

Paralympic Post

IN COOPERATION WITH



Positive change

An interview with
IOC President Thomas Bach

Moving forward

Testing the accessibility
of Sochi

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How does it feel to be at the Games as a journalist? Take a look at the Paralympic diary of our young reporters: tagesspiegel.de/paralympics

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Titel: Russian team players celebrate their victory over USA after their group stage ice sledge hockey match. Photo: dpa

Hello!



Dear readers, the idea to further an inclusive society was the primary motive behind the Paralympic Post when we started the project 10 years ago. Since

2004, the newspaper has been reporting about the performances, the triumphs and defeats of Paralympic athletes, their hopes and dreams. It contributes to giving people with disabilities a much deserved place in the spotlight. And it is an instrument of peaceful international exchange and cooperation, bringing young reporters from Germany and the respective host countries together.

In the past few weeks, however, many have asked themselves: can one celebrate the Paralympic Games in these times of political tensions? We, at German Social Accident Insurance, have pondered this question, too. Ultimately, we have decided to continue with our project Paralympics Zeitung / Paralympic Post despite a difficult political background.

Why? We believe that the Paralympics promote an idea that is of both universal appeal and value: that we need to appreciate the diversity of humankind, that this diversity is our greatest treasure, and that no one should be excluded from participating in the life of the community on the grounds of who they are.

We are convinced that the Paralympic Games are not just a showcase of tremendous athletic performances but an instrument of change – a change we hope to support with our Paralympic Post.

Your **DR. JOACHIM BREUER**
General Director of the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV)

Salut!



Dear readers, the Paralympic Post is a fantastic project which I have supported for years. The young reporters from different countries working together

as a team and producing an entertaining newspaper is a fantastic example of how different nationalities are united through sports and interests. Their different points of views, cultures and attitudes make the paper all the more exciting to read.

This is the spirit of the Paralympic movement and the atmosphere we are hoping for at the games. The international games are a great opportunity for athletes, spectators, officials and politicians from all over the world to meet on an even footing. They are united by a common idea: a peaceful and great games. The Paralympic values of inspiration, equality, courage and determination should be directive for us all.

I very much hope the games continue to be a great success and inspire a lot of young people around the world.

Your **WILLI LEMKE**
Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace



The Paralympic Post

10 years and still as exciting as ever. The jubilee edition of the international newspaper project is once again written by an enthusiastic international group of young reporters. The Paralympic Post Sochi 2014 talents are Amrei Zieracks, Anastasija Arinushkina, Anastasija Rusavskaja, Anna Lisina, Anton Latynin, Bradley Neen, Christina Spitzmüller, David Kramer, George Simonds, Jonas Wengert, Julia Holtnagel, Katharina Schiller, Nicolas Feißt, Tatjana Popadyova und Vladislav Radjuk. The team of British, Russian and German students are not only filling the Paralympic Post with exciting and well-informed articles. They are also working on the two issues of the German language Paralympics Zeitung and the Russian edition, the Paralimpijskij Reporter.

The Paralympic Post has been co-published by the German Social Accident Insurance (Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung, DGUV), the publishing house Der Tagesspiegel and the agency panta rhei since the Paralympic Games in Athens 2004. After two preparatory workshops in Berlin and Moscow our team arrived in Sochi in time for the Opening Ceremony. Since then, they have been busy 24/7: interviewing athletes and officials in English, German and Russian, writing articles, translating for their colleagues, catching up on sleep on the busses to and from the venues, researching behind the scenes in the prosthetics workshops, in the Paralympic village and visiting press conferences.

Clara Kaminsky

No stopping us

“The competition will keep getting tighter and the courses longer.”
USA's **Nicole Roundy** gives the low-down on the Paralympics' newest sport

BRADLEY NEEN

Para-snowboarding is “fiercely competitive racing.” That’s how Nicole Roundy, who will represent the United States in the Paralympics’ newest event, describes the sport. Roundy, who had her right leg amputated due to bone cancer aged eight, stepped onto the ski slope for the first time in 2004. Ten years later she proudly takes her place in the team of 80 US athletes at the tenth Winter Paralympic Games. Snowboarding is the latest inclusion in the Winter Paralympics. The competition has two medal events, men’s and women’s, included in the alpine skiing category. Roundy ran the Paralympic Post through the main female competitors. “Bibian Mentel-Spee from the Netherlands is the favorite for gold. She’s dynamite!”

In the men’s category, favourite to win is USA’s Evan Strong, who is an X-Games gold medalist. He will face competition from the likes of New Zealand’s Carl Murphy and Tyler Mosher of Canada. The snowboarding events take place on the penultimate day of the games. This means competitors will spend more than a week in Sochi before their competitions start. It is not foolish to wonder whether the added wait will help or hinder the athletes. “I’m personally enjoying pacing myself and being able to enjoy the games while I focus on preparation,” said Roundy.

Roundy also juggles her training schedule around a full time job. After gaining a degree in business management in 2012, she now works in online marketing. Fortunately, there is rarely a clash of interests. “Occasionally, I have to sacrifice some training for my job and vice versa. I’ve been incredibly fortunate to work for a company that supports and understands the passion for what I do.” The sport was saddened last month by the death of Australian snowboarder Matthew Robinson. He passed away whilst competing in the IPC World Cup Finals in La Molina, Spain, after suffering neck and spinal injuries. Al-



Nicole Roundy of the United States of America competes in a Snowboard Adaptive Standing Women.

though not due to compete in Sochi (he had an upper limb impairment), Robinson was regarded as one of the most talented and popular athletes in his sport.

As for the future, the aim is to ensure para-snowboarding receives more recognition in the media and with spectators, which may enable it to develop into a more expansive discipline in South Korea in four years time. At the

moment, Paralympic snowboarding is only open to athletes with lower limb impairments. “It is my hope, to develop a stronger, smarter, and more talented group of athletes worldwide,” says Roundy. “I think that the competition will keep getting tighter, the courses longer and more progressive.” For now, we can prepare for this new competition with open minds.



Austrian skier Matthias Lanzinger.

Fresh start

Matthias Lanzinger was counted as a future Olympic athlete for Austria, a young talent that had already won great races in alpine skiing. He won the Europa Cup, was Austrian champion twice and even junior World Champion. Then he had a dramatic accident at a Super G competition in Kvitfjell, Norway in 2008. His left leg had to be amputated. After a long and painful recovery, he started competing again in disabled winter sports in the season 2011/12. In an interview with Tagespiegel, he pointed out that he did not start competing again for fame, but for himself. Still, his aims are competitive and clear: “I came to Sochi to win medals. After a good start this season, my hopes are justified.” The international attention Lanzinger receives is immense, he is the Austrian alpine star, the news about his accident was spread around the world and now everyone is interested in this special comeback. Despite all the potential distractions, he stays focussed for the games, which are “a special highlight for us Paralympians”. In his first competition, downhill, he narrowly missed the medals, coming fourth. Concerning the difficult conditions of the route, the athlete stated he would “send prayers to heaven before the start and re-check the screws.” After his fourth place finish, he wrote on Facebook that this is the place you don’t want at the Paralympics. One day later, he achieved his aim and won a silver medal in Super G, the same discipline in which he had his accident six years before. Only his compatriot Markus Salcher could beat him on this very difficult slope. Lanzinger did not get discouraged or scared by the accidents to earn his first silver medal.

Amrei Zierjacks



The Russian sledge hockey team played Korea in the first match

New national heroes

At every games there is a single sport that really captures the public’s imagination. In Beijing the nations’ hearts were won unsurprisingly by table tennis whilst in London it was wheelchair rugby’s turn. And despite an early setback, Russia’s sledge hockey team is set to thrust the sport into the national psyche; at least if Vladimir Putin can have anything to do with it!

The president’s presence at many of Russia’s ice hockey games at the recent Olympic Games was well publicised. And so his attendance, alongside IOC President Thomas Bach, for Russia’s first sledge hockey game came as little surprise. And I for one can’t blame them.

As a spectacle it is fast flowing, dynamic and engrossing whilst the athletes showcase a simply astounding array of skills; quick and powerful one plays – subtle and calm the next. And all of that inside a fast paced, easy to watch but highly technical sport. Putin managed to pick the game of the first round; Russia’s first game against Korea, which as famous British broadcaster Alan Green would say, “showed all the signs of a great cup tie.”

