2001 and became Vice President in 2009, a position he held until retiring from the role last November.

Tasker, an APC Board Member since 2008, has more than 23 years of experience in sports administration and served as the Swimming Competition Manager at the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games before acting as the Chief Executive Officer of Swimming Australia from 2001-2008.
Swimmers to return to Eindhoven for European Championships

The 2014 IPC Swimming European Championships will be held from 4-10 August in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, at Pieter van den Hoggenband stadium, the same venue that hosted the 2010 World Championships. Five hundred athletes from 40 countries are expected to compete, including Great Britain’s three-time world champion Ellie Simmonds, Russia’s five-time Paralympic champion Oxana Savchenko and the Netherlands’ three-time world champion Marc Evers.

ITTF holds first Star Awards

China’s Ma Lin and Sweden’s Anna-Carin Ahlquist were presented as 2013 Para-Male and Para-Female Table Tennis Stars, respectively, at January’s inaugural ITTF Star Awards at the Raffles Hotel in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Organised in co-operation with the Dubai Sports Council, the awards attracted the who’s who of the table tennis world, and was an event of glitz and glamour.

Ahlquist, unbeaten since she won the London 2012 Paralympics, is world No. 1 in women’s singles Class 3. In 2013, she won singles golds at the European Championships, Copa Tango Open, Slovenia Open and German Open, and both singles and team gold at the Italian Open.

The Stars were nominated by the ITTF Para-Division, and the ITTF Star Awards Selection Commission then chose the deserving winners. In addition to awarding the world’s best players for their achievements in 2013, the Awards also raised US $246,000 for ITTF’s corporate social responsibility program, Dream Building, which will be used for para-table tennis, development and junior table tennis initiatives.

BP supports African Wheelchair Basketball Championships

BP Angola reaffirmed its commitment to para-sports by providing financial support so that the IWBF African Wheelchair Basketball Championships could take place in Luanda. Cairo was the intended host city of the event, but due to unrest in Egypt, an alternative location was sought at short notice.

The well-attended event was organised by the Angolan Paralympic Committee, and the popularity of wheelchair basketball in Angola has grown since a national league was formed last year. This was enabled by BP Angola’s donation of 100 wheelchairs.

Croatia take interest in ice sledge hockey

NPC Croatia held a presentation for all its sport organisations in November to officially introduce ice sledge hockey to the country. The NPC is now working to pick out potential players and will begin on-ice training for the first time in early 2014.

African and Angolan Paralympic Committee President Leonel de Rocha Pinto said: “It is an honour for us to once again have the support of BP Angila, which opens a new page in our successful partner-ship history, and is also a very important moment in the lives of the athletes themselves.”

BP has been an official partner of the Angolan Paralympic Committee since 2011, and the co-operation will continue beyond the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games. BP also supports a number of local Paralympic athletes, including Jose Armando Sayovo, who won two medals for Angola at the London 2012 Paralympics – gold in the 400m T11 and bronze in the 200m T11 – to add to his already three gold and three silvers from Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008.
With the Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games upon us, defending Paralympic gold medallist Sonja Gaudet and silver medallist Jalle Jungnell hype up the wheelchair curling competition.


Sonja Gaudet VS. Jalle Jungnell

Each Paralympics is unique to itself, and I am looking forward to being in an incredible athlete’s Village and competing in the great venue that they have prepared for us.

What will make Sochi 2014 different from the other Paralympics you have competed in?

For team Sweden, this is the first time that we don’t have our preparations destroyed by health problems. I expect the Games to be extraordinary, special and different, as they always are and have been since my first ones.

What is something people do not normally know about wheelchair curling?

That there’s no sweeping in our sport, because as soon as you mention curling, they automatically think about the sweeping and the yelling.

What goes through your mind as you are delivering a stone on the ice?

As little as possible. I try to never think about the importance of making the stone, rather just focus on direction, weight and rotation.

What are the perfect ice conditions?

The stipulated ice is what we like, and that is four-foot curl and 14-second draw weight. But, as a skip, I don’t mind a little tricky ice that makes it more of a challenge.

How do you celebrate after a win?

During a tournament you don’t celebrate. You talk about the game and discuss it so that you can get the game out of your system and focus on the next one.

Wheelchair curling at Sochi 2014

Dates: 7-16 March
Location: Ice Cube Curling Centre in Sochi, Russia

#AskAnAthlete

Samsung Paralympic Bloggers

Following on from its success at London 2012, the Samsung Paralympic Bloggers project will continue in Sochi, as 30 Paralympians will be given a Samsung Galaxy Note 3 to share their challenges and victories from behind the scenes.

In London, 50 Paralympians recorded almost 700 behind-the-scenes video blogs for the first time at a major sporting event.

