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# **Athlete First**

## **A History of the Paralympic Movement**

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**Steve Bailey**  
*Winchester College, UK*



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***To Paula,  
Tim, Will and Rosie***

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# Contents

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List of Figures and Boxes	ix
Foreword: Sir Philip Craven	xi
Foreword: Prof. Dr Gudrun Doll-Tepper	xiii
International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education	xv
Preface	xvii
List of Abbreviations	xix
Chapter 1 A Showcase of Ability	1
Chapter 2 An Air of Hopelessness	13
Chapter 3 The Era of Development: 1960 to 1980	23
Chapter 4 Fair, not Equal: 1980 to 1988	43
Chapter 5 Building Bridges not Walls: 1988 to 1992	91
Chapter 6 Spirit in Motion: 1992 to 1996	139
Chapter 7 Repair What Needs Repair? 1996 to 2000	191
Chapter 8 Sport is About Emotion: 2000 to 2004	225
Bibliography and Resources	265
Index	273

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# Figures and Boxes

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## FIGURES

6.1 Atlanta 1996	178
6.2 Atlanta 1996	179
6.3 Atlanta 1996	180
6.4 Atlanta 1996	181
7.1 Sydney 2000	219
7.2 Sydney 2000	220
7.3 Sydney 2000	221
7.4 Sydney 2000	222
8.1 Salt Lake City 2002	241
8.2 Salt Lake City 2002	242
8.3 Salt Lake City 2002	243
8.4 Salt Lake City 2002	243
8.5 Athens 2004	257
8.6 Athens 2004	258
8.7 Athens 2004	259
8.8 Athens 2004	259

## BOXES

5.1 The IPC–ICC Agreement	112
8.1 Recommendations of the working group	232
8.2 Future IPC business	236
8.3 Motion for restructuring the IPC	254

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# Foreword

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**Sir Philip Craven**

*President of the International Paralympic Committee*

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) is one of the largest and most dynamic sport organizations in the world; with a constituency that comprises the vast majority of athletes with a disability. The IPC's democratic structure has ensured the centrality of the athlete since its inception in 1989.

This is the first published history of the Paralympic Movement, presenting a detailed examination from the early enthusiasms of different groups and individuals to the creation of the International Paralympic Committee, and the IPC's first fifteen years of operation. Although there has been a growing body of work in a number of areas of sport science, sport for athletes with a disability has not so far received comparable attention from historians. This study goes some way towards bridging that gap.

Bringing this rigorous study of the Paralympic Movement to fruition has been the undertaking of Dr Steve Bailey, a respected historian and author. The enormous volume of material that Dr Bailey has worked with has been provided willingly by the IPC, as well as additional resources being put at his disposal by the International Olympic Committee. The author has provided the perspective of an outside observer, and the synthesis and interpretations are entirely those of the author. But many others have given their time and support to advise on points of accuracy and fill in gaps where the written record is incomplete.

This project has arisen out of the relationship between the International Paralympic Committee, the International Olympic Committee and the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education, and it is this strength of cooperation that will continue to promote the objectives of bringing sporting opportunities to all athletes with a disability.

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# Foreword

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**Prof. Dr Gudrun Doll-Tepper**

*President of the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education*

What started as a formal meeting between the then President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Juan Antonio Samaranch and myself in 1997 about the lack of a documented history of the Paralympic Movement, developed into an international collaborative project, bringing together three of the world's major sports bodies. The International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE) proposed a project to the IOC that would see, for the first time, an in-depth collation of the activities, challenges and achievements that have made the Paralympic Movement what it is today.

*Athlete First: A History of the Paralympic Movement* is the result of this project. Dr. Steve Bailey, a scholar recognised by the International Olympic Committee, has compiled not only the most extensive history of the Paralympic Movement, but also an honest and thought provoking account of the development of the IPC from the first Stoke Mandeville Games in 1948 and the aspirations of Sir Ludwig Guttmann, through to the first Paralympic Summer Games in 1960, the formation of the IPC in 1989 and the Paralympic Games in 2004 in Athens. Personalities who have enabled the Paralympic Movement to grow are seen close-up, as they worked to establish this very special movement.

*Athlete First* is also filled with stimulating stories and drama, which is to be expected when such a huge collection of individuals comes together to progress an ideal. What is most inspirational is how divergence is overcome and the collective commitment of individuals keeps the IPC working toward their vision 'to enable Paralympic athletes to achieve sporting excellence and inspire and excite the world'. The extensive work that the IPC does in development of sporting opportunities at the grass-roots is also testament to how complex and engaging the organisation is. It is certainly not before time that the whole world can get to know this through reading *Athlete First*.