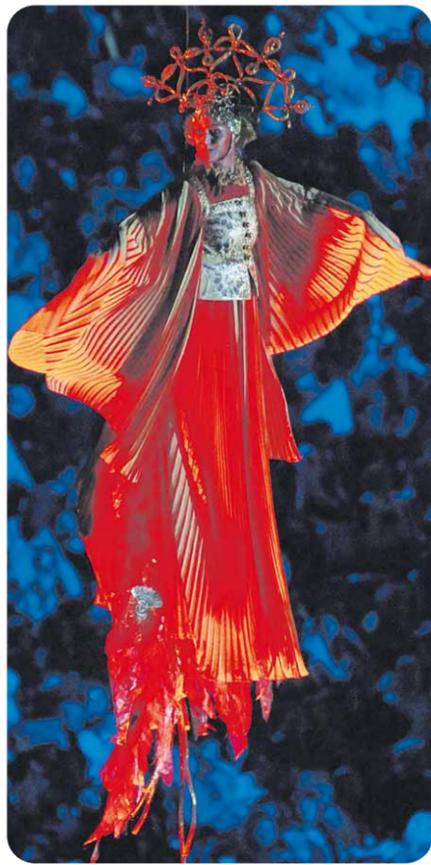
The Russian sledge hockey team had to make up for the reversal at the Olympics

The hotly tipped Russian side started slowly before taking a commanding two goal lead heading into the second period interval. Only for Korean defender Min-Su Han to score a game changing goal with just 36 seconds remaining in the period. After the break the Koreans had far more possession which delighted and worried (in equal measure) the increasingly anxious partisan Russian crowd. A great Korean team goal two minutes into the final third set up a tense last 10 minutes. At the end of normal time the score stood level at 2-2 which of course meant extra time and after an even more tense five minutes of scoreless overtime the game went to ‘Game winning shots’. Which, after 4 rounds, went the Koreans way after Min-Su Han held his nerve and scored the winning goal. Vasilli Varlakov, the Russian de-

fender was surprisingly pensive after the game: “Of course we didn’t play like we could have done, which is a great shame especially in front of our expecting fans and relatives.” This may have been due to the increased pressures associated with a home game; earlier in the day American hockey player Steve Cash had commented that his side had “certainly” suffered from “a few pre-Paralympics nerves.” And the Russian coach Sergey Samoylov certainly alluded to it in his post-match press conference. Although whilst these Paralympic pressures won’t disappear looking towards the rest of the competition there are certainly some strong positives for the Russian team to take from the game. In particular they created some fantastic opportunities; “We just didn’t take them as well as the Koreans did” commented Varlakov. “It’s certainly ‘in our hands,” he added. Regardless of the future successes of the Russian team, if the rest of the competition is anywhere close to being as exciting as the games so far I for one would not be surprised to see Mr Putin at the Shayba Arena again. Or the whole of Russia for that matter.

George Simonds

Performers in large translucent spheres, young ballerinas (right picture), firebirds (below) and a huge icebreaker ship (bottom) were part of the Opening Ceremony.



Breaking the ice

One million lights illuminated a ceremony that was a **spectacular opening** for the first ever Russian Paralympic Games

BRADLEY NEEN



The 2014 Winter Paralympic Games were officially declared open on Friday night with a spectacular ceremony inside the Fisht Stadium, Sochi. The ceremony, which signified the start of the tenth Winter Games, took place in front of 40,000 spectators in the Olympic Park. The two hour ceremony encompassed sport, music and the arts, with alpine skier Valerii Redkozubov carrying the Russian flag in the athletes procession.

"The Winter Paralympics in Sochi will demonstrate the power of sport to unite and inspire the world," said President of the Sochi 2014 Paralympic Organising Committee, Dmitry Chernyshenko. "Welcome to a games which will be a real collection of sport, and inspire millions of people to reach new heights."

Ukraine's decision **not to boycott** the Paralympics was made shortly before the Opening Ceremony



The ceremony, named "Breaking the Ice," honoured the strength of the human spirit and explained how important it is to change perceptions and promote inclusion in society.

The 575 athletes from 45 nations paraded around the stadium before they left to finalise preparations for their competitions in the slopes at Krasnaya Polyana and at the Olympic Park in Adler.

Almost one million LED lights were hung from the roof of the impressive Olympic Stadium, lighting up in the national colours of each country as they entered the ceremony.

A single Ukrainian athlete named Mykhailo Tkachenko carried the national flag into the stadium, as the rest of the team chose not to attend the ceremony. IPC President Sir Philip Craven alluded to the political crisis in Crimea, if not by name then by meaning, saying: "Welcome to the games, a games where sport must be the winner."

Craven gave an inspirational speech at the ceremony. "Tonight is a very special occasion, tonight is proof that what might not seem possible, is possible."

The crescendo of the ceremony was the carrying of the Paralympic flame, which had made its way across Russia, travelling through 46 different cities.

The torch was passed through the stadium before two of Russia's most famous Paralympians, 6 times gold medallist biathlon athlete Sergey Shilov and summer Paralympic swimmer Olesya Vladykina, lit the torch to signify the opening of the games.

The opening ceremony included thousands of dancers and performers, who afterwards shared their thoughts with the Paralympic Post. "It's just amazing, to hear all the shouts of support... But it is still a big responsibility," explained Michail, who also performed at the Olympic Games opening ceremony. "When I participated at the Olympic ceremony I didn't have much time to feel the atmosphere properly. But this time we stood there and watched the sportsmen as they were passing by. It was awesome, inexpressible."

Sir Philip summed up these games perfectly: "The sport you witness here will change you. Not just for now, but forever."

"In this case we would leave"

In the space of half an hour, the word "peace" was said 47 times during the press conference before the Paralympic Games Opening Ceremony. Valerii Sushkevych, the president of Ukraine's Paralympic Committee, used this word to explain the reason why the Ukrainian National Paralympic team will take part in the competition.

The largest Ukrainian team in the history of Winter Paralympics has come to Sochi. Over the last four years, since the Paralympics in Vancouver, a huge ski lodge with a biathlon complex was built in the Carpathians for Ukrainian Paralympic athletes. Valerii Sushkevych noted that for a country not par-

ticularly associated with snow sports, Ukraine shows a great level of preparation, considering the difficult economic and political situation in the country.

"Our team consists of 31 Paralympic sportsmen, who are ready to start.. [their].. winter Paralympic sports. And they do want to do it," said Sushkevych. "But any team, which participates in the Paralympic Games, is team of its country. The Ukrainian team can not be indifferent to the situation around the Crimean Peninsula".

According to the president of the National Paralympic Committee of Ukraine, there is now not political but military tension in the Crimea. That's why the Ukrainian team came to Sochi, with the desire to promote fair competition and peace for its country, for Europe and for the whole world.

Sushkevych said that despite his 15-years work in Verchovna Rada of Ukraine, he strug-

gled not to give a political significance to the press conference. "On Tuesday night I met with Vladimir Putin. Our conversation was civil and respectful. I understood that I spoke to the president as a messenger of the Paralympic team and should ask only for peace during the Paralympic Games." The Ukrainian team made a peaceful, non-political demonstration of the Ukrainian situation when only the flag-bearer of the Ukrainian team, Mkhaylo Tkachenko, took part in the athletes' parade at the ceremony.

It was mentioned that Putin has not made any promises to the Ukrainian national Paralympic team, but Russia's president took its proposals into consideration. As Ukrainian skier and biathlete Gregory Vovchinsky said, if the national Paralympic team boycotted the games in Sochi, they would be forgotten in a few hours. But if they stay, they can show their feelings and call for peace in the Ukraine. Nevertheless, Sushkevych added: "I am afraid that despite my desire for peace something irreparable will happen during the Paralympics. I declare that in this case we would leave Sochi." **Tatjana Popadyova**

One man, one flag: protest at the opening.



Paralympic Champion Markus Rehm wins the West German Championship against his able-bodied competitors.

Photo: Imago

Advantage or not?

Markus Rehm is focused, the German knows how important this jump might be for him. Then he starts running, and jumps. It is 7,50 metres. Rehm is the winner. Although it is only a regional championship, he is nevertheless elated. He is the world record holder in long jump since he won the gold medal at the Paralympics 2012 in London by a big margin. Not one of the other athletes was able to jump longer, Rehm was too good.

Today the feeling of winning the West German Championship is special: All of his opponents were not disabled and Rehm beat them with his prosthetics. It was the first time a German Paralympic athlete had qualified for the National Championships in able-bodied athletics. But in the evening, a few hours after the competition, the jury decided to strip him of his title. They said the lower-limb amputee has an advantage over his non-disabled opponents. The next day, the jury revoked the decision. "This decreases the enjoyment", said the 25-year-old.

The indecision of the jury has demonstrated that they don't know how to manage a case like this. But it seems certain that more athletes with disabilities will qualify for able-bodied championships. Not only because of better technique, but also because of the more professional training conditions. Rehm has no opponents in disability sports anymore who are able to jump as far as he does. This is why he wants to compete against non-disabled athletes. "I offered to compete without being in the results list." He wants to compete to get better and for his own athletic ambition. Rehm has prepared to go ahead and act controversially in order to move things along, even though the discussion isn't new.

Oscar Pistorius was the first prominent Paralympian who became good enough to compete against non-disabled and even beat them. That was in 2008, when Pistorius competed in the Olympic Games in Beijing. In 2012 he started in London as well and made it to the semi-final. During the months before the games he went from court to court, fighting for his rights. A study showed that he has no advantage against the non-disabled

Markus Rehm has no major opponents in **disability sports** anymore. Athletes like him and Pistorius want to compete with able-bodied athletes

NICO FEIBT

and he was allowed to start. Some people were satisfied with the decision, others criticised him because he took part in both the Paralympic and Olympic games in London.