Once again, the campaign will have an accompanying film, which Samsung hopes will trump the virality of the London film “Sport Doesn’t Care,” which was viewed by more than five million people on YouTube.

Get social! Share the blogs on social media or embed them on your website. All blogs will be uploaded to the IPC’s YouTube channel.

Google Hangouts

The IPC will allow fans to get closer to their Paralympic heroes with Google Hangouts, which are live video calls that allow athletes to interact by passing their questions, which athletes will attempt to answer live.

Get social! Watch live on the IPC’s Google+ or YouTube page. Use the Q&A app to ask the athletes questions.

#Paralympics and #Proud Paralympian

In 2012, #Paralympics was the top trending hashtag on Twitter for any sport event in Great Britain, outranking the #Olympics. In order for it to have similar success in 2014, all fans are encouraged to get behind the hashtag.

Athletes are encouraged to use #ProudParalympian to raise awareness for the Games and Movement, establish themselves as ambassadors for change and stimulate discussions about people with an impairment.

Get social! Use #Paralympics in all of your tweets related to the Games, and if you are an athlete use #ProudParalympian. You can also add a #Paralympics Twibbon to your profile picture.

Opening Ceremony Thunderclap

Get social! At exactly 20:14 (MSK) on 7 March there will be an IPC Thunderclap on social media post, that when posted together will have a greater impact. Visit the website to obtain a social media post suggested for you.

#ParalympicGames
@Paralympic
Paralympics
ParalympicSport.TV

The IPC actively encourages Sochi 2014 athletes, staff and attendees to embrace social media to share their life-changing experiences with the world. Social media is an incredible tool for the Paralympic Movement, as #ProudParalympians can act as ambassadors to inspire and excite the world through their sporting achievements and spread a message of inclusion.

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Get social at Sochi 2014

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Here is a taste of what you can expect on social media at Sochi 2014.

#AskAnAthlete
Road to Sochi

The Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games are expected to be the biggest Winter Games in history and will be broadcast on more televisions around the world than any to date. From 7-16 March, many of the winter Paralympians mentioned in the forthcoming pages will aim to become household names.

1,500
Torchbearers
will carry the Sochi 2014 flame through 46 Russian regions

25,000 volunteers

20
Russian states involved in barrier-free projects

550
members of the press attending

300
hours of live HD coverage on Paralympic.org

1,500
athletes

5
venues

585
athletes

44
countries

Paralympic Winter Games history

Ornskoldsvik
1976
16 countries
15 athletes

Sapporo
1978
18 countries
20 athletes

Innsbruck
1984
25 countries
41 athletes

Innsbruck
1998
22 countries
37 athletes

Lillehammer
1994
21 countries
85 athletes

Nagano
1998
31 countries
181 athletes

Salt Lake City
2002
56 countries
416 athletes

Torino
2006
58 countries
417 athletes

Vancouver
2010
56 countries
382 athletes

Sochi
2014
54 countries
440 athletes

72
medal events

5
sports

9
days of competition

585
countries
Beginning on 26 February, the Paralympic Torch Relay will pass through all eight of Russia’s federal districts prior to the Sochi 2014 Opening Ceremony. More than 1,500 torchbearers will take part in the relay across 46 Russian cities, with at least 20 per cent of these participants being people with an impairment.

For the first time, there will be an international component of the relay, as a Flame Lighting Ceremony will take place on 1 March at Stoke Mandeville Stadium in Great Britain, which was the birthplace of the Paralympic Movement. It will then travel to several local landmarks before a Flame Celebration is held to send it on its way to Sochi.

Each day, the flame will be lit simultaneously in several Russian cities, and on 5 March a Paralympic Flame Unification Ceremony will take place to create the official Paralympic Flame that will be used in a final relay before the Opening Ceremony on 7 March.

### Torch trivia

- **How much does the Torch weigh?**
  - 1.8kg

- **When did the first Paralympic Torch Relay take place?**
  - Atlanta 1996 Paralympic Games

- **When was the first time the Paralympic Games did not share the same Flame as the Olympic Games?**
  - Atlanta 1996

- **How many editions of the Sochi 2014 Paralympic Torch are being produced?**
  - 1,000

### Paralympic Winter Games planner

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**Opening Ceremony** Friday, 7 March

The Sochi 2014 Paralympics will begin with the Opening Ceremony at the Fisht Olympic Stadium at 20:14 local time. Spectators and viewers will enjoy a night of Russian culture and entertainment.