The book has received the full backing of the International Paralympic Committee, where the author was given unrestricted access to all minutes of meetings and archives of the International Paralympic Committee, as well as being welcomed as an accredited scholar at the International Olympic Committee's research centre in Lausanne, for which I would like to express my sincere gratitude to both organisations.

I commend this book to you and would like to declare my honour at having been involved in such a valuable and inspiring project. Steve has done a magnificent job and I offer him my whole-hearted thanks at taking on such an all-consuming task.

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# International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE)

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2008 marks the 50th Anniversary of the International Council of Sport Science (ICSSPE). Since 1958, ICSSPE has been connecting professionals in all disciplines of sport science and physical education. As a result of its initiatives, ICSSPE is recognised as a Formal Associate of UNESCO. It has held this status since 1997, not only for its past history of major contributions, but also for its ongoing ability to contribute effectively to UNESCO's ongoing objectives. As a further testament to the importance and relevance of its goals, ICSSPE is also a recognised organisation of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and cooperates with the World Health Organization.

ICSSPE provides its members with a wide range of benefits, as part of its network encouraging international cooperation in all areas of sport science and physical education, and actively promotes the practical application of innovative research in these fields.

In 1995, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) joined ICSSPE, and since then, the two organisations have collaborated successfully on a number of activities, for example, with publications like ICSSPE's May 2002 *Bulletin* no.35 focusing primarily on 'The Paralympic Movement and the 2007 *Perspectives* no. 7 addressing 'Sport for Persons with a Disability'.

Another one of these activities is ICSSPE's major Sports Science Congress, which has taken place immediately prior to the summer games in its host country since the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, Germany. In 2004, ICSSPE, the IPC, FIMS (International Federation of Sports Medicine), and the IOC agreed to form a partnership to have the top four international sport organisations working together to support and organise this regular congress, the International Convention on Science, Education and Medicine in Sport (ICSEMIS) 2008.

ICSSPE looks forward to another healthy 50 years in active cooperation with its members like the IPC, and to continue to be at the forefront of social change through the use of sport and physical activity.

For more information, please visit us at [www.icsspe.org](http://www.icsspe.org).

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# Preface

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My purpose has been to trace and interpret the phenomenon that has become the Paralympic Movement; how it came into being, and how it has served the needs and ambitions of athletes with a disability from its beginnings in the middle of the 20th century. The later period of study has necessarily focused on the development of the International Paralympic Committee, now providing the biggest global sporting phenomenon for athletes with a disability. Recognising that an organisation such as the International Paralympic Committee is far more than the sum of its administrative parts, I have sought to include much personal and anecdotal information through interviews and correspondence, as well as the study of thousands of documents. Often in the growth of the Paralympic Movement, differing views have promoted quarrels; sometimes people working together may appear to have been obstinate or even self-promoting. But my interpretation of the many forms of evidence I have seen and heard is that the development and advancement of ideas has been made possible by the interaction of highly dedicated individuals passionately expressing their vision of the future for athletes with a disability. Much of the time this has meant that they have challenged established barriers to access and societal structures. It was Oscar Wilde who welcomed this sort of conflict as encouraging growth: 'Disobedience, in the eyes of anyone who has read history, is man's original virtue. It is through disobedience and rebellion that progress has been made.'

Although it has been possible to record many examples of the tireless work of a number of individuals and international organisations, I need to apologise for the inevitable omissions. We can only show a sample of the type of dedication that has been evident in the growth of the Paralympic Movement.

One overriding point is that my research has had to draw on thousands of pages of documentary evidence, and that I have inevitably had to interpret both meaning and value to this study with relatively little opportunity to recreate the precise historical context in which these records were made. The errors and omissions are mine, as are the interpretations. I have had the benefit of many hours of sage advice from people involved with all aspects of the Paralympic Movement. But this is still not the same as experiencing the meetings and the events first-hand. The International Paralympic Committee agreed to give me access to more recent documents only with a written agreement on the specific use of the material and the right of a factual review of the manuscript. I have been pleased to provide this, and this work has been improved as a result of the written comments subsequently provided by Phil Craven, Clare Wolfensohn, Leen Coudenys and Jean Stone. The opinions reflected in this book remain my own, as do the mistakes.

