



WHAT ARE THE PARALYMPICS AND HOW DO THEY DIFFER TO THE OLYMPICS

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ANNOTATION: *The Paralympics are games that allow athletes with disabilities to participate in an international competition against athletes with similar or the same disabilities. There are five different disability groups that are registered in the games. There are nineteen different sports, four of which are unique to the Paralympics.*

KEYWORDS: Paralympic Games, motto, sport, Guttman, Rome, physical, summer, Seoul, Sought Korea, IPC, George Eyser, Lis Hartel, Latin, IOC, Beijing, Physical Impairment, impaired muscle power, hypertonia, ataxia, athetosis, visual impairment, Intellectual Disability.

“Para” refers to the Greek term “beside” or “alongside”. They chose this because it refers to the fact that members of each movement didn’t want the Olympics and Paralympics to be seen as two competing events, instead they wanted it to be seen as existing side-by-side.

Because the athletes competing in the Paralympics have certain disabilities they are allowed concessions that may help them compete competitively, but do not give them an unfair advantage over other competitors.

History of the Paralympics Sports had existed for more than 100 years before the Paralympics came into founding. After World War II the idea of sport for impaired athletes became widely accepted and practiced. The original purpose of the Paralympics was to assist the increasing number of retired war soldiers and injured civilians. In 1944, rehabilitation sport turned slowly into a competitive sport. At the opening ceremony of the Olympic games in 1948, Dr. Guttman was a man who organized the very first competitions for athletes limited to wheelchairs (Stoke Mandeville Games).



In 1952 a Dutch ex-serviceman supported the cause that Guttman was trying to promote, and so the International Stoke Mandville Games were created and founded. Later they were changed to the Paralympic Games. The first Paralympic Games were held in Rome. The Paralympic Games or Paralympics, also known as the Games of the Paralympiad, is a periodic series of international multi-sport events involving athletes with a range of physical disabilities, including impaired muscle power (e.g. paraplegia and quadriplegia, muscular dystrophy, spina bifida), impaired passive range of movement, limb deficiency (e.g. amputation or Dysmelia), leg length difference, short stature, hypertonia, ataxia, athetosis, vision impairment and intellectual impairment.

There are Winter and Summer Paralympic Games, which since the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, are held almost immediately following the respective Olympic Games. All Paralympic Games are governed by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC).

Athletes with disabilities did compete at the Olympic Games prior to the advent of the Paralympics. The first athlete to do so was German American gymnast George Eyser in 1904, who had one artificial leg. Hungarian Karoly Takacs competed in shooting events in both the 1948 and 1952 Summer Olympics. He was a right-arm amputee and could shoot left-handed. Another disabled athlete to appear in the Olympics prior to the Paralympic Games was Lis Hartel, a Danish equestrian athlete who had contracted polio in 1943 and won a silver medal in the dressage event.

Although the name is originally coined as a portmanteau combining "paraplegic" (due to its origins as games for people with spinal injuries) and "Olympic", the inclusion of other disability groups meant that this was no longer considered very accurate. The present formal explanation for the name is that it derives from the Greek preposition παρά, pará ("beside" or "alongside") and thus refers to a competition held in parallel with the Olympic Games. The Summer Games of 1988 held in Seoul was the first time the term "Paralympic" came into official use.

Spirit in Motion is the motto for the Paralympic movement. The symbol for the Paralympics contains three colours, red, blue, and green, which are the colours most widely represented in the flags of nations. The colours are each in the shape of an



Agito (which is Latin for "I move / I shake / I stir"), which is the name given to an asymmetrical crescent specially designed for the Paralympic movement. The three Agitos circle a central point, which is a symbol for the athletes congregating from all points of the globe. The motto and symbol of the IPC were changed in 2003 to their current versions. The change was intended to convey the idea that Paralympians have a spirit of competition and that the IPC as an organization realizes its potential and is moving forward to achieve it. The vision of the IPC is, "To enable Paralympic athletes to achieve sporting excellence and to inspire and excite the world." The Paralympic anthem is "Hymne de l'Avenir" or "Anthem of the Future". It was composed by Thierry Darnis and adopted as the official anthem in March 1996. In June 2001, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) signed an agreement that would ensure that the staging of the Paralympic Games is automatically included in the bid for the Olympic Games. The agreement came into effect at the 2008 Paralympic Summer Games in Beijing, and the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver. However, the Salt Lake 2002 Organizing Committee (SLOC), chose to follow the practice of "one bid, one city" already at the 2002 Games in Salt Lake City, with one Organizing Committee for both Games, which was followed up by the 2004 Games in Athens and Turin in 2006.