**Day 1 Saturday, 8 March**

**Must-see!** Alpine skiing: Men’s downhill visually impaired

Competition begins in four of the five sports. On the slopes, alpine skiers in all classes will take part in the downhill discipline, including defending Paralympic champions Jon Santacana Maltzarg of Spain and Alana Nichols of the USA. The Nordic skiing trails will feature the men’s 7.5km and women’s 6km biathlon distances in all classes, and eight wheelchair curling round-robin matches will play out, beginning with China against Russia. All eight ice sledge hockey teams will play their first preliminary round games, with the Russia-South Korea late game expected to highlight the first day.
Day 2 Sunday, 9 March

**Must-see!** Wheelchair curling: Canada vs. Sweden

Cross-country skiing begins with the men’s 15km and women’s 10km sitting events, as Russia’s Irek Zaripov, the defending Paralympic champion in the former, goes against compatriot Roman Petushkow. In wheelchair curling, Paralympic and world champions Canada will face world silver medalists Sweden in arguably the most highly anticipated round-robin match. Norway’s game against Canada will highlight the ice sledge hockey schedule for the day, while on the slopes, the men’s super-G alpine skiing races will be contested across all classes.

Day 3 Monday, 10 March

**Must-see!** Alpine skiing: Women’s super-G sitting

Slovakia’s Henrieta Farkasova and Austria’s Claudia Loesch will aim to defend their Paralympic titles in the women’s visually impaired and sitting super-G alpine skiing events, with France’s six-time world champion Marie Bochet tipped for gold in the standing class. Rivalries will play out in wheelchair curling with matches that pit China against South Korea, Canada against USA and Finland against Norway. Cross-country skiing continues with the men’s and women’s classic standing and visually impaired events.

Day 4 Tuesday, 11 March

**Must-see!** Biathlon: Women’s 10km standing

Ice sledge hockey: Russia vs. USA

A much-anticipated showdown is expected at the Shayba Arena on the final day of ice sledge hockey preliminary play, with Paralympic champions and world silver medalists USA facing world bronze medalists and host nation Russia. On the second day of biathlon, Russians Nikolay Polukhin and Grigory Murygin hope to wow the home crowds in the men’s 12km races, while on the women’s side Ukrainians Julija Batenkova and Oleksandra Kononova could complete a one-two finish in the standing class. Alpine skiing will feature all super combined events, with wheelchair curling showcasing seven more round-robin matches.

Day 5 Wednesday, 12 March

**Must-see!** Cross-country skiing: Men’s and women’s 15k sitting (all classes)

With alpine skiers having their only day off during the Games, action continues on the Nordic trails, as the men’s and women’s 1km sprint races take place across all three classes. In a busy day, athletes will compete in the qualification rounds for the event, followed by the semi-finals and finals. Paralympic champions Brian McKeever and Oleksandra Kononova will look to defend their titles in the event. In ice sledge hockey, there will be classification games for fifth through eighth-place teams and the wheelchair curling schedule includes seven more round-robin matches.

Day 6 Thursday, 13 March

**Must-see!** Ice sledge hockey: Semi-finals

The top four teams from the preliminary round will face off in the ice sledge hockey semi-finals, which, if matchups go according to seeding would pit Canada against Russia and the USA against the Czech Republic. But as we know, anything can happen. Alpine skiers across all men’s classes will perform two slalom runs, with Slovakia’s Jakub Krako and New Zealand’s Adam Hall hoping to defend their titles in the men’s visually impaired and standing classes. The final day of wheelchair curling round-robin matches will see a tough test for the host nation against Slovakia, while the Sweden-South Korea matchup could also turn into battle.

Day 7 Friday, 14 March

**Must-see!** Snowboard: Men’s and women’s snowboard cross medal events

Snowboard will make its Paralympic debut in the morning at Rosa Khutor, as the USA’s Evan Strong and the Netherlands’ Bibian Montel-Spee head out to the slopes as the ones to beat. The sport is expected to draw a lot of attention as one of the highlights of the Games in Sochi. Alpine skiers across all women’s classes will compete in the slalom, and any potential wheelchair curling tie-breaker matches needed will take place at the Ice Cube Curling Centre. Ice sledge hockey’s fifth and seventh-place games will also be played.

Day 8 Saturday, 15 March

**Must-see!** Ice sledge hockey: Gold-medal match

Wheelchair curling: Gold-medal match

All the hype will surround the Costal Cluster of venues, as the team sports culminate with the medal matches in ice sledge hockey and wheelchair curling. Canada head into both sports as the No. 1 seed, and if everything falls into place, they could potentially sweep the team events. Earlier in the day, Russia will aim to ramp up the home crowds in the 4x2.5km mixed and open cross-country skiing relays.