My thanks go to a number of people who have helped me make sense of the mass of documentation and opinion. In particular I would like to recognise the help offered by the following people: Christophe Mailliet, Tamie Devine, Amandeep Chima, Susanne Reiff, Siân Ölschläger, Leen Coudenys, Nanami King, Horst Strohkendl, Tip Thiboutot, Phil Craven, Bob Steadward, Clare Wolfensohn and Jean Stone. Celia Carden at John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. has been a great supporter; I am grateful to Celia for her

patience and advice in the final stages. Gudrun Doll-Tepper has remained a strong motivator, and it was her initial encouragement that got this project underway. I am grateful to Juan-Antonio Samaranch, who intervened personally to ensure that I had unfettered access in Lausanne to the IOC correspondence files and the normally closed minutes of IOC meetings. Without the extensive advice and scrutiny of draft chapters by Hans Lindström, Carl Wang and Bernard Atha, this text could not have been brought to life. Finally I must record my gratitude to Joan Scruton, who was willing to receive me with a cup of tea at her home on many occasions over a period of two years. Joan permitted me to record hours of interviews and to study a number of unpublished manuscripts that were in her possession. She was able to recount her many years of involvement with the Paralympic Movement with total accuracy: a fact later borne out by my scrutiny of the minutes of hundreds of meetings – I know which process I enjoyed more.

Throughout this study the many prestigious titles and honours of the people referred to have been omitted, not out of disrespect for the individuals concerned, but because this history has tried to deal with the people, and not the positions they have represented. Also, all spellings have been anglicised for the benefit of consistency.

This research project and subsequent publication has only been possible with the tolerance and support of my family: I am grateful to Paula, Tim, Will and Rosie for their patience and encouragement.

Steve Bailey  
Winchester  
2007

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# Abbreviations

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ACOG	Atlanta Olympic Organising Committee
ANOC	Association of National Olympic Committees
APOC	Atlanta Paralympic Organising Committee
ATHOC	Athens Organising Committee
CAID	Commission for Inclusion of Athletes with a Disability
CFSOD	Canadian Federation of Sports Organisations for the Disabled
CISS	Comité International des Sports des Sourds / International Committee for Deaf Sports
COJO	Comité d'Organisation des Jeux Olympiques (French)
COOB	Comite Organizador Olimpico Barcelona
COPTA	Organising Committee for the Paralympics in Tignes Albertville
CP-ISRA	Cerebral Palsy – International Sports and Recreation Association
ECISOD	European Committee of the International Sports Organisation for the Disabled
EUROCOM	European Regional Committee of IPC
EUROPC	European Paralympic Committee
FESPIC	Far East and South Pacific Games for the Disabled
GAISF	General Association of International Sports Federations
IBSA	International Blind Sport Association
ICC	International Coordinating Committee of World Sports Organisations for the Disabled
ICSSPE	International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education
IF	international federation
IFAPA	International Federation for Adapted Physical Activity
IFSOD	International Federation of Sports Organisations for the Disabled
INAIL	Istituto Nazionale per l'Assicurazione contro Infortuni sul Lavoro
INAS-FID	International Sports Organization for Athletes with an Intellectual Disability
INAS-FMH	International Association for Sport for Persons with Mental Handicap
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IOSD	International organisations of sport for people with a disability
ISMGF	International Stoke Mandeville Games Federation
ISMWSF	International Stoke Mandeville Wheelchair Sports Federation
ISOD	International Sports Organisation for the Disabled
IWBF	International Wheelchair Basketball Association
LAOOC	Los Angeles Olympic Organising Committee
LPOC	Lillehammer Paralympic Organising Committee
NAPOC	Nagano Paralympic Organising Committee
NBA	National Basketball Association
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NWAA	National Wheelchair Athletic Association

NWBA	National Wheelchair Basketball Association
ONCE	Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles
SANROC	South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee
SCEC	Sports Council Executive Committee
SLOC	Salt Lake Organising Committee
SPOC	Seoul Paralympic Organising Committee or Sydney Paralympics Organising Committee
USOC	United States Olympic Committee
WCWB	World Council for the Welfare of the Blind
WVF	World Veterans' Federation

# A Showcase of Ability

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It's all about discovery. My discovery is that Swimming opened the door to everything: first it gave me freedom, then a place in society (Béatrice Hess, France, IPC Brochure 2004)

## INTRODUCTION: NO EXCUSES, NO LIMITS

For anyone who has witnessed the determination of athletes striving to push themselves beyond their own limits it is quite easy to understand how competitive sport can play such a key part in the life of an individual with a disability. There are more opportunities for accomplishment of personal goals through sport than in many other aspects of life, and sport certainly can change the way other people see us. For some persons with a disability competitive sport provides a vehicle for levelling out some of the inequalities that are faced day-to-day. But for everyone it is thrilling, fun and satisfying.