The agreement was adjusted in 2003. An extension was signed in June 2006. Initially agreed to remain in effect until the 2012 Summer Olympics, this has since been extended, currently encompassing all Summer and Winter games up until the 2020 Summer Olympics. Even beyond this, all Summer and Winter host cities currently announced are preparing pairs of Olympic and Paralympics Games. This was further confirmed when on 10 March 2018, the IOC and the IPC agreed to further extend the contract to the 2032 Summer Olympics.

There are twenty-two sports on the Summer Paralympic program and six sports on the Winter Paralympics program. Within some of the sports are several events. For example, alpine skiing has downhill, super combined, super-G, slalom, giant slalom. The IPC has governance over several of the sports but not all of them.



Other international organizations, known as International Sports Federations (IF), notably the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation (IWAS), the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA), and the Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association (CP-ISRA), govern some sports that are specific to certain disability groups. There are national chapters for these International Sport Federations including National Paralympic Committees, which are responsible for recruitment of athletes and governance of sports at the national level.

The IPC has established ten disability categories, including physical, visual, and intellectual impairment. Athletes with one of these disabilities can compete in the Paralympics though not every sport can allow for every disability category. These categories apply to both Summer and Winter Paralympics.[60]

Physical Impairment – There are eight different types of physical impairment:

Impaired muscle power – With impairments in this category, the force generated by muscles, such as the muscles of one limb, one side of the body or the lower half of the body is reduced, (e.g. spinal cord injury, spina bifida, post-polio syndrome).

Impaired passive range of movement – The range of movement in one or more joints is reduced in a systematic way. Acute conditions such as arthritis are not included.

Loss of limb or limb deficiency – A total or partial absence of bones or joints from partial or total loss due to illness, trauma, or congenital limb deficiency (e.g. dysmelia). Leg-length difference – Significant bone shortening occurs in one leg due to congenital deficiency or trauma.

Short stature – Standing height is reduced due to shortened legs, arms and trunk, which are due to a musculoskeletal deficit of bone or cartilage structures. (e.g. achondroplasia, growth hormone deficiency, osteogenesis imperfecta)

Hypertonia – Hypertonia is marked by an abnormal increase in muscle tension and reduced ability of a muscle to stretch. Hypertonia may result from injury, disease, or conditions which involve damage to the central nervous system (e.g. cerebral palsy).

Ataxia – Ataxia is an impairment that consists of a lack of coordination of muscle movements (e.g., cerebral palsy, Friedreich's ataxia, multiple sclerosis).



Athetosis – Athetosis is generally characterized by unbalanced, involuntary movements and a difficulty maintaining a symmetrical posture (e.g. cerebral palsy, choreoathetosis).

Visual Impairment – Athletes with visual impairment ranging from partial vision, sufficient to be judged legally blind, to total blindness. This includes impairment of one or more component of the visual system (eye structure, receptors, optic nerve pathway, and visual cortex). The sighted guides for athletes with a visual impairment are such a close and essential part of the competition that the athlete with visual impairment and the guide are considered a team. Beginning in 2012, these guides (along with sighted goalkeepers in 5-a-side football) became eligible to receive medals of their own.

Intellectual Disability – Athletes with a significant intellectual impairment and associated limitations in adaptive behaviour. The IPC primarily serves athletes with physical disabilities, but the disability group Intellectual Disability has been added to some Paralympic Games. This includes only elite athletes with intellectual disabilities diagnosed before the age of 18. However, the IOC-recognized Special Olympics World Games are open to all people with intellectual disabilities.

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