Beside Pistorius there were others participating in the two games: South African swimmer Natalie Du Toit and Polish table tennis player Natalia Partyka. Du Toit won the silver medal at the Olympics. She doesn't need a leg-prosthetic when she is swimming, so no one could accuse her of having an advantage. And Partyka has one hand, but she only had a

small disadvantage playing like this. She debuted in the Paralympics when she was eleven. In London, she competed for the first time in the Olympics and lost in the round of 16. Her target is to win a gold medal in the able-bodied World Games. "I know I have to work harder for it", she stated in London. Nobody criticised them, because in swimming and table tennis athletes don't need to wear prosthetics and the main advantages are small.

In other disciplines the rules are clearer than in athletics, for example in wheelchair basketball. In the German Premier League, players without a disability are allowed to play in the same team as people with disabilities, including them in the highest rate of classification. In the international tournaments they are not allowed to do so. When competing there, they need a certain grade of disability.

Regarding the competition of disabled and able-bodied athletes, there is always the question: Is it a good idea to put the Olympic and Paralympic Games together? All athletes advise against this: Firstly, it is impossi-

ble because of the logistical aspect, secondly, the Paralympic Games would take place alongside the Olympics and thirdly, it would be ridiculous to give up the Paralympics at a time when they are becoming bigger and bigger. Still now the Paralympics are the second biggest sports event in the world, there is always a new spectator record every two years and TV channels show more and more disability sport.

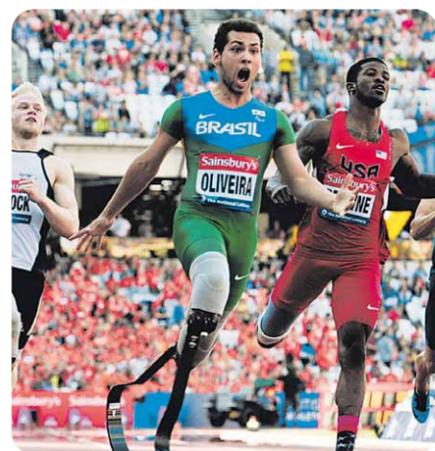
And what is Markus Rehm doing now? He is just carrying on long jumping at the same time as promoting his sports. Because there was such a big discussion after he won the West German Championship, people were interested in what he is doing. So he had the opportunity to jump in a hall during a sports gala. A few weeks ago, the orthopedic technician trained and competed in the United Arab

Partyka aims for gold in able-bodied games

Emirates for several days to raise public awareness for disability sports in countries where they don't exist at all. Rehm knows that he is too good for only being a sports star. He has representative exercises and is the biggest hope for disability sports, to get the same possibilities as able-bodied athletes. Then nobody would wonder when Rehm will beat the able-bodied athletes.

Commentary

Flying with long prosthetics



Alan Oliveira won the men's 100 metres event in London.

Alan Oliveira will always be the man who beat Oscar Pistorius. He is the world record holder in 100 metres and Paralympic champion in 200 metres track and field. Pistorius had never lost in 200 metres or 400 metres, and in the semi-final of the Paralympic Games in London he ran a new world record. There was no doubt he would win that gold medal in the final. After half of the race Pistorius was in the front, leading by nearly ten metres. But then Oliveira came, so fast that it appeared as he could fly. There was no new world record, but he had beaten Pistorius, like nobody had done in the past years.

Brazil was happy: There was a young, charming runner. The people in the host country of the 2016 summer Paralympics had a new idol. Soon enough, Oliveira became the face of the games, people recognise him, he is

their hope to win gold medals. On the one hand, this is good because the Paralympics will become more famous and the Brazilians are familiarised with disability sports long before the games. They can learn how to deal with people who have disabilities and can give the sports a platform.

On the other hand, people criticise Oliveira for having prosthetics that are longer than a real leg. But according to the rules of the IPC everything is all right, even if it's not fair for the others who have prosthetics in the right proportions. The IPC perhaps needs to reconsider this as people like Oliveira can never compete against able-bodied athletes. But when they change the rules, Oliveira will be slower – and the Paralympics 2016 in Rio may lose their poster boy.

Nico Feibt

JULIA HOLLNAGEL and GEORGE SIMONDS

The Paralympic movement is growing at an incredible rate. With its message of equality and performance reaching more people than ever before. This is shown by the incredible growth that companies such as Otto Bock have experienced. As head of communications Karsten Ley said "we started as five men and a parasol, now we have five separate stations!" And whilst the Paralympic movement attempts to break down barriers for people with disabilities, has this rapid growth actually meant they have built their own barriers – the barrier of wealth? George and Julia investigate.

A defining feature of all Paralympic sports is the quest for fairness, with the official IPC website stating: "all sports having a system in place which ensures that winning is determined by skill, fitness, power, endurance, tactical ability and mental focus." This system includes the infamous classification procedure, the grading of results and stringent equipment standards. This means all the athletes who are competing in the same classification are using the same standard of equipment.

A competition mono-ski costs as much as a small family hatchback

Everyone wants to see the performance levels increasing and to help facilitate this the equipment used by the athletes is becoming increasingly more advanced. For example the mono-skis used at the Rosa Khutor Centre contain the same spring cores that are used in Formula One cars. That obviously does not come cheap, with a standard competition mono-ski costing as much as a small family hatchback.

And with this huge level of technological advance it is easy to see how countries can get left behind. No sooner have they invested in the latest ski with the most advanced Formula One technology before another even lighter, more stable model is released. This means only the richest nations such as Germany (investing \$4.4 million a year into disability sport) and Ukraine (who have strong Paralympic traditions) can keep up, leaving the poorer nations athletes simply unable to compete. This is clearly shown in the respective medals table. Of the 13 countries yet to win a winter Paralympic medal almost all are poorer LEDC nations. But it's not only the athletes from the poorer nations who are being left behind. In 2008, three Americans sued the United States Olympic Committee over a miserly attitude to disability sports. Their appeal was rejected by the Supreme Court but its impact was an international resonance.

"We realise that equipment is an issue," said Craig Spence, Media Officer of the International Paralympic Committee, to The Guardian. "Paralympic sport can be quite cost prohibitive."

Over the last decade the IPC has recognised this problem and has taken several steps to try reducing the issue. For example the IPC covers 80% of the costs incurred from attending the games; from transport to accommodation. Although even with this significant financial support Paralympic squads from Malawi and Botswana were forced to withdraw a few days before the start of the London Games due to funding problems. This assisted funds approach was supported by a more practical solution. Six years ago the IPC tasked the British charity Motivation with making lower-cost performance sports wheelchairs.



The picture shows a mono-ski-bobsleigh from 1984. The technical development has increased rapidly.

Rich vs. Poor

Performance levels are increasing faster than ever before and this is partly due to the massive increase in equipment **technology**. Surely this can only be good for the Paralympic movement as a whole. Some aren't so sure



Technological advance affects every facet of Paralympic sport; from its coverage in the media to the pre-competition preparations. Modern prosthetics are very much a part of this leading to the enhanced performance of all athletes.

And at last year's games the final products were released, including a low-cost racing wheelchair (at 1/6 of the usual price) and specialist's basketball chairs priced at £435. Although even these low-cost alternatives are still prohibitive to young athletes.

Undoubtedly, one of the crueler paradoxes of Paralympic sport is that the countries with the largest pool of potential athletes are often those who are least able to support them. For example Cambodia – a country with one of the largest ratios of amputees in the world (due to the high number of landmine blasts) are yet to win a Paralympic medal.

This kind of example "damages the image

of disability sport," according to German Paralympic gold medallist Markus Rehm.

The modern Olympic movement only really began to accelerate after the end of the Second World War (in a fully equal society). That was of course over a century after the abolition of slavery games and 50 years after the suffragette movement and the accompanying large scale emancipation of women. So perhaps a country should only start the quest for Paralympic medals once there is a real equality in society.

This ideology of "opportunity then performance" is exemplified by Rwanda. A complete national transformation of the education system allowed it to field 14 athletes at the 2012 London Paralympic games.

Similarly Sir Philip Craven pointed out to the BBC, that Ukraine "has zoomed into view in both the Summer and Winter Paralympic sport... relatively quickly." This change is rather due to a paradigm change in the treatment of disabled people than a rapid economic development.

This can be politically led, as was the case of Russia, with the appointment of former Paralympic athlete Mikhail Terentiev and Vladimir Krupennikov into the Russian duma (parliament) being instrumental in initiating the change of attitudes to disabled people in Russia. The change could also be led from a social perspective with the simple TV coverage having a positive impact. The incredible displays of courage, commitment and athletic performance can be instrumental in instigating the change in views of disabled

people. And these 'able' connotations alongside the presentation of disabled people as glamorous, ambitious and capable is a stark contrast from the usual image of a victimised minority.

In fact the worldwide main criticism of Paralympic TV coverage is the lack of it. Russia's main networks only showed brief coverage of the London Games as did Japan's NHK network. Whilst America's treasured NBC attracted huge levels of criticism both nationally and internationally for its scanty TV coverage.