This book attempts to examine the route through which the Paralympic Movement has advanced. On its way to the present day we will see personal crusades, conflict and consensus. But the overriding message is one of heartfelt enthusiasm to make a difference. This study should allow us to understand something of the early sacrifices and successes of a small group of people, but it will also trace the emergence of a highly complex worldwide organisation, the International Paralympic Committee. In this sense it is both an institutional history and a weaving together of several biographies. The sketching of the personalities is vitally important to our understanding of the emergence of the modern phenomenon.

The Paralympic Movement effectively began with the recreational and rehabilitative use of sport for persons with a disability, turning gradually into a broad-based pyramid of competitive sport that has ultimately led to the elite level of the Paralympic Games. The philosophy of the Paralympic Movement is one of self-realisation through competitive sport. The expression of personal determination and the exploration of one's own boundaries are there for those brave enough to commit themselves.

The Paralympic Movement has developed over the last fifty years to become the pinnacle of achievement for athletes with a disability. Ludwig Guttmann, a German neurosurgeon who had established the Stoke Mandeville Spinal Injuries Unit in Aylesbury in 1944, used sport as part of a process of rehabilitation for patients with spinal injuries. As his employment of competitive physical activity became more sophisticated, he also saw the benefits of drawing people with similar injuries together: sport enabling individuals to meet and strive for 'normal' goals. As the first Stoke Mandeville Games coincided with the opening day of the Olympic Games being held in London in 1948, the parallel with the Olympic Games was drawn. Today the Paralympic Movement is recognised as a global

sporting phenomenon: a wonderful celebration of competitive physical activity that fuels dreams, encouraging many to participation and to excellence.

## THE INTERNATIONAL PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE

The International Paralympic Committee was formed in 1989 out of the earlier cooperation of several international organisations looking to stabilise and extend the world of elite sport for persons with a disability. These organisations have had their own colourful and distinct histories, and their full genesis is beyond the scope of this study. However it is essential to understand how these organisations have moved towards a vision of international elite sport for individuals with disabilities. The International Paralympic Committee now organises the Paralympic Winter and Summer Games, as well as acting as the international federation for 12 sports – in which it also coordinates the World and Regional Championships. The successes of the IPC have allowed the organisation to target activities in developing countries, and to focus specifically on improving the participation levels of women with disabilities, and of those athletes with severe disabilities. ‘Through sport, its ideals and activities the IPC seeks the continuous global promotion of the values of the Paralympic Movement, with a vision of inspiration and empowerment’ (IPC 2004).

In the period after the end of the Second World War Ludwig Guttman was involved in the institutionalisation of organisations serving the needs of persons with a disability other than those with spinal injuries, although he held a fiercely personal grip on organisations he had brought into being. Guttman was instrumental in the promotion of sporting competition for athletes with disabilities, establishing the International Stoke Mandeville Games organisation. Work was being done in some European nations to provide for people who were blind and for amputees, but Guttman was keen to hold off their entry into the Stoke Mandeville movement. He was later to be more broadly inclusive of people with other disabilities through the International Sports Organisation for the Disabled (ISOD).

As international federations strengthened partisanship towards the needs of their own population, they also built restrictions to access by others. In turn, this had a slowing effect on progress towards the wider acceptance on the world stage of elite sport for athletes with a disability. Major international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have tended to encourage interest groups to get together and speak with one voice so as to ensure consistent and fair representation and support, as well as enabling these agencies to serve complete constituencies more effectively. This has been true of United Nations agencies and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The Olympic Movement has always insisted on being able to respond to one lobby rather than receiving numerous different petitions for assistance or attention from groups with overlapping interests. Just as the IOC has sought to encourage a single umbrella organisation to represent sports science, it has also been instrumental in prompting confederacy among disability sports organisations. In 1982 an International Coordinating Committee of World Sports Organisations for the Disabled (ICC) was established, with the intention of ‘speaking with one voice’ with regard to sport for persons with a disability. This committee undertook the management of what became the Paralympic Games: international multi-disability world championships organised in conjunction with the timing and location of the Olympic Games cycle. Although the time was right for cooperation between the separate disability organisations, it was particularly the call of the International Olympic Committee for unity from within the organisations serving athletes with a disability that consolidated the actions that led to the foundation of the International Paralympic Committee. This was no impulsive act: national organisations wished to create a sport-specific organisation rather than a disability-specific one. The national organisations also drove the movement towards a democratic structure. The International Paralympic Committee is the most prominent



evidence of success in drawing the early development of elite disability sport into a fully coordinated world organisation.