Day 9 Sunday, 16 March

**Must-see!** Closing Ceremony

Competition concludes with women’s alpine skiers racing for giant slalom medals across all classes, as France’s world champion Marie Bochet and Germany’s Andrea Rothfuss go head-to-head in the standing class and Great Britain’s Kelly Gallagher challenges Russia’s world champion Aleksandra Frankova in the visually impaired class. Cross-country skiing will wrap with the men’s 10km and women’s 5km races, across all classes, and then the Games will culminate with the Closing Ceremony at the Fisht Olympic Stadium.
Alpine skiing will draw more participants than any other sport at Sochi 2014, as athletes across the three sport classes compete in five disciplines: downhill, super-G, super combined, giant slalom and slalom. Alpine skiing will draw more participants than any other sport at Sochi 2014, as athletes across the three sport classes compete in five disciplines: downhill, super-G, super combined, giant slalom and slalom. Alpine skiing will draw more participants than any other sport at Sochi 2014, as athletes across the three sport classes compete in five disciplines: downhill, super-G, super combined, giant slalom and slalom.

Athletes are grouped according to their functional ability, with factored timing allowing those with different impairments to compete against each other. Athletes are grouped according to their functional ability, with factored timing allowing those with different impairments to compete against each other. Athletes are grouped according to their functional ability, with factored timing allowing those with different impairments to compete against each other.

France’s 20-year-old Marie Bochet may be the most dominant individual on the slopes when she competes in the women’s standing events. She won five golds at the 2013 IPC Alpine Skiing World Championships and one at the 2011 edition of the event. In Sochi, she will be challenged by Germany’s four-time Paralympic medalist Andrea Rothfuss, who finished second to Bochet in all five events at last year’s World Championships.

Germany’s 16-time Paralympic champion Gerd Schoenfelder retired after Vancouver 2010, leaving the men’s standing competition wide open, with France’s Vincent Gauthier-Manuel, Austria’s Markus Salcher and Switzerland’s Michael Bruegger the front-runners. The visually impaired races will feature Spain’s triple-world champion Jon Santacana Maiztegui, who is trying to return to form after tearing his Achilles tendon, as well as Kelly Gallagher, who will attempt to win Great Britain’s first-ever gold at a Winter Paralympics. Slovenian Jakub Krako and Henrieta Farkasova could be the toughest challengers for them, with the host nation’s Aleksandra Frantceva also one to watch.

In sit-skiing, Japanese duo Taiki Morii and Takeshi Suzuki have four Paralympic and 15 World Championship medals between them, while on the women’s side the rivalry between Germany’s Anna Schaffelhuber and Austria’s Claudia Loesch is expected to play out in full.

Snowboard is finally set to make its Paralympic Games debut in Sochi, with one medal event being contested for men and one for women in the snowboard cross discipline.

The sport features some of the most outgoing and adventurous athletes, including the USA’s Evan Strong and the Netherlands’ Bibian Mentel-Spee, who are expected to be the ones to beat.

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Cross-country skiing

Mikhalina Lysova have the potential to be Roman Petushkov and visually impaired skier over 2010, and heading into Sochi, sit-skier Russia dominated the sport at Vancouver, while Petushkov dominated all distances at last year’s World Championships. Lysova’s teammate, five-time world champion Elena Remizova, might just be her biggest competition.

The Ukrainians will try to challenge the Russians with a contingent led by two strong women – Iryna Bui, who is a 17-year-old world champion, and Iuliia Batenkova, who is a nine-time Paralympic medallist but still in search of her first gold.

After winning 56 medals, including 22 golds, at the 2013 IPC Nordic Skiing World Championships, the Sochi 2014 host nation is expected to shine the brightest in the cross-country skiing events, which are being contested across three sport classes. Racers will compete in sprint, middle and long-distance events.

The biathlon results may look quite similar to those of cross-country skiing, as the Russians are expected to repeat – and potentially better – their Vancouver 2010 success in the sport, which will include sprint, middle and long-distance events.

In Sochi, they will be led by men’s visually impaired star Nikolay Polukhin, whose six Paralympic medals at Vancouver 2010 were the most of any athlete, as well as 19-year-old men’s sitting world champion Grigory Murygin. Polukhin, in particular, has dominated the IPC Nordic Skiing World Cup circuit the last four years and is at the prime of his career.

Both Canada’s Mark Arendz and Japan’s Kozo Kubo are in search of their first Paralympic medals after steadily rising in the men’s standing and sitting ranks, respectively, the last four years.

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South Korea’s Seung-Hwan Jung is entering his second Paralympics as the fastest player in the world on ice.

Norway and Sweden have participated at every Paralympics in the sport, and the Norwegians have medalled at each of them. If veteran defenceman Rolf Pedersen is still at the top of his game, Norway may just reach the podium once again.

Second-seeded USA, the current world silver medallists, are eager to repeat their Vancouver 2010 success and will lean on forward Josh Pauls, goaltender Steve Cash and a contingent of war veterans in Group B. But Dmitry Lisov and host nation No. 3 Russia will not go down without a fight on their home ice, and look promising to medal after taking bronze on the world stage in 2013.