Obviously these factors are inexorably linked. Increased wealth leads to increased education regarding disability which in turn leads to social and political change. This then results in increased sporting performance before inspiring even more TV coverage. Regardless of this, as Paralympic torch bearer Sergey Shilov said: "At the beginning you have to work hard regardless of your background. But where there's a will there's a way."

And the IPC and Paralympic fans worldwide are hoping that there's a way to overcome the latest obstacle facing Paralympic sport and I for one, am sure they will.

The five sports

The Sochi 2014 **Winter Paralympic Games** will be home to five different sports, with three taking place in the mountains and two at the coastal Olympic Park



Biathlon

The biathlon competitions are 7.5 kilometres long and are interrupted by two shooting breaks.

Each shooting competition consists of five shots on a target which stands 10 metres away.

Each miss results in a time penalty. The athletes pick up their rifles at the shooting range.

Biathletes compete in short, middle and long distance runs as well as in the relay starts.

Athletes with an arm or leg impairment compete in the standing category whilst wheelchair users are categorised as sitting and compete in a sit-ski. Athletes with a visual impairment are accompanied by a sighted guide,

who helps them to navigate their way around the course. The athletes aim by listening to an acoustic signal transmitted to their headphones by the electronic rifles. Medal favourites are the Russian athletes, like Elena Kaufman (picture), who are strong in most disciplines. Russian biathlete Roman Petushkova won the first medal for the host country in biathlon. Other strong contenders are the Ukrainian and American teams.



Cross-Country

In the cross-country skiing competitions athletes compete in three different distances: The shortest distance is 1 kilometre and the middle distance is 10 kilometres for men and 5 for women. The length of the long-distance track is dependent on the classification category. In the standing category, the men cover a distance of over 20 kilometres and women 15 kilometres. The cross-country ski run for the athletes in the sitting category is 15 kilometres long for men and 10 for women. Athletes with different disabilities and classification categories compete in the relay competitions. Athletes classified as standing use cross-country skis while the sitting athletes use specialised sit-skis. Athletes with a visual impairment are assisted by a sighted guide who gives directions and warns about upcoming obstacles and turns. As in most sports the strong Russian team is one of the medal favourites with athletes such as Nikolay Polukhin and Irek Zaripow. Other contenders include athletes from the USA and Ukraine with Lyudmyla Pavlenko (picture).



Alpine Skiing

Alpine skiing is a fast and exciting sport to watch. There are seven different disciplines to follow: Downhill, Slalom, Giant Slalom, Super G, Super Combined, Team Events and for the first time at the Paralympic Games: snowboarding.

The male and female athletes in the standing category race downhill at an average speed of 120 kilometres per hour. The competitors in the sitting category race on sitting or mono-skis. They keep their balance with help of two sticks which have mini-skis at the ends.

Para-snowboarding will make its Paralympic debut at the games in Sochi. The male and female athletes compete in the lower limb category. The sport is not yet open for athletes with upper body or visual impairments. The athletes start one after the other in the boardercross competition. The best two times of the three runs are added together. The two most promising athletes are Evan Strong and Mike Shea both from the US team.



Curling

Two mixed-gender teams with four players play against each other in wheelchair curling. All athletes are wheelchair users in daily life. The teams alternate in pushing the granite stone, which weighs 20 kilograms, over the ice. The stone is turned by hand or a specialised stick giving it direction on the ice. As no sweeping techniques are used, the athletes have to be very precise when giving it the right push to move the stones towards the house at the end of the 42 metre long ice lane. The objective is to place all stones in the four rings of the house and to push the opposing team's stones in a disadvantageous position. Every stone that is successfully placed in the house wins points depending on its exact position. After eight rounds the team with the most points wins. The Canadian team who won the gold medal at the 2010 Games are this year's favourites. Sweden and China are their toughest competitors for the gold medal.



Sledgehockey

Sledge hockey is one of the most popular and fascinating Paralympic winter sports. Two teams of 5 outfield players and a keeper play against each other. The male athletes, who are wheelchair users in daily life, glide across the ice in their double-blade sledges. The sledges are made of steel or aluminium with a seat.

The athletes use two sticks, which have a spike-end for pushing and a blade-end for shooting the puck into the opposing team's goal. The goals and playing field are the same size as in ice hockey. Most of the rules are also similar. One of the differences is that the playing time is shorter.

The thirds are just 15 minutes each.

In Sochi eight teams are competing for the three medals. Medal favourites are defending champions and world champions USA. The Canadian and Russian teams also have medal hopes.

First steps to accessibility

Accessibility inside the Olympic Park of **Sochi** is almost perfect. But what about the public transport and public buildings in the country's most **barrier-free** city? We carried out a test to find out

JONAS WENGERT and GEORGE SIMONDS

For a brief period during the Paralympic Games the world's media are focused on the trials and tribulations of people with disabilities. But what about the plight of those who aren't skiing, sliding or shooting? We decided to find out.

Three weeks before the Paralympic Games in Sochi started, we had our last workshop, to ensure we are well prepared for our work during the games. So we all headed out to Moscow where six times Paralympic champion and Paralympic flame lighting athlete Sergey Shilov told us that 'the Russian capital is the second most accessible city in the country'.

After hearing this, I wasn't sure whether to laugh or cry. I had realised in my few days in the capital, that for pretty much all wheelchair users it is almost impossible to move along the city without any help. Often there were no ramps to the pavement or if there miraculously was one, they were simply too steep. By the way: we didn't see a single elevator that would bring a wheelchair user (such as I am) downwards onto the subway. There were only incredibly long escalators

Sometimes the problem is verbal communication

with an almost dangerous angle. Fortunately for me, I am able to stand and walk short distances; whilst I also had several helpful colleagues on hand to carry my wheelchair. So after an often challenging few days in Russia's second most accessible city we were very interested to see the situation in the most accessible one – Sochi.

I think it is important to remember that during the Paralympics a large number of people with disabilities are on Sochi's streets and so our test probably isn't representative of the city as a whole. My editorial colleague and friend George Simonds and I tested the city's accessibility with my wheelchair. We started at our accommodation. On our way to the Press Centre we decided to head into a small corner shop to get supplies for our long day of writing. There was a small ramp leading onto the pavement; although it was located about 20 metres away from the supermarket's entrance. Therefore, whilst accessible to a wheelchair user it required careful planning from any potential disabled customer. Once inside there were no problems; the staff were on hand to help me reach any item. First test, passed!

Then we began to meet our first few problems. Attempts to make the pavement wheelchair-friendly were clear to see; although obviously this was not possible everywhere. For the next part of my journey I needed all of the help I could get. Initially a small obstacle in the form of a low kerb was overcome. We then found ourselves standing in front of a little improvised bridge. At the beginning there was a ramp leading to two large steps onto the bridge. It was even worse on the other side of the bridge; no ramp - just three stairs. A paraplegic can't get out of his wheelchair and so there is virtually no chance for him to handle this situation without help. And after the bridge, it didn't get any better. We then came across a set of long stairs and to our delight we saw a ramp built next to it. I, however, struggled to imagine that any wheelchair user could use it as it was so steep. Thus I was forced to stand as I was quite worried about breaking my neck. After managing to scale the stairs the fast flowing road seemed a surprisingly easy obstacle to overcome as all the drivers were very considerate and stopped to let us pass. In an attempt to speed up our progress



Photos: Thilo Ruckelshaus

we then tried to take the bus. Unfortunately the public one that arrived next was completely inappropriate for wheelchairs. No ramp, no lift, nothing. So we were forced to continue (on foot and wheel respectively).

After our experience with the bus we decided to test whether all forms of public transport were as inaccessible for people with a disability. Therefore, we decided to check out the local train station. The problem here wasn't the accessibility; instead it's the verbal communication (or lack of it) due to a rather large language barrier. And thus actually understanding each other was the largest problem as there were a few accessi-

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How does it feel to be at the Games as a journalist? Take a look at the Paralympic diary of our young reporters: tagesspiegel.de/paralympics

bility issues. The station was equipped with both ramps and a lift; enabling us to reach all the platforms. Getting onto the train was easier if you had help but would be possible if you were completely independent, too. It is important to say that this is the station closest to the Paralympic Park and as far as accessibility is concerned it is almost ideal. It became clear to us that the closer we got to the Park the better the accessibility is. Next to each set of stairs we found a ramp and all of them were fine to use. So it didn't take long for us to reach the Main Press Centre. Here they were all set for wheelchair users and everything worked very well.

On our journey home again we decided to stop in a large local supermarket. The service here was excellent. A worker immediately showed us the lift to the upper floor and if not there was an electric ramp too. He was both considerable and helpful and helped us all the way through our purchase.

After our bad experience with the public bus we finally decided to take the special Sochi bus. They certainly were better equip-



Paralympic Post reporters Jonas Wengert (in a wheelchair) and George Simonds test the accessibility in Adler.



How barrier-free are supermarkets, public transport systems and public buildings in Sochi? We tried to find out.

ped; with, in the worst case scenario, a hand-operated ramp which could be deployed. There was also a deluxe edition with an electric lift which could not be more comfortable. The bus drivers didn't have to be asked, the ride was smooth and there were even seat belts. And so whilst wheelchair accessibility was not possible everywhere in some places and situations it was outstanding.