Certain issues regularly became focal points as the international organisations were establishing themselves and as the movement progressed towards a single international body for athletes with disability: among them whether representation should be based on disability, sport or country; and whether classification of athletes for competition should be medical/anatomical or functional. These issues emerged in the historical context of the development of sport for those with disabilities. It is inevitable in preparing a history of the Paralympic Movement that the emphasis will change as we move through time: new problems arise and new horizons permit fresh setting of targets. The early pioneers brought their own specialisations to the attention of a larger audience, inevitably inviting a smaller section of the population into the limelight for a time – until ideas broadened and others worked to help bring the same benefits to their particular population. In this respect sport for people in wheelchairs was in the public eye earlier than some other sporting opportunities for persons with other disabilities.

The reasons for prominence of one particular group are not always easy to pinpoint. Sometimes it can result from the particular drive and commitment of an appropriately poised individual; sometimes the regional or national political environment can suit the emergence of a dominant influence. Conspiracy theories have pointed to Eurocentric attitudes of colonialism being historically at the root of all successful international sporting organisations: ‘arrogantly teaching the world how to play’. Certainly some chance is likely to contribute to the circumstances being right for initiatives to become wholly supported in society – particularly where more marginalised populations have been concerned. It is essential to explore the background to these localised energies so as to understand better the emerging picture of the Paralympic Movement. Inevitably there are difficulties in ascribing meaning and determining the prime movers in a diverse subject such as this, and it is best to emphasise that no particular merit is intentionally being bestowed on individual participants in the process. Adaptation and emulation are the means of progress, and international sport for persons with a disability has benefited from the nebulous identities of groups with different needs. By definition the pursuit of sporting excellence within particular populations will always require some reassessment of established concepts relating to elite sport and international competition.

Funding and research recognition will inevitably affect the progress and development of highly specialised areas of sports science. The impact of the Paralympic Movement has been far-reaching in its effects on attitudes towards all those persons with a disability. Governments have addressed aspects of educational reform, accessibility and prejudice against disability in recent decades. Seeing elite athletes on a world stage promotes an inclusive stance towards all members of society, helping to bring down barriers.

Today, the International Paralympic Committee is the principal force for the Paralympic Movement, identifying as its vision: ‘To enable paralympic athletes to achieve sporting excellence and inspire and excite the world’. The IPC seeks to enable athletes with a disability to be involved with decisions about their own future, to maintain a sports-centred organisation and to provide the appropriate opportunities for the development of all athletes – from early stages through to elite levels. To capture the essence of these aims the International Paralympic Committee introduced a new Paralympic Motto: ‘Spirit in Motion’ (IPC 2003).

## **QUALIFICATION, ELIGIBILITY AND CLASSIFICATION**

It has been natural for organisations to define eligibility so as to provide for ‘fair’ competition. Classification in sport for those with disability has a similar basis to the early distinctions made between the amateur and the professional athlete in Olympic sport in the early 20th century: participants wished

to compete against those with similar opportunities and against those with similar limitations, so that competition itself was meaningful – a victory or defeat had significance. In the creation of structures and definitions for classification in disability sport, as identified by Ludwig Guttman just after the Second World War, there was also the inevitable development of barriers to access. Qualification meant distinction and also exclusion. Guttman logically encouraged competitive sports events among former patients of spinal units. Others followed Guttman's model and took the institutionalised system of sporting participation back to their own countries and units after spending time at Stoke Mandeville. Using disability categories to specify who could and who could not compete necessarily excluded certain athletes who did not fit into a particular classification. The motive of clarity also brought a greater difficulty in moving towards integration within sports movements, although segregation was a by-product and was not usually intentional.

## **THE 'MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABILITY' VERSUS THE 'SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY'**

Before embarking on an examination of how the Paralympic Movement has emerged to become the world phenomenon that it is today, it is important to understand the nature of disability in society.

From centuries past it had been common to treat persons with a disability in terms of those requiring medical cure, rehabilitation or segregation from the rest of 'normal' society. This legacy has been called the 'medical model' of disability, and it was commonly sustained until only a few years ago. This model (also sometimes called the 'individual model') relies on a designation of a person in terms of negative classification – disability prevents a person from functioning within society. The inability of people to participate fully in society is seen in terms of their disability. The humanity of individuals becomes subordinated to their disability.

