



HISTORY OF THE PARALYMPIC MOVEMENT

From the Stoke Mandeville Games to the Paralympic Games

Sport for athletes with a disability has existed for more than 100 years. In the 18th and 19th centuries contributions were made which proved that sport activities were very important for the re-education and rehabilitation of persons with a disability.

Following World War II, traditional methods of rehabilitation could not meet the medical and psychological needs of large numbers of soldiers and civilians with a disability. At the request of the British government, Dr. Ludwig Guttmann founded the National Spinal Injuries Centre at the Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Great Britain in 1944. Guttmann introduced sport as a form of recreation and as an aid for remedial treatment and rehabilitation.

On 29 July 1948, the day of the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games in London, the Stoke Mandeville Games were founded, and the first competitions for athletes with spinal cord injuries took place on the hospital grounds in Stoke Mandeville. Two British teams with 14 former servicemen and two former servicewomen competed in archery. From then on, the Stoke Mandeville Games were to be held annually. In 1952, Dutch ex-servicemen joined the movement - the International Stoke Mandeville Games were established. These too took place every year in Stoke Mandeville.

In 1960 the International Stoke Mandeville Games were staged for the first time in the same country and city as the Olympic Games, ie, in Rome. They have gone down in history as the "First Paralympic Games". The first Paralympic Winter Games took place in Örnköldsvik, Sweden, in 1976. The word Paralympic was originally a pun combining "paraplegic" and "Olympic", however with the inclusion of other disability groups and the close associations with the Olympic Movement it now represents "parallel" (from the Greek preposition "para") and "Olympic" to illustrate how the two movements exist side by side. "Paralympics" has been the official term of the Games since 1988.

Organizational Structure of the Paralympic Movement

Over time, the organization and structure of the Paralympics became more professional, which was reflected in the continuous improvement of the classification system, an increase of standards in coaching, training, refereeing and umpiring, continual amendments of the Handbook of Rules for each sport,

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as well as in a growing number of athletes and countries participating in the Games.

Last but not least, the organizational structure also underwent significant changes. Until 1952 the Stoke Mandeville Games had been organized by Dr. Guttman and hospital staff, with a forum of doctors, trainers, physiotherapists and administrators deciding on rules, classifications, etc. In 1961, however, the International Stoke Mandeville Games Committee was founded, which was henceforth responsible for the Games organization, until in 1972 the constitution was amended to the International Stoke Mandeville Games Federation (ISMGF). In the 1990s, the ISMGF became the International Stoke Mandeville Wheelchair Sports Federation (ISMWSF).

In 1960, an International Working Group on Sport for the Disabled was set up to study the challenges of sport for persons with a disability. Its aim was to establish an organization which included all disability groups. It resulted in the creation, in 1964, of an international sport federation called ISOD: International Sports Organization for the Disabled.

ISOD offered opportunities for those athletes who could not affiliate with the ISMGF: athletes with a visual impairment, amputation and cerebral palsy. The organization pushed very hard to include athletes with a visual impairment and an amputation in the Toronto 1976 Paralympic Games and persons with cerebral palsy in the Arnhem 1980 Paralympics. The aim of ISOD was to become an umbrella organization for all disabilities in the future and to act as a co-ordinating committee. Later, other disability groups, too, established their international sports organizations that arranged various competitions.

Today, four of the five International Organizations of Sport for the Disabled (IOSDs) listed below are members of the IPC:

- CPISRA: Cerebral Palsy International Sport and Recreation Association
- IBSA: International Blind Sports Federation
- INAS-FID: International Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability
- IWAS: International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation (amalgamation of ISOD and ISMWSF in 2004)
- CISS: Comité International Sports des Sourds (member of the IPC from 1986-1995).

The international organizations experienced the need of co-ordinating both Paralympic Games and other international and regional sport competitions. In 1982, ISOD, ISMGF, CPISRA and IBSA therefore created the "International Co-ordinating Committee (ICC) of World Sports Organisations for the Disabled", to govern the Paralympic Games and to represent the participating organizations in dialogues with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and other global organizations. However, the member nations demanded more



national and regional representation in the organization. This finally led to the foundation of a new, democratically organized institution, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), in 1989, with Headquarters in Brugge, Belgium. The IPC officially replaced the ICC following the 1992 Paralympics in Barcelona.

In 1999, the IPC opened its permanent Headquarters in Bonn, Germany, run by professional staff. In November 2003, culminating several years of hard work and planning, the IPC took important steps towards a new future when the General Assembly adopted new structures with respect to Governance and Management following a Strategic Review that was conducted in the preceding years. The IPC is now composed of the General Assembly (its highest decision-making body), the Governing Board, the Management Team and various Committees and Councils. In addition to the NPCs and IOSDs, the sports and regional bodies now have the option to become members of the IPC. A motion also passed that will lead the nine IPC Sports towards more self-sustainability and eventually independence from the IPC.