It is very hard to fairly evaluate the accessibility of Sochi as a whole; at times it is flawless whilst at others it does leave a lot to be desired. Though everyone we encountered made a real effort to create the best atmosphere possible.

IOC President Bach met David and Nastja in the Paralympic Family Hotel during his stay in Sochi

What are the main differences between the Olympic and Paralympic Games?

First of all, I think one should focus on what they have in common. The Paralympics have undergone a great amount of development within the last few years. The entire Paralympic movement has shifted its focus further towards sports and athletic achievement. There are far more similarities today than in the past when the social aspect was more prominent in the Paralympic Games. This common ground has also made the cooperation between the International Paralympic Committee, IPC, and the IOC much better and easier in recent years.

These Paralympics will have a positive influence on Russian society

As President of the IOC, you must be confronted with the recurring discussion about whether or not the Paralympic and Olympic Games should be held after each other, together or independently. What is your opinion on this question?

This question should actually be put to the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). My impression is that the current situation is very satisfactory. The Olympics are a 'driving force' for the Paralympics when it comes to potential candidate cities. They open doors for the Paralympic movement, which might otherwise not be as easily accessible. The third reason the current order is preferable is that it offers the Paralympic athletes the platform they deserve. As I said, this is the IPC's matter. But an additional aspect, which should be considered when thinking about combining the two events is the logistical challenge this would provide. The Olympic venues and accommodation could not be re-used but would have to be built additionally and on top. This would not be in accordance with the sustainability aspect and could reduce the number of cities interested in hosting future games.

Due to the cancelled visits of some Western delegations, these Paralympic Games in Sochi are more political than ever before. Do you think this is justified?



Photo: Thilo Ruckelshaus

“Positive change”

Thomas Bach, President of the International Olympic Committee, IOC, about the development of the Paralympic movement and the relationship between sports and politics

Every government has to decide how they want to support their athletes and team at these games themselves. I do not think the Paralympic or Olympic Games are suitable platforms to deal with political disputes. As I said during the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games, I think the Olympics and Paralympics should do the exact opposite: Both Games convey a positive message and

values of unity and peace between the participating nations, which should not be disrupted by political disagreements. Everyone will have their own answer to the question of whether or not these gestures – to put it positively – have any political significance.

Does this mean you think sports and politics can be separated?

No. In our world, everything is political to some degree so politics cannot be disregarded completely. Sports are to remain politically neutral, which does not mean they are against politics. Of course, we have to recognise that we currently have a very delicate political situation. This has to be acknowledged.

Do you think the Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi can influence Russian society's attitude towards people with disabilities?

The answer is yes! We have also experienced this positive change at the Paralympics in Beijing 2008. The games were able to make quite a difference regarding the

attitude towards the abilities and achievements of people with a disability in China. I am positive that these Paralympic Games and the athletes' amazing performances will also have a positive influence on Russian society.

Having competed at several Olympic Games yourself, how do you rate the accomplishment of athletes with a disability who fight their way back to daily life and competitive sports, for example after an accident or an illness?

I find this to be a most admirable and brilliant achievement. I think it is very impressive if a professional athlete who was handicapped by an accident finds the strength to overcome this and adjust to their new situation in life. In my opinion, this dedication, motivation, endurance and positive attitude demands our respect and admiration.

Questions by Anastasija Arinushkina and David Kramer

Sunny skies and first results

The alpine and Nordic skiing competitions got off to a blistering start in the mountains at Krasnaya Polyana, with the Russian and German teams dominating

The first days of Paralympics in Sochi couldn't be better for the fans of alpine and Nordic skiing: blue sky, sun and the monumental panorama of the Caucasus. But of course they came there for another reason: supporting their teams. And you can already say that they're doing a great job! The stadiums are full of cheers and flags. You can feel that everybody is having a good time. The sportsmen and women feel the spirit and are giving their very best.

In Nordic skiing Russia clearly dominates the competitions. The best example was the medal ceremony of Men's Biathlon 15 kilometers sitting competition: with Roman Petushkov, Irek Zaripov and Aleksandr Davidovich, three Russians were on the medalists' podium. But also other nations are doing very well. The Ukrainians won gold and silver and German athlete Andrea Eskau also won a gold medal. On Saturday the Germans experienced a real gold rush when Anna Schaffelhuber won the women's downhill race.

The Japanese fans could celebrate their gold and silver medals in the men's Super G race and Marie Bochet from France was the fastest in the downhill standing disci-



Photo: dpa

Andrea Eskau of Germany competes in Women's 12km Sitting of Cross-Country.

pline. Despite all the joy about the results, there are always two sides to the story. Especially during the alpine ski competitions the spectators hold their breath when they see spectacular accidents. The piste is quite demanding and due to the warm weather conditions it is very uneven. That's why many athletes fell and Tyler Walker from the US even had to be air-lifted to the hospital. Besides the problems with the snow, there's another factor which presents difficulties for the athletes: it's simply too warm. Andrea Eskau had to break off a competition the day after her gold medal because of problems with her breathing. A reason may be the warm weather, which is 12° C in the mountains. This is a huge difference for athletes who aren't used to "spring" in the mountains. However, thanks to hard training and concentration the athletes give their best and achieve excellent results. Katharina Schiller

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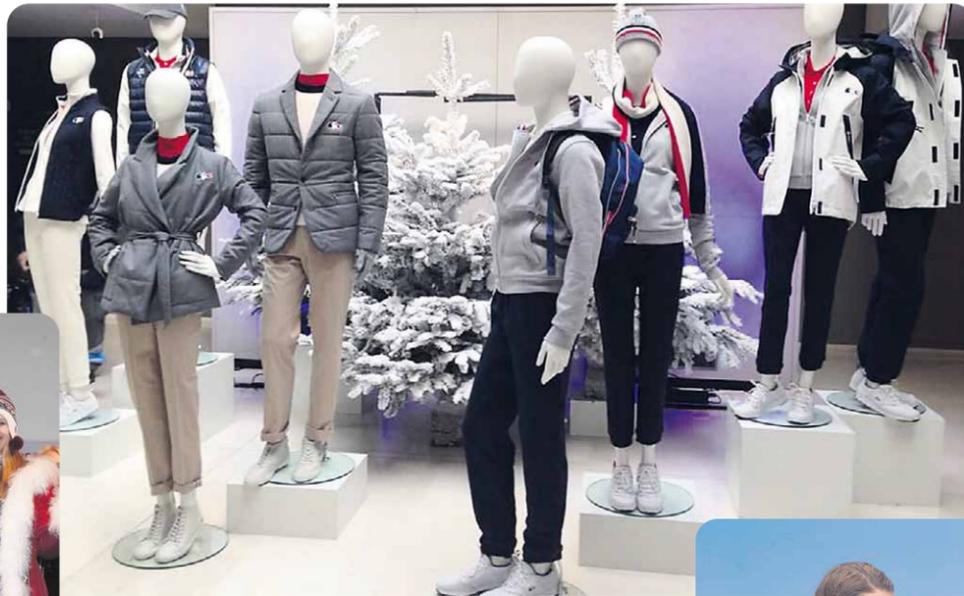
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Très chic!

Style check with **Julia Müller**. The “Brigitte”-editor knows what’s in fashion and who deserves the gold medal for the **best-dressed** team



S **Russia**
The design is quite folkloristic. I can’t decide whether to say “for heaven’s sake” or “how cute”. I find the traditional design quite charming but not particularly modern. However, the hats the female athletes are wearing are really cool.



G **France**
I really like the kit the French team is wearing; it is typically Lacoste. I like the grey and the chino pants, they give the team a certain laid-back chic. I am especially delighted with the tricolor scarf. I would wear it myself. Although the design is not especially daring, it is altogether very attractive and wearable.



B **Germany**
I would have loved it if the design had been chosen to make a political statement, to emphase a point. It’s a pity that it’s meant as a fashion statement. Because the question I have to ask myself is: What fashion statement? Personally, I find the red flared pants quite daring and so I am not surprised that the brightly coloured design caused a large international stir.

The Opening Ceremony of the Paralympic Games showcased a lot of different team kits. Our reporters asked athletes, officials and volunteers about the top three:

Anna Schaffelhuber,
German athlete Ski Alpin

“Our outfits are definitely very colourful and so we won’t be overlooked. As at most other games, we stand out of the crowd. Which is exactly what we want to do in the competitions as well. So the reference is correct: We definitely don’t come across as grey and dull!”

Benoir Hetet,
Press Officer Federation Francaise Handisport

“Lacoste made very elegant and modern outfits for the French team. They’re quite classic, but the athletes ap-

preciated them very much. The other countries did as well, because they asked us whether we would like to swap our clothes with them after the Games. We also really like the German outfit because it’s visible and fresh. They’re adapted to an international and very colourful event.”

Talchuk Kaleriya and Victoria Semenets,
Russian volunteers at the Paralympics

“The Russians’ outfits are bright and colourful. We really like them. It reminds us of a white bear, showing off the Russian culture.”