More appropriate to us today is the 'social model' of disability: individuals' impairment becomes a disability when the organisation of society prevents them from participating fully. This could be in relation to access, mobility, communication or other barriers. So, in the social model of disability, a distinction is made between 'impairment' and 'disability'. Impairment is considered to be a long-term limitation of body function, structure or physical appearance that has usually been caused by illness, injury or a congenital condition. Disability is defined as the loss of opportunity to function equally with others because of impediments put in their way either by the environment or by the way society is structured. The World Health Organization's Action Plan for Disabilities and Rehabilitation 2006–2011 defines 'disability' as: 'the outcome or result of a complex relationship between an individual's health condition and personal factors, and of the external factors that represent the circumstances in which the individual lives'. Effectively, society causes the disablement of those individuals who are impaired in some way. Inflexibility in organisational policies can be a barrier to enabling normal functioning of persons with a disability in society, as can cultural representations that patronise or dehumanise. In the social model disability is necessarily a political concept.

## **DISABLING BARRIERS AND THE ROLE OF COMPETITIVE SPORT**

There can be no doubt that sport has the power to bind people together, make them feel as though they belong and create 'community'. The many positive benefits sport has to offer all individuals are even more meaningful to persons with a disability. Motivation and socialisation are obvious rewards to add to health maintenance. For many people sport has provided levels of freedom that have not been normally

experienced by them, due to barriers, ignorance and prejudice. Sport can offer a means of navigating past the barriers that have limited participation in other facets of their lives. For many people sport has given new goals and targets that have lifted them out of a sometimes unwelcoming environment. The high profile of the Paralympic Movement has served to force communities to address questions of accessibility and inclusion for persons with a disability. In more recent years this could mean that a career path has opened up through sport, but for most individuals sport has helped physical and mental well being.

As changes in policy and legislation have come into effect, society has become more accepting of persons with a disability, but this has not been enough. Compliance with what is required does not in itself lead to changes in attitude. The difference is made by active provision of opportunities, inclusion of all individuals in communities as citizens.

### **Language Defines and Restricts**

Concrete change in use of language has been encouraged in the past decade, bringing people's attention to removing seldom-considered negative connotations. Language and ascribed meaning are relentlessly evolving. Value systems also continuously change, causing a need for redefinition of what is meant by particular words and phrases. A phrase from the past becomes a hackneyed cliché with familiarity and overuse. The worst prejudices and misunderstandings in society have frequently been exacerbated by particular use of language, perpetuating myths that have affected the treatment of marginalised groups. Resolute campaigning in many quarters in more recent years has led to a change in the way language is used to refer to persons with a disability. Labels can generalise and stigmatise so that differences become problematic. Certainly labels can dehumanise. Stigma can imply threat, inferiority, or that the 'different' individual does not deserve the same levels of courtesy and consideration as other people. As Goffman (1963) explained, stigma could act to be socially discrediting and to exclude individuals from acceptance in society. Stereotypes are reinforced through language that confines definition of persons in terms of their disability, rather than recognising the humanity of individuals in their own right. Apprehension and misunderstanding have blighted the progress of persons with a disability.

The currently preferred principle is to use positive, 'people-first' language when referring to individuals with disabilities. It is more appropriate to refer to the person first and to the impairment afterwards – if it is relevant to do so at all. So terms such as 'crippled', 'afflicted', 'suffering from', 'wheelchair-bound' and 'handicapped' are considered negative, and are to be discouraged. A wheelchair provides the mobility that can be enabling, rather than 'binding'. Putting people first means recognising the value of people as individuals, rather than patronisingly defining them in terms of their disability. 'Disabled people', therefore, are referred to as 'persons with a disability'. Political correctness in language can have its own problems, however. The purpose of being politically correct is reportedly to reduce the chance of offending others. Politically correct language can still apply labels and it can ignore individuality. But it can signal an intent that is positive – effectiveness is in the understanding or in the actions rather than in the language. Respect can be conveyed through sensitivity. Appropriate and thoughtful use of language may avoid labelling altogether.

Not everyone agrees that the preoccupation with political correctness in language is a good thing: overdoing people-first language can be unacceptable to the very populations believed to benefit. In a reaction against the oversensitivity that had arisen, the US National Blind Federation passed a resolution in 1993 declaring that politically correct language 'does the exact opposite of what it purports to do since it is overly defensive, implies shame instead of true equality, and portrays the blind as touchy and belligerent' (Jernigan 1993). Some extensions to politically correct language can overreach their purpose and become condescending in their use: terms such as 'challenged' and 'differently able' might

fall into this category. While society has made some effort to correct the wrongs of the past, it is essential to remember that individuals often see their disability as a crucially identifying feature of their persona. While the fact that individuals have a disability that causes some limitation of function is part of who they are, it should not affect society's attitudes towards them as individuals in the community.