In a field of 10 mixed gender teams, Canada enter the competition as the defending Paralympic and world champions. In fact, they are the only country to have won wheelchair curling Paralympic gold since it was added to the Games programme in 2006. Playing in the lead position, Sonja Gaudet has been an integral part of those titles and is hoping to star again on the Sochi ice.

Paralympic bronze medallists Sweden, led by Jalle Jungnell, hope to knock Canada off their pedestal after losing to them by a single point in the final at the 2013 World Wheelchair Curling Championships, which also served as the Sochi 2014 Test Event. The Chinese, South Korean and Russian teams also have the talent to be in the medal mix.

Great Britain, Finland, Norway, Slovakia and the USA make up the rest of the teams, who will play six days of round-robin matches prior to the semi-finals and medal matches.
What's your problem?

Sport Doesn't Care

Samsung

Worldwide Paralympic Partner
What's your problem? Sport Doesn't Care
Have you ever stuck your head out the window of a moving vehicle with your eyes closed?

Well, you should not try it, but that is what Slovakia’s Jakub Krako said he will be doing at the Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games.

Not literally – just what the visually impaired alpine skier said it will feel like as he cruises down the slopes at 100km/hour behind his guide, former able-bodied skier Martin Motyka.

“I will only see my guide and one gate ahead of me,” Krako said. “Everything around me will not be clear. The white snow and green trees will just be a blur of colours.”

The three-time Paralympic champion is one of around 80 visually impaired athletes expected to take part in the Sochi 2014 Paralympics, and one of thousands around the world who take part in para-sport.
Eleven of the 27 Paralympic sports include visually impaired athletes, yet have you ever stopped to think how these visually impaired athletes first learned and experienced their sports?

Adapting to their environment

The IPC classification system includes three sport classes for athletes with a visual impairment: B1, B2 and B3. B1 is for athletes who are either blind or have very low visual acuity, while B3 is for those with the least severe visual impairments.

An athlete’s natural athletic ability when he or she first takes up sport may depend on whether the impairment was innate or acquired after birth.

IPCC Classification Committee member Scott Field, who is visually impaired and a seven-time Paralympic swimming medallist from South Africa, explained:

“If you’re blind from birth, not only are you starting off new in a particular sport, but you’re also not 100 per cent sure about the mechanics of the human body when doing everyday stuff. Thus, sometimes you might find completely blind people having bad mannerisms in just the way they walk or do physical activity at first.”

From birth, a person with a visual impairment must familiarise themselves with sensory cues to adapt to everyday life. Despite their inability to see, they are still able to light up the visual cortex of their brain because they have the capacity to focus more on their other sensory inputs.

“They are seeing with their ears essentially,” Field said, noting that a blind person can still work out where the doors or walls are in a new building they enter.

But in training, Field explained the most common way for athletes to develop is to observe others and imitate them. Visually impaired athletes thus need a one-on-one coach or guide when they first start who can tell them exactly how they should be moving.

“As a visually impaired person, you’re starting off at a slight disadvantage compared to where you would be as a fully sighted person,” Field said. “Depending on the sport, the disadvantage can be bigger or smaller.”

That is where athlete guides come into play, assisting Paralympians such as Krakó in alpine and cross-country skiing, biathlon, athletics and cycling. Other sports, such as swimming, judo and football 5-a-side, include visually impaired athletes but no guides.

Information Graphic: Alpine Skiing – Visual Impairment Category

Jessica Callagher is visually impaired in her right eye and competes in Alpine skiing at speeds up to 105 km/h, which is sometimes a challenge for visually impaired person. Due to her limited sight, she can only catch the edge of the piste better performing on a notably steeper mountain. Therefore, total trust in her guide is a must.

http://www.sponsoring.allianz.com/en/paralympics/paralympics
Learning to trust their guide

Athlete guides are a critical part of sport for visually impaired athletes and are entitled to the same benefits as the athlete, including a medal of their own when they make it onto the podium.

“You’ve got to have a dedicated one-on-one person showing you exactly what to do,” Field said. “You’re not just going to trust them that they’re going to assist you, but that they’re going to ensure you don’t get hurt.”

“It takes some confidence, because you don’t know what you look like to the other people. Imagine going to a dance, and you have a glass wall around you while you’re dancing around the floor. You cannot see anyone else, but they can all see you.”

In Krako’s case, he can see just a little bit on the slopes, but locks his eyes onto the back of his guide, who instructs him through a radio headset. Motyka wears him out, she just cannot see it.