Short!

Hot.Cool.Sorry, what?

The motto ‘Hot.Cool.Yours’ raised many eyebrows in the international sporting community when it was announced in 2012. The Sochi organisers were, however, quick to issue an explanation. ‘Hot’ reflects the intensity of sporting battles and the passion of the spectators. The ‘Cool’ symbolises the snow, ice and white mountain tops. And finally ‘Yours’ indicates that no-one is excluded from both participating and experiencing the joy of the games.

George Simonds

Kurz!

No need for a winter coat



Palm trees and snow – what sounds like a contradiction isn’t one at all in Sochi. When you arrive at the airport, the first thing you see is big, green palm trees. No need for a winter coat, temperatures around 15°C are normal where the coastal cluster is located. For the skiing events one has to go up to the Caucasus mountains to Krasnaya Polyana, which has become a famous skiing resort in the last few years.

Christina Spitzmüller

Bref!

Special Olympics coming up

Beside the Paralympics there are also the Deaflympics for deaf people and the Special Olympics, the largest organisation for people with an intellectual disability, incorporating 4.2 million athletes from over 170 countries. The Deaflympics last year took place in Sofia, Bulgaria, and the next Special Olympics will be in Los Angeles, USA, in 2015. The Special Olympics Germany, the national championships, take centre stage this year in Düsseldorf, Germany, from the 19th-23rd of May.

Nico Feißt

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The very top

Anna **Schaffelhuber** - Paralympian, **gold medal** winner and law student doesn't let anything stop her

NICO FEIBT and KARIN PREUGSCHAT

I am not different from any other girl my age. I have always had the opportunity to try everything I wanted to do," says Anna Schaffelhuber. Which is true: The cheerful young woman studies law in Munich, she is pretty, outgoing and has a passion for skiing. The 21-year-old blonde seems to be an ordinary girl.

Until a few days ago in Sochi... She now is the youngest Paralympic gold medallist in the German team. Yes, she is a Paralympic athlete. Anna is a wheelchair user and races her mono-ski downhill at breathtaking speeds of up to 120 kilometres per hour. During the practice-runs in Sochi, Anna was the only racer to make it down the hill without an accident. Maybe this is because she was the only athlete who didn't think she couldn't do it. Maybe it is because she believes that she can do anything she wants to do. Anna Schaffelhuber is an excellent example of how inclusion should work - and that inclusion is not just an unobtainable ideal. Maybe her willpower and way of thinking help to make a difference in other people's lives.

"She is a wonderful role model and great asset for our team," says Gregor Doepke. He is head of communication of the German Social Accident Insurance (Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung DGUV). Within the DGUV's many activities, one of their objectives is to promote rehabilitation and prevention through sport. "We founded the DGUV-team to show that athletes with a disability have the same opportunities as everyone else. Equal opportunity is an important milestone in the process to have a totally inclusive society."

Along with the two winter Paralympians Anna Schaffelhuber and Andrea Rothfuss, who are both competing in Sochi, two former winter sports athletes and 11 summer Paralympians make up the team. The DGUV wants to support and enable all people with a disability to take an active role in their own lives and in society without any restrictions.

One of their communication tools is the DGUV-team. The members of the team are all successful role models, former and active athletes, who show that just because you may have a disability, there are barely any limits to what you can do. Anna Schaffelhuber is one of the younger members of the team who has never let anything stop her from achieving her goals.

"This is exactly the spirit that our society needs. People with or without disabilities need to have all options open to them without any exceptions," Dr. Joachim Breuer, the DGUV General Director stresses. This ap-

"Equal opportunity is an important milestone"

plies to every aspect of life - social and of course professional. One way to enable people to take an active role in their lives is through sports.

Sports allow people to experience mobility, motivation and success. Therefore, the DGUV uses sport as a key element to successful rehabilitation. An outstanding example to prove that sport is the best way to regain an active role in life are the Paralympic Games. Numerous Paralympic athletes have overcome an accident, a serious illness or were wounded in war. They have all fought their way back to life with ambition and many hours of hard work and training.

In Germany, the DGUV takes care of people who have recently been in accidents. Aside from practical and technical assistance in daily life, one of the DGUV's goals is successful rehabilitation. A very important part of this process is sport. The aim is not necessarily to introduce patients to competitive sports but to enable them to take an active part in their daily life as well as in their professional life. Athletic achievements help regain a positive attitude and mental strength. Just like a Paralympian, just like Anna Schaffelhuber, who has won two gold medals in Sochi so far.



German athlete Anna Schaffelhuber enters the stadium during the Opening Ceremony of the Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games at the Fisht Olympic Stadium.

You can do more than you think

Henry Wanyoike is running the final lap of the 5000 metres, his guide is exhausted. But Wanyoike keeps fighting, speeding up, pulling his guide over the finish line. The crowd cheers him on. "They screamed: Go Kenya, keep straight", Wanyoike remembers winning his first Paralympic gold medal in Sydney 2000.

This is one of many remarkable scenes in the documentary "GOLD - You can do more than you think." The film tells the emotional story of three Paralympians. Henry Wanyoike, a visually impaired marathon runner, Kirsten Bruhn, paralysed swimmer and gold medal winner from Germany and Kurt Fearnsley, Australian wheelchair racer.

The film, which celebrated its world premiere at the international film festival Berlinale, went on to be shown in cinemas all over the country. "In the beginning, it seemed to be a crazy idea to make a film about the lives of three Paralympic athletes. But the outcome is amazing. There is no better way to show inclusion. The emotional pictures

touch people's hearts", said Gregor Doepke, Head of Communication with the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV), who initiated the project.

Over years a film team around Michael Hammon followed these outstanding athletes through their lives. The film shows them with their families and friends or working in social projects. It portrays the motivation and passion the three athletes have for their sports as well as the hours of hard work and training they put into it. GOLD showcases why they are role models.

The movie reached its peak at the 2012 London Paralympics. This is the highlight they have all been working towards. Not all of the portrayed Paralympians win a gold medal in the end - but they show that everybody can achieve more than you think.

Dr. Joachim Breuer, Director General of the DGUV, says: "I have watched the film eight times, and I'm sure that you can still watch it in five years. It is a timeless movie."

Nico Feibt



Swimmer and Paralympic athlete Kirsten Bruhn (l) at the premiere of the movie "GOLD - You can do more than you think".

GOLD - The amazing documentary about three Paralympians which has moved thousands of people is now available on DVD and Blu-ray

Bref!

Hope of the nation



Photo: AFP

On the 11th of March, three years after the earthquake that led to the tsunami in Japan, Yurika Abe will compete in the LW6 cross-country skiing at the Paralympic Games. The 18-year-old was one of millions of victims of the tsunami, luckily she and her relatives survived. But the scale of the disaster means she thinks her exploits have the ability to give hope to her compatriots after the disaster. Born with a paralysed left arm, Abe only took up the sport three years ago after watching the event in Vancouver. Since then she has been incredibly hard working and passionate in her long term aim to be one of the best athletes in the world. Although at the moment she is just pleased to be able to represent her country and her compatriots here in Sochi.

Katharina Schiller

Behind the scenes



Photo: Andrei Zernitski

Peter Kaadtmann, team manager of the German TV-channel ZDF, gave a behind-the-scenes-tour to writers from the Paralympic Post. He then showed them the studio which they share with the other German public-sector broadcaster ARD, in the International Broadcast Centre in Sochi. "All of the technical equipment comes in a ship from Germany. The office fittings we have to hire locally", Kaadtmann says. An office chair for example costs around 20 Euros a day. However, these expenses are certainly worth it. With both channels broadcasting over 20 hours of coverage directly from the Paralympics in Sochi, the TV ratings are even better than at the Olympic Games!

Christina Spitzmüller

Kurz!

Carrying the torch



Photo: Getty

Sergej Shilov, a former Russian biathlete who won six gold medals in his career, held the Paralympic flame at the Opening Ceremony in Sochi. Although he isn't participating in the games this year, he still watches every biathlon competition. When asked what it felt like to carry the torch, he answered: "It is a very special feeling. People have told me that they wanted to cry whilst they were watching the ceremony, and I replied by saying that I was also conscious of this. Our government understands that people with disabilities are also real sportsmen and they support us. So it is just awesome, when you are there and you prove yourself. And show that even people with disabilities can do sports in a professional situation. I am proud that the Paralympic Games are being held in Russia for the first time. I hope that people with disabilities who stay at home can look at this ceremony, and can see that people with disabilities are active and do sports and can even win medals. So why can't they go outside and try and take part? That is my purpose." Anasatasija Arinushkina

Knights in colourful armour



Photo: Thilo Ruckelshaus

If you think about the Olympic and Paralympic Games, you picture sportsmen, journalist and spectators. The volunteers are, however, not always recognised. Volunteers in their colourful uniforms all around the venues in Sochi are always easy to spot. They are pro-active, chatty and eager to help.

The Winter Games in Sochi are unique because all of the infrastructure in the city was built from scratch in a short amount of time. Meaning that many people who live in Sochi don't know where to find every new venue or transport link. Although the volunteers are on hand to answer these questions.