## READING AND WRITING A HISTORY OF THE PARALYMPIC MOVEMENT

In the discussions that follow it has been essential to make use of contemporary sources: principally documents and publications. Extensive support has been forthcoming from people who were involved in the events themselves, to corroborate the documentary evidence and to provide the necessary 'colour' that makes the Paralympic Movement what it is: a thriving and energetic celebration of sport for persons with a disability. In reflecting the evidence as accurately as possible, some outdated terminology used by the participants of the day has been retained, although this necessarily means that more recent sensitivities in language already discussed might be affronted. No offence is intended, only a wish to keep the language of the discussions accurate to the historical context in which they took place. It should become apparent to the reader that the central participants in the Paralympic Movement are much less constrained by the language used to describe their disability or social situation than are people who are trying to enter the debate from an external viewpoint. As this study heads towards analysis of the very recent past one might observe that the language being quoted from meetings, interviews and written evidence is often of a nature that would be judged not to be politically correct at all. Those involved do not tiptoe around their subject – they act with passion so as to affect change.

### Paralympic Terminology

The employment of the term 'Paralympics' has been in dispute off and on for many years. It is interesting to look at the different ways that individuals and organisations have employed the term, and how they have explained its origins and meaning. The earliest users of the term for the quadrennial games tended to perceive 'para' as a prefix that was associated with paraplegia, combined with 'Olympic' – the association with the Olympic ideals in sporting distinction. As time progressed, the International Coordinating Committee moved towards a derivation that was coupled to the idea of 'para' as 'being attached to' or 'parallel to' – so accordingly the Paralympics were defined in terms of the broadened participation of disability groups in a sporting celebration timed to closely precede or follow the Olympic Games. The wish to aspire to the highest sporting accomplishments, as epitomised by the celebration of the Olympic Games, has always been present in the identity of the Paralympic Movement.

In 1949 Ludwig Guttman declared that he hoped the International Stoke Mandeville Games would be the 'disabled person's equivalent of the Olympic Games' (Guttman 1949b); he seems to have been adamant that the use of the word 'Olympic' must be maintained, even in the face of pressure from the International Olympic Committee to protect what it saw as its own copyright. Jens Bromann (former President of the International Blind Sport Association and former Vice President of IPC) comments: 'Guttman told the IOC that as long as he was living he would call these games "Olympic" and he would never give up that term because sport for the disabled was as ideal as the spirit of the Olympic Games for the able-bodied' (Jennings 1996). Roger Bannister, neurosurgeon and inspiration to many athletes for his achievements on the track, presented the prizes at the 1955 Stoke Mandeville Games and announced that he considered the recipients 'wonderful record holders in their own "Paraplegic Olympics"'.

A recent, more intricate, explanation was published by the International Paralympic Committee: ‘The word “Paralympic” derives from a combination of three sources: the Latin adjective “par” (“similar” or “the same”), the Greek preposition “para” (“next to” or “alongside”), and the word “Olympics” (the Paralympic Games being held parallel to the Olympic Games)’ (Reinecke and Reiff 2002). While this may be a suitable explanation now, it has been demonstrated that nothing so precise was intended at the outset.

Organisers of the Tokyo 1964 Paralympic Games were among those to try to clarify the meaning of the title. Although Ludwig Guttman referred to the 1964 13th International Stoke Mandeville Games as the ‘Tokyo Games for the Paralysed’ in his welcome address at the Opening Ceremony, throughout his official reports he called the event the Paralympic Games. This was the same in most official reports of Tokyo – the term used was ‘Paralympics’. The Japanese press also used the term ‘Paralympics’ to report the events at the time. For various reasons, usually connected with the legal rights to usage of Olympic-related terminology, the name used for the four-yearly international games has been varied until more recently: World Wheelchair Games, World Winter Games, International Games for the Disabled, Olympiad for the Physically Disabled, Torontolympiad, Olympics for the Disabled and finally the Paralympic Games. Since 1988, when the Games were held in Seoul, Korea, the Paralympic Games has been accepted as the official name.