That incident made Motyka realise he could potentially have Krako’s life in his hands at any time on the slopes, and that even Krako’s family and friends must trust him entirely.

“I hope they trust me. There is not any other choice,” Motyka said. “I try to not think about that fact during the race, but rather concentrate on having a good performance.”

Guilhermina, meanwhile, said the most challenging thing as a visually impaired sprinter is to know exactly where she is on the track, especially in the 400m event, as there are two bends during the course of the race.

That certainly proved to be the case at London 2012, where she became known for the multi-coloured blindfolds she wore during competition.

“I think I now have the fear of Guilherme leaving me alone on the track because of an injury. It was the first time that I ran without a guide by my side.”

Soares de Santana does not need to be frightened, though, as Guilhermina, just like all visually impaired Paralympians, takes it all in stride.

“When I run, I’m free and there are no obstacles ahead. Despite that, I really can’t see those obstacles anyway,” Guilhermina chuckled.

Terezinha Guilhermina and guide Guilherme Soares de Santana have said they plan to compete at the Rio 2016 Games.

HOW DO YOU SKI VISUALLY IMPAIRED?

Find out through a video produced by Allianz, which features Slovakia’s Henrieta Farkasova and Spain’s Jon Santacana Maiztuagi.

>> www.bit.ly/SkiVisuallyImpaired

Krako parted ways with Juraj Medra – his guide of 10 years – following the Vancouver 2010 Paralympics, at which point he met Motyka through a friend and tested out their partnership on the slopes.

The pair began by free skiing without gates on smaller slopes, but after just three days moved onto intermediate slopes to perfect their co-ordination.

“There is no time for learning,” Krako said. “You have to trust your guide. If you do not trust him, then you have to change your guide. It is dangerous to have an untrustworthy guide.

“I told him that he had to go as fast as I can, not as he can. They are our races not his, and he learned that very quickly.”

Much of that same trust between an athlete and guide is seen in summer sports.

Brazil’s three-time Paralympic champion sprinter Terezinha Guilhermina refers to her guide Guilherme Soares de Santana as an “automatic pilot” on the track because he is always in good shape and never seems to get tired.

But Soares de Santana, who has served as Guilhermina’s guide since 2010, said she wears him out, she just cannot see it.

“It’s a big responsibility,” Soares de Santana said. “Whether or not she ends up being a champion, the responsibility is big because I need to help her always to try to finish first.

“My training is just as hard as Terezinha’s training. I need to be in such a good physical conditioning to not interfere with her on the track.”

Recovering from crashes

Even if an athlete trusts his or her guide 100 per cent, there is always room for human error, and in alpine skiing if an athlete crashes, the guide is not allowed to help.

In Krako’s second race with Motyka as his guide, Motyka went silent over the radio just before the final gate on the slope, forgetting the word he was trying to think of.

Krako crashed.

The accident is now a distant and amusing memory for Krako, he said, in addition to a learning experience for the pair.

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IPC Wheelchair Dance Sport World Championships

More than 160 athletes from nearly 20 countries competed in six medal events at December’s IPC Wheelchair Dance Sport World Championships in Tokyo, Japan.

The event was the first major international para-sport competition to be held in Tokyo since it was announced as the host city for the 2020 Paralympic Games.

Russia topped the final standings with eight overall medals, including three golds, followed closely by Ukraine who finished with six medals, including two golds.

The Ukrainian pair of Nadiia and Ivan Sivak won both of their country’s world titles, taking the top spot on the podium in the duo standard class 2 and duo Latin class 1 events.

The event was the first major World Championships since 2010.

IPC Wheelchair Dance Sport held its first World Championships since 2010

Canada and Russia win ice sledge hockey tournaments

Canada captured gold with a 3-1 defeat of the USA at the 2013 World Sledge Hockey Challenge in front of a nearly sold-out crowd on their home ice in Toronto. The defending world champions beat the reigning Paralympic champions to assert themselves as the No. 1 seed heading into the Sochi 2014 Paralympics.

In the bronze-medal game, Russia defeated South Korea 4-2 in dramatic fashion with both teams tied with less than two minutes remaining.

Russia dominated January’s International Sledge Hockey Tournament on their home ice in Podolsk, winning all three of their games against Norway, Canada and Russia.

In the quarter-final Russia defeated Norway 21-1 in the process. Norway took two wins over South Korea and Russia went on to win the bronze medal.

IPN Nordic Skiing World Cup

The 2013-14 IPC Nordic Skiing World Cup wrapped up in January with cross-country skiing and biathlon finals in Oberstdorf and Oberried, Germany, respectively.

Russia won all three men’s classes across both sports and all but one of the women’s classes.