Volunteers should be friendly, helpful and selfless. So whilst you may think that the work of volunteers is easy, their twelve hour shifts ensure that they are the real heroes. Thankfully, the venue announcers praise the volunteers during every game, so they always get some recognition for their hard work.

Anton Latynin

Short!

Tweeting and posting

Embracing social media like no other, athletes are giving inside accounts of what it feels like to be a Paralympic competitor. Social media is becoming more important with every passing day. Less than ten years ago, social media sites were almost non-existent. Now every athlete, journalist and supporter is tweeting updates, posting thoughts on Facebook and sharing pictures on Instagram. Twitter is an amazing forum for fans and athletes to connect. An excellent example is Australian alpine skier Jessica Gallagher (@JessGallagher86), who also competed in two sports at London 2012. She showcases how athletes of all nationalities can communicate directly with supporters, posting exclusive snaps and updates from her training and competitions in Sochi.

Bradley Neen

Explosive out of the 'Bock'



Photo: Promo

Otto Bock has opened a free technical station in the Paralympic Mountain Village. 28 technicians from different countries are working night and day to fix any problems Paralympic athletes have with their prosthetics.

Otto Bock was created in 1919 and at the time all prosthetics were made individually. The company began working at the Paralympics in 1988 when they took only two bags and an umbrella and set off on their journey to Korea. Although the founder wants to ensure everything is more standardised, sportsmen still have to customise their prosthetics. The reason is that their success isn't just dependent on the technical characteristics but also on their ability to use them in the most efficient way. In many ways prosthetics are even more complicated than Formula One cars - they are special parts of bodies.

Today Otto Bock makes prosthetics for everyday life as well as sports: in an attempt to increase participation levels and to inspire disabled people to leave their comfort zone as well as lowering their financial costs.

However, even the most modernized prosthetics can't turn you into a superhuman. Athlete Genrich Popov says that if it works faster than a healthy leg it will only make things worse.

Sometimes the equipment plays an essential role and can even dictate the chances of athletes to win. However, almost all Paralympic athletes would only wish to be healthy and have no technical enhancements rather than have brand-new prosthetics.

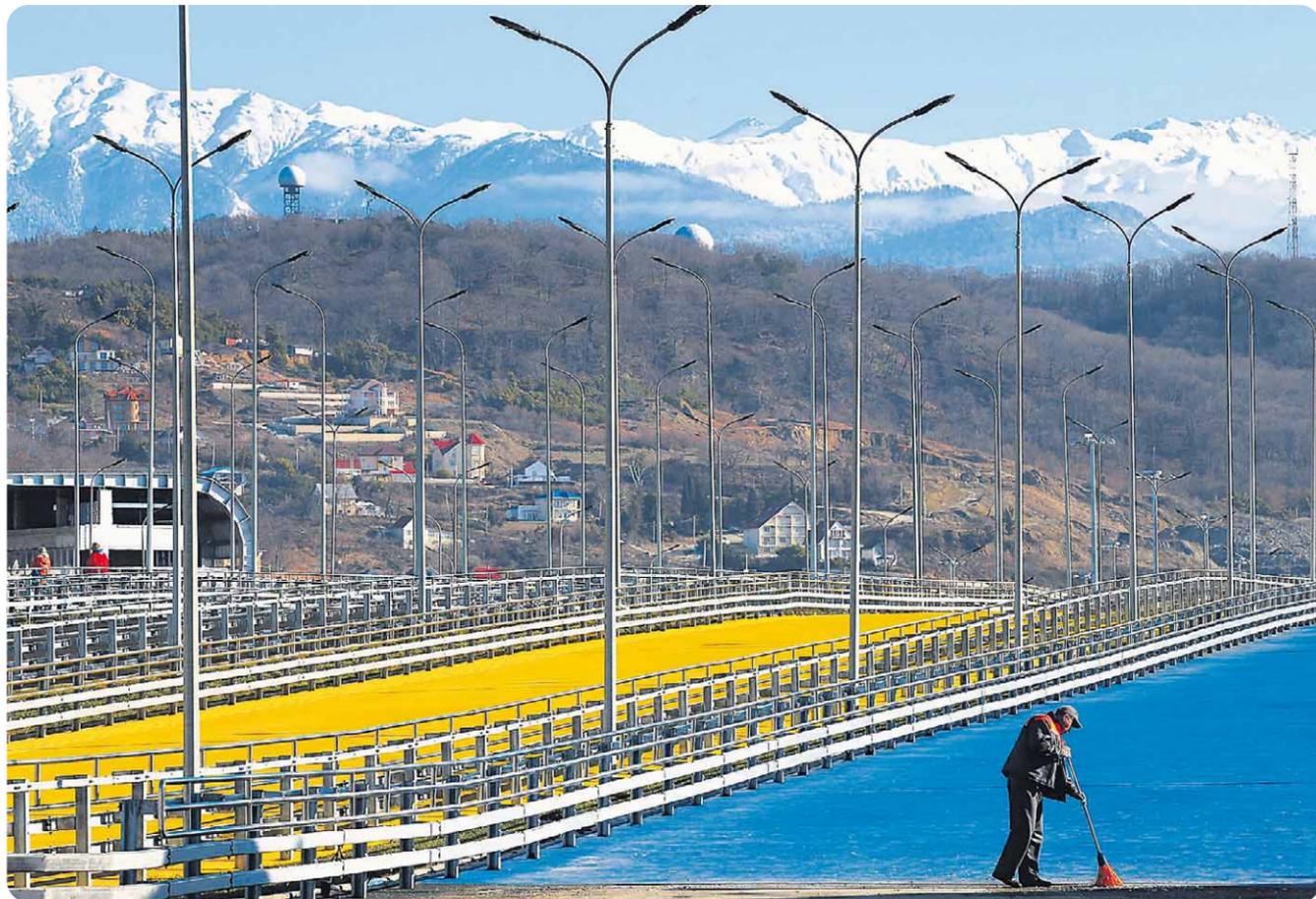
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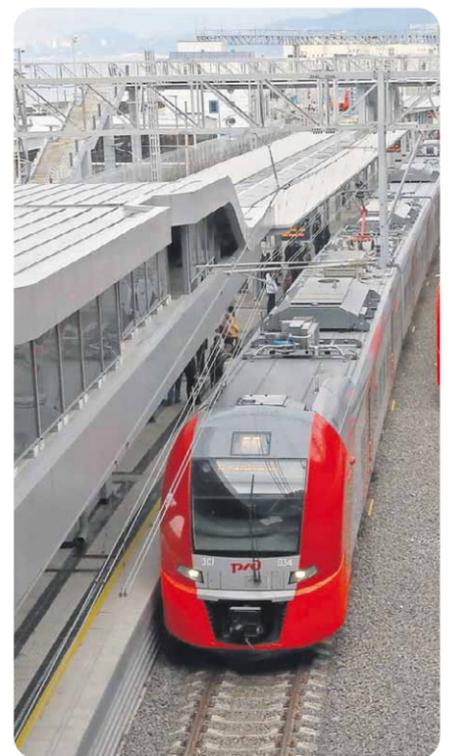
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A worker sweeps the bridge at the public entrance of the Olympic Park and coastal Olympic venues ahead of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics (left picture). Extensive work was also carried out on the public transport system.



Uncertain legacy

This is the beginning of a lasting legacy. A lasting legacy for Sochi, for Russia, for the world." This was the promise of Dmitry Chernyshenko during the Paralympic Opening Ceremony. Chernyshenko, the man challenged with organising the games, used a word that is often spoken during the Paralympic Games: legacy. At London 2012, fans and journalists spoke of the legacy and what it would bring to the city and for disabled sports. The legacy is the lasting impact of the games, such as what will happen with the venues and how Paralympic sport will continue to be popularised throughout a country. All of this helps to maintain the momentum of the Paralympic movement.

In London, the Olympic Park has been renamed the Queen Elizabeth II Park. The Olympic Stadium is being used for the 2015 Rugby World Cup, the 2017 Athletics World Championships and will soon be home to Premier League football club West Ham United. Some venues have been disassembled,

Sochi is looking forward to more sporting events

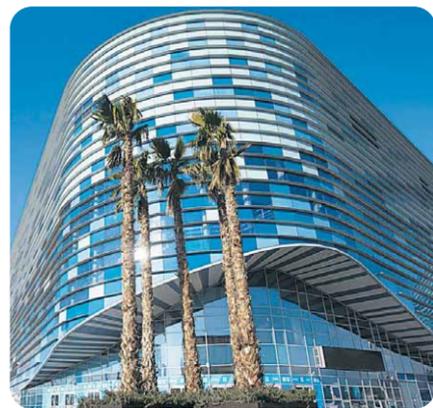
including the Aquatics Centre and Paralympic football pitches. Others have been converted. Eton Manor, the collection of tennis courts used solely for the Paralympics, are to remain as a training centre for the next generation of talented young players.

For Sochi, some would argue it is more difficult to create a viable legacy. London is the financial, cultural and most importantly, the sporting hub of England. The same cannot be said for Sochi, which in the past has hidden in the shadows of Moscow and St Petersburg when it came to wealth, popularity or power.