## **ORIGINS OF ORGANISATIONS OF SPORT FOR PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY**

Any attempt to understand the development of the Paralympic Movement will be aided by a look at the various organisations that emerged in the 20th century serving specific populations of persons with a disability. They each came into existence in differing ways, often riding the enthusiasm of particular individuals. But they provided an essential stability for those individuals who wished to express themselves through competitive sport, and eventually these organisations gave the platform for efforts to bring the different disability groups together. In an effort to provide greater fluency in preparations for quadrennial multi-disability games, discussions between international organisations led to the creation of the International Coordinating Committee of Sports for the Disabled (ICC), on 22nd March 1982. The President, Vice President and Secretary General from four international federations began meetings that would have much wider impact. The organisations involved were: Cerebral Palsy – International Sports and Recreation Association (CP-ISRA), the International Blind Sport Association (IBSA), the International Stoke Mandeville Games Federation (ISMGF) and the International Sports Organisation for the Disabled (ISOD). In 1986 these four organisations were joined in their efforts by the International Committee for Deaf Sports (CISS) and the International Sports Association for Persons with Mental Handicap (INAS-FMH). Understanding the beginnings of the different international organisations serving sport for persons with a disability will aid any detailed exploration of the Paralympic Movement, because they represent the constituents of the Movement itself. Below is a brief introduction to the very diverse origins of the international federations.

### **Comité International des Sports des Sourds / International Committee for Deaf Sports**

The oldest of the international federations for sport for individuals with a disability is the Comité International des Sports des Sourds / International Committee for Deaf Sports (CISS). This organisation, at first called the International Committee of Silent Sports, was set up just before the end of the

inaugural World Games for the Deaf, held in Paris in 1924 on 16th August. The preferred name for the CISS Games is now the Deaflympics. The prime movers were Antoine Dresse (Belgium) and Eugène Reuben-Alcáis (France). The latter had encouraged the six existing national federations for the deaf (Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Poland) to send competitors to the First International Silent Games. Some athletes from other countries without a national organisation also competed (from Hungary, Italy and Romania). At a meeting in the Café de la Porte Dorée, adjacent to the Bois de Vincennes, Paris, 13 representatives from these nine countries met and sketched out the formation of an international organisation. The constitution was formally adopted at the first Congress, in Brussels, on 31st October 1926. The Summer Silent Games has operated on a four-year cycle since 1924, apart from a ten-year gap from 1939, with Winter World Games for the Deaf starting in 1949. As the only federation representing people who are deaf, the International Olympic Committee recognised the CISS in 1951. The particular independence that the CISS has had since its very early beginnings has strengthened its ability to represent its members. At the same time the isolation that has come with total self-sufficiency, and its singular population, has tended to make it more difficult to persuade the members of CISS to embrace the potential benefits of bringing all disability sports organisations together. The fact is that the International Committee for Deaf Sports has not really needed to hang on the coat-tails of any other global body for survival. CISS became a member of the International Coordinating Committee in 1986, and was a founder member of the International Paralympic Committee. But its early misgivings were confirmed: that there was little to gain from maintaining its involvement. The elected officials of CISS felt that valuable resources were being squandered attending meetings that had little relevance to their ability to represent athletes who are deaf. In 1995, at the Congress held in Helsinki before the Winter Silent Games in Ylläs, Finland, the membership of CISS voted to withdraw from the International Paralympic Committee.

## **International Stoke Mandeville Games Federation**

The International Stoke Mandeville Games Federation (ISMGF) arose from the annual festivals of sport held at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Aylesbury, UK. Originally the games were organised by the Paraplegic Sports Endowment Fund, which later became the British Paraplegic Sports Society and is now the British Wheelchair Sports Foundation. The participants at these annual gatherings were mainly from the spinal injuries units or other rehabilitation centres around the United Kingdom. The tendency of the Stoke Mandeville Committee to be Eurocentric was historically related to its origins in England, and by the expansion mostly into Europe via medical exchange contact. When an International Stoke Mandeville Games Committee was set up at the Meeting of Managers and Trainers in 1959, it was not surprising that the five members should include Great Britain and the Netherlands holding permanent positions. The Netherlands was suggested as a permanent member 'as the country which, with Great Britain, first put the Games on an international basis' (Scruton 1998); the country in which the next games were to be held (if not at Stoke Mandeville) would also be a member. In 1959, Italy was included as the host country for the 1960 Games, with France and Belgium constituting the five.' It might help to add another sentence explaining the basis on which the final two were chosen. Membership of the Committee was initially intended to change regularly. The country in which the next games were to be held (if not at Stoke Mandeville) would be a member, with France and Belgium constituting the five. Delegates on the first Committee were: Dr L. Guttman, President (Great Britain), Dr A. Maglio, Treasurer (Italy), Dr A. Tricot (Belgium), Mr M. Boubee (France) and Capt. H. Tjebbes (Netherlands). Joan Scruton was appointed Honorary Secretary. Only two years later the membership was extended to include representatives from the USA and Austria: Mr R. Simon (Austria) and Mr B. Lipton (USA). Then in 1964 the full Committee was enlarged to include: Dr A. Lococo