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Australian Open

Japan’s Shingo Kunieda wrapped up his seventh Australian Open men’s singles title in Melbourne in January, as Germany’s Sabine Ellerbrock clinched the women’s title to return to world No. 1 and the USA’s David Wagner won his third quad singles crown.

Kunieda defeated Argentina’s rising star Gustavo Fernandez 6-0, 6-1, while Ellerbrock beat Japan’s Yui Kamiji, 3-6, 6-4, 6-2. Wagner reigned victorious over South Africa’s Lucas Sithole in a rematch of the 2013 US Open, winning 3-6, 7-5, 6-3.

In the doubles competition, Kunieda paired with Houdet to win a fifth title and Kamiji partnered with Great Britain’s Jordianne Whiley to win their first. Great Britain’s Andy Lapthorne and Wagner won the quad doubles title in straight sets.

IPC Alpine and IPCAS Snowboard World Cups

Both the IPC Alpine Skiing and IPCAS Snowboard World Cups are nearing their conclusions. For current updates from the slopes, please visit www.ipc-alpineskiing.org.

“...We put our heart into every dance. All dances have their own character and specific features. They can be compared to a family with 10 children, when every child is his or her own character. You need to find an approach to each of them, but more importantly, you need to love them all.”

Nadiia and Ivan Sivak
Bayron Lopez

President of Ecuador’s National Paralympic Committee

When we started working on the Paralympic Movement in Ecuador in 2012, we weren’t aware of what progress had been made in the country before. Although 12 per cent of the general population in the country has an impairment, we had previously only heard about paraplegic references with travel and participation rather than competition and improving the performance of athletes.

Athletes from various para-sports in Ecuador complained constantly that they didn’t have an opportunity to develop, and we realized that 80 per cent of the athletes at that time were over 40 years old with no goals or plans for the future.

Nobody was concerned about involving the youth, which is a large target group in Ecuador. As leaders for the Paralympic Movement in the country, our first step was to comply with the Law on Sport, Physical Education and Recreation that applies in Ecuador. Para-sport clubs were then created together with three National Federations for athletes with a physical, visual and intellectual impairment.

We believe to strengthen the foundation of the Movement in the Americas region, NPCs like ourselves must organise sport fairs throughout the country, gather equipment, create para-sports clubs to form future athletes and motivate the current para-stars to become role models and inspire the next generation.

IPCs SIX STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Ensure successful Paralympic Games for all participants
2. Promote opportunities to engage in and grow Para-olympic sports
3. Build greater understanding of the Paralympic brand
4. Ensure appropriate funding and identify revenue opportunities
5. Enhance efficient structures to ensure the ability to deliver
6. Leverage partnerships to use synergies and broaden the reach
IPC Athletics Grand Prix

The second year of the IPC Athletics Grand Prix will feature events in four regions, including new events in Nottwil, Switzerland, and Tunis, Tunisia, as the sport expands into Africa. The season will culminate with August’s IPC Athletics Grand Prix Final in Birmingham, Great Britain. In the first Grand Prix series last year, 1,037 athletes from 69 countries took part, setting 10 world records throughout the season.

**Upcoming Events**

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<td>6th Fuzia International Athletics Competition</td>
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<td>14-16 April</td>
<td>2nd China Open Athletics Championships</td>
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<td>24-26 April</td>
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<td>Berlin Open</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 August</td>
<td>IPC Athletics Grand Prix Final</td>
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**IPC Athletics Marathon World Cup**

The IPC Athletics Marathon World Cup will take place as part of the 2014 Virgin Money London Marathon on 13 April.

In addition to the annual wheelchair race featuring T53-T54 athletes, it will feature T44-46 class (leg and arm amputees) and T11-T13 classes (visually impaired) for both men and women. A T51-T52 event will also be included.

**IPC Powerlifting World Championships**

The 2014 IPC Powerlifting World Championships will be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 5-11 April. The Championships are expected to attract around 300 athletes from 50 countries and will be the latest stop for powerlifters on the road to Rio 2016.

IPC Powerlifting’s “Raise the Bar – Say No! to Doping” campaign — aiming to educate athletes and teams about anti-doping — will climax at the World Championships.

**Team Sports**

**World ParaVolley Sitting Volleyball World Championships**

Sixteen men’s and 12 women’s teams will battle to become the best in the world at the WOVD Sitting Volleyball World Championships, which take place from 15-22 June in Elblag, Poland.

**IWBF Wheelchair Basketball World Championships**

For the first time in history, the IWBF has split the Men’s and Women’s Wheelchair Basketball World Championships into two separate events. The women’s tournament will take place first from 20-28 June in Toronto, Canada, followed by the men’s event from 3-12 July in Incheon, South Korea. The women’s event will also give Toronto an organisational test prior to hosting the 2015 Parapan American Games.