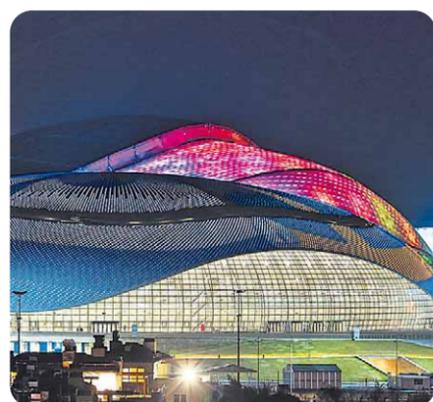
But for Sochi, there are several plans for after the games, the city is already looking forward to more major sporting events. It will be the first Russian city to host a Formula One Grand Prix, starting this year until at least 2020. It is also a host city for the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Sochi will host Formula One races and the World Cup. But can it also become Russia's first-ever international winter sports centre?

BRADLEY NEEN



Inside the Olympic Park you will find the Iceberg Skating Palace (upper picture) and the Bolshoy Ice Dome.



The organizing committee is using the 2014 games as an opportunity to create Russia's first-ever international winter sports centre. The centre will include four of the coastal cluster venues, and three venues in the mountains at Krasnaya Polyana.

It is also anticipated that the games will create an economic boost for the country. Four ski resorts designed to house 42,000 tourists have been built, with the hope of promoting Sochi as a holiday destination for after these games. The 2014 games have also helped to boost employment in Russia, with the Olympic and Paralympic project creating in excess of 560,000 new jobs.

Many of the venues in the coastal cluster will be converted to either become multi-purpose sport centres or entertainment facilities.

Before London 2012, IPC President Sir Phillip Craven said, "what I am hoping for is greater visibility of our athletes before, during and after the games. This could be one of the legacies of London 2012." And now, you see the faces of Ellie Simmonds and Jonnie Peacock on television. People know the names, elite disability sport is now taken seriously in a way few expected. The team behind London 2012 hoped that the Olympic and Paralympic Games would "inspire a generation." And it did just that – people are willing to try Paralympic sports.

It was a Paralympics where spectators finally started to focus on ability rather than disability, a request many Paralympians have always made. "I think people are going to look back at this Paralympic Games and for the first time really, truly believe that Paralympic sport is not just inspirational, it's hard-core sport," said blade-runner Pistorius.

Sochi will also help Russia progress towards a barrier-free society. An environ-

ment where everyone is included. This means both the infrastructure and attitude changes need to be instigated. Dmitry Chernyshenko also spoke of the removal of barriers in his Opening Ceremony speech. "Sochi became the first Russian city where the concept of a barrier-free environment was fully implemented."

It is the job of the legacy to ensure that this change can be implemented across the whole of Russia. Of course, it will not be an immediate change. But an international

Half a million jobs were created in the region

sporting event such as the Paralympics, which brilliantly showcases the talents of disabled people, can be a catalyst for change.

An interesting project that has been created is the innovative "Accessibility Map." The project was designed to help people with disabilities to find a place with information on sports and accessible venues. Everyone can contribute: the Accessibility Map comprises information from individuals and volunteers all over Russia and it currently covers over 14,000 venues. This is another step in the right direction, to help develop a society that showcases equal opportunities.

Sir Phillip Craven spoke of the desire for Sochi to initiate change. "Together [the athletes and officials] are the catalysts for change. You have the ability to change perceptions and alter attitudes like no other. You have superb sporting venues to express your amazing talents and live up to the Paralympic values of determination and courage, inspiration and equality."

A legacy is forged through a desire to better yourself, to enhance the lives of others, and most importantly to raise awareness for Paralympic sport and disabled people in society. The idea is to create a tangible legacy. One that can last for decades and change perceptions worldwide. A movement which can change the lives of disabled people forever. In 10 years time, the hope is that Craven's words will not be a dream, but reality.

ANNETTE KÖGEL

It all began with a phone call ten years ago: "Could you imagine working on a newspaper project with young reporters who cover the Paralympic Games?" This sounded like an interesting challenge – journalism, educational work and all at an exciting international sports event. Working on the Paralympics Zeitung at my first Paralympics in Athens was an unforgettable experience.

Since then the project initiator German Social Accident Insurance (Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung, DGUV), Der Tagesspiegel and the agency panta rhei have co-published the paper in every host country of the games and Germany. For ten years the international newspaper project has changed the attitudes and lives of all the young reporters, supporters and millions of readers.

The Paralympic Games symbolise enthusiasm, ambition, motivation, fascination, goose bumps and tears. All of these emotions make it difficult for a journalist to keep the distance they need to write about a certain topic. But the Paralympics just captivate their audience. Numerous students will never forget the many hours, days and months they spent as reporters at the games becoming members of the ever-growing Paralympic family at the same time.

In Athens 2004, the first edition of the Paralympics Zeitung was written by the students of the German School in Athens right next to the Olympic Park. The first print run was only 5000 copies: start small, think big. The Torino 2006 edition contained articles in four different languages and received the European Union's European Language Label.

The first edition was written in Athens 2004

Equality and inclusion were both important topics during the games in China. A Paralympics Zeitung's delegation accompanied German chancellor Angela Merkel to Beijing where an agreement was signed allowing the Paralympics Zeitung to be published in Chinese and German – as one of the first Western publications. The venues were full, 90 000 fans were cheering the biggest games yet – with Oscar Pistorius one of the games' stars.

Still going strong

Ten years of enthusiastic young journalists, exciting articles, six Paralympic Games and millions of readers - 2014 marks the anniversary of the international project **Paralympics Zeitung**



During the 2010 Vancouver Games the first Paralympic Post was published. The international team of young journalists wrote the articles in Canada while the Tagesspiegel produced and edited during night shifts. The Paralympic Post/Paralympics Zeitung's reporters were not only source of information but also interview partners for professional broadcasters. The Vancouver edition was awarded the "World Young Reader Prize" in the category 'Making the News' by the world association of newspaper publishers.

"This has been the best experience of my life"

Thanks to our co-publisher, the DGUV, the young reporters who were selected from hundreds of applicants from around the world for the London 2012 project, first met their international colleagues at a preparatory workshop before the Games.

The Paralympic Post at London 2012 had a total circulation of around five million copies and was published in cooperation with the London Evening Standard. On this occasion of the Paralympics Zeitung's ten year anniversary and the first-ever Paralympics in Russia, the project reached new dimensions. Our Russian edition Paralimpijskij Reporter is a supplement to the Russian newspaper Vedomosti (Rostov-on-Don). The next issue of the Paralympics Zeitung will be published as a supplement to the German weekly "Die Zeit" as well as to "Handelsblatt", "Tagesspiegel" and "Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten".

As one of the young reporters Maxie from Berlin said during the closing ceremony of the London 2012 Paralympics: "This has been the best experience of my life", "But don't you have a boyfriend?", "Still."



(Top) Paralympic Post reporters get their hands on the paper in Sochi. Former German president Horst Köhler with Annette Kögel.

The countdown begins

It may still be over two years ahead but for the 2016 Rio Organising Committee the countdown to the start of the games is beginning to come close. Anticipation levels are rising daily; not helped by Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff's promise that the Rio games 'will be the best ever'. But what should you expect when the world's greatest sporting event arrives in Rio in August 2016?

The athletics events (held in the Maracana Stadium) will be a real crowd-pleaser especially if poster boy Alan Oliveira hits the heights he seems capable of at the moment. Oliveira, the controversial winner of the T44 200m in London, is currently under increasing allegations following the questions made about the fairness of his blade length (for more information see page 6). With the debate intensifying, his times continue to drop. We will have to wait until 2016 to find out just how fast he can run.

Apart from athletics Brazil are set to feature strongly in judo, goal ball and football. With all three strongly represented with medals in London. For the first time Brazil also has the opportunity to enter a wheelchair rugby team and therefore 'Murderball' is sure to be one of the hits of the games.

Levels of expectation are rising daily but will the **2016 Rio Games** really 'be the best games ever'?

There will be no better place for the athletes to prepare than the purpose-built athlete village. The 53-hectare facility equipped with 17,700 beds and a 5,500 seater dining room; looks set to be the best yet. Providing the athletes with a prime opportunity to perform at their best, giving the 2 million ticket holders an unprecedented show of sporting performance. As such broadcasters (including the British Channel 4 and American NBC) are planning to offer an unparalleled level of coverage.

So whilst I cannot promise that the games will live up to the levels of expectation many fans feel, preparations are looking good. With Rio set to offer an unforgettable few days of incredible performances, jaw-dropping athletic endeavour and levels of equality and acceptance that are so unique to the Paralympic Games. Although I can tell you the best place to find out whether they did: and that's right here in the Paralympic Post.

So see you in Rio (in 910 days' time).

GEORGE SIMONDS



In 2016, the Paralympics will be staged in South America: in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

WWW

How does it feel to be at the games as a journalist? Take a look at the Paralympic diary of our young reporters: tagesspiegel.de/paralympics