**IBSA Goalball World Championships**

There will be 16 men’s and 12 women’s teams competing for gold at the IBSA Goalball World Championships, which take place from 26 June - 6 July in Espoo, Finland.
The Rio 2016 qualification period began on 1 January 2014 and sport with each sport staging six medal events. Triathlon and canoe will make their Paralympic Games debuts in Rio, contesting 528 medal events.

The Rio 2016 Paralympics take place from 7-18 September 2016, with 4,350 athletes from more than 160 countries expected to compete. To physically experience a Games environment first-hand.

Taking in a Games atmosphere
Members of the PyeongChang 2018 staff will take part in the IPC’s Observers Programme at the Sochi 2014 Paralympics in order to gain valuable expertise and experiences for delivering a Winter Games. They will hear from Sochi 2014 Organising Committee function area managers and have the chance to physically experience a Games environment first-hand.

Road to Rio
The Rio 2016 Organising Committee launched the “Road to Rio” section of its website, which was a project that resulted from an IPC Academy Excellence Workshop and features the world’s best Paralympic athletes expected to star at the 2016 Games. The section shares content about these top athletes, including their achievements, hobbies and motivations, with all of the Paralympians having been chosen from the IPC’s Ones to Watch list.

Qualification criteria announced
The IPC published the Qualification Guide for Rio 2016, which describes in detail how athletes and teams can qualify for each of the 22 sports on the Games programme.

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Japanese Paralympic Orientation Seminar
In January, an IPC delegation, led by Vice President Andrew Parsons and Chief Executive Officer Xavier Gonzalez, gave 220 members of the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee an introduction to the background of the Paralympic Movement and the evolution of the Paralympic Games, beginning the transfer of Paralympic knowledge.

The seminar served as the official kickoff for preparations for the 2020 Paralympics, which will be held from 25 August - 6 September six years from now.

Those who attended the seminar included representatives from the following organisations: Japanese Paralympic Committee, Japanese Olympic Committee, Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Japan Sport Association and the Japan Sport Council.

Representatives came from the national government and national sport federations. Attendees also learned more about the Paralympic brand and were given an introduction to the strategic approach to Paralympic communications.

An overview of Paralympic sports, an introduction to inclusion and legacy opportunities and information about key requirements and timelines was given over the course of the two days.

The IPC delegation received an extended venue tour of many sites that will host the Paralympics.

In 2020, Tokyo will become the first city to stage the Paralympic Games for a second time.

Brazilian athletes mark 1,000 days to go
IPC President Sir Philip Craven and top Brazilian athletes marked 1,000 days to go until the Rio 2016 Paralympics in December by attending the Brazilian Paralympic Awards at Rio’s Museum of Modern Art. Sir Philip also took part in a range of interviews with various Brazilian media outlets.

Daniel Dias was recognised as Brazil’s Best Male athlete in 2013 for winning six golds at the IPC Swimming World Championships in Montreal, Canada, and Susana Schnarndorf took Best Female after claiming a gold and a bronze in the pool at those same Championships.

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I have served on the IPC Athletes’ Council since I was elected by my athlete peers at the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

By the way, how great were those? The atmosphere at all of the sport competitions was electric.

In the Netherlands I had already been serving on the Athletes’ Commission for our National Paralympic Committee, which is integrated with the National Olympic Committee. Having the chance to be on the IPC Athlete’s Council and help improve the Movement for para-athletes was and is a real honour for me.

I have always believed that as an athlete, instead of complaining and not doing anything, we can help improve the quality of sports by being vocal and letting the decision-makers know what we think and how we feel about the important issues.

The role of the IPC Athletes’ Council is to provide the IPC Governing Board with direct access to the athletes and vice versa. The Council also has a close relationship with the IOC’s Athletes’ Commission, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and classification experts. In the future, we also hope to create Athletes’ Councils or focus groups within all IFs.

The athlete’s voice in any sporting movement must be strong and consistent. While not all sports face the same issues or challenges, the athlete’s voice must be a collective one in order to push recommendations in the face of decision-makers.

Without the IPC Athletes’ Council – which has a balance of regions, genders and sports – each International Federation (IF) would be working in silos.

For us on the Council, it is really important that other athletes come to us with the issues they are facing.

If we know the challenges they are facing in their sports, then we can really try to make a difference. If athletes remain silent about these challenges, then nothing will ever change.

To improve the quality of the Paralympic Movement, we need all kinds of perspectives: the federation, the coach, the scientist, the medical personnel, the media and the fans. But most importantly, that of the athlete.

WANT TO RAISE YOUR VOICE AS AN ATHLETE?

Send your questions or concerns to athleteescouncil@paralympic.org.
“To enable Paralympic athletes to achieve sporting excellence and inspire and excite the world.”