

Paralympic Summer Games History

The Paralympics have come a long way from its humble beginnings as a rehabilitation program for British war veterans with spinal injuries. Back in 1948, Sir Ludwig Guttman, a neurologist who was working with World War II veterans with spinal injuries at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, began using sport as part of the rehabilitation program of his patients. He set up a competition with other hospitals to coincide with the London Olympics in that year.

Over the next decade Guttman's care plan was adopted by other spinal injury units in Britain and competition grew. In 1960, the Olympics were held in Rome, and Guttman brought 400 wheelchair athletes to the Olympic city to compete. The modern Paralympics (or "Paralympics") were born.

In 1964, the able-bodied athletes went to Tokyo for the Olympics and shortly afterward the Japanese capital also played host to the disabled athletes.

The games in Japan saw the introduction of wheelchair racing - although only in the normal day-to-day chairs rather than the space age machines used by the Paralympians of today.

While the Olympics went to Mexico in 1968, the Paralympics were staged in Israel and four years later were held in Heidelberg while the Olympics were in Munich. They saw more than 1,000 athletes from 44 countries participating and people with quadriplegic spinal injuries competed for the first time while visually impaired athletes took part in demonstration events.

The visually impaired took a full part in medal events in Toronto in 1976. Their participation, along with debuts for amputee and mixed disabilities, athletes boosted the number of competitors to 1600. Specialized racing wheelchairs were used for the first time.

Politics reared its ugly head in 1980 as the Soviet Union could not, or would not, agree to the Paralympics taking place and as a result 2,500 disabled athletes from 42 countries went to Arnhem in Holland to compete. The Paralympic movement invited athletes with cerebral-palsy to compete for the first time.

The 1992 Barcelona Paralympics took the Games one step further with 3,500 athletes from 82 countries competing in front packed stadiums. Following the Barcelona Games, athletes with learning disabilities had their own Paralympics in Madrid.

PARALYMPIC SUMMER GAMES

1948 - Stoke Mandeville
1960 - Rome
1964 - Tokyo, Japan
1968 - Tel Aviv
1972 - Heidelberg
1976 - Toronto
1980 - Arnhem
1984 - Stoke Mandeville & New York
1988 - Seoul
1992 - Barcelona
1996 - Atlanta
2000 - Sydney
2004 - Athens
2008 - Beijing



By 2000 in Sydney, Australia a staggering 132 countries took part with rugby and wheelchair basketball given full medal status The Games, which enjoyed packed stadiums and unprecedented media coverage across the world - making it the best Paralympics ever. It is all a far cry from the movement's humble beginnings in Stoke Mandeville



Canadian Para-Athletics History

Canada has participated in every Summer and Winter Paralympic Games since Tel Aviv, Israel in 1968; missing the first two Paralympic Games in 1960 and 1964 (Rome and Tokyo, respectively). In 1968, twenty-two Canadian wheelchair athletes participated, out of a total of approximately 750 athletes from 29 countries. Canada's participation was largely made possible through the efforts of Dr. Robert F. Jackson, a Toronto Orthopedic Surgeon, who later became the first President of the Canadian Wheelchair Basketball Association and Founding Father of the Canadian Paralympic Committee.

Eight years later, the 1976 Paralympics Summer Games were held in Toronto and following that event, the Canadian government granted funds to be spent in developing sport opportunities for people with a disability. Since then, Canada has been internationally renowned as a leader of the Paralympic Movement. At the Games, Canada has always ranked amongst the top countries.

Since the early 1990s, Canadian sport organizations have followed a policy of inclusion for athletes with a disability. Athletes with a disability joined the 'able-bodied' national federations responsible for their sports. As part of this policy, in 1997 Athletics Canada assumed responsibility for wheelchair athletes participating in athletics at the national level. In 2002, amputee athletes, visually impaired athletes, and athletes with cerebral palsy were also integrated. This policy ensures that all high performance athletes, both 'able-bodied' and with disabilities, receive a similar level of services and support.

CANADA'S SUMMER PARALYMPIC MEDALS

Year	Host City	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total medals	Overall Ranking
1968	Tel Aviv, Israel	6	6	7	19	12
1972	Heidelberg, Germany	5	6	8	20	13
1976	Toronto, Canada	25	26	26	77	6
1980	Arnhem, Netherlands	64	35	31	130	4
1984	New York, USA	87	82	69	238	3
1988	Seoul, South Korea	54	42	55	151	4
1992	Barcelona, Spain	28	21	26	75	6
1996	Atlanta, USA	24	22	24	70	7
2000	Sydney, Australia	38	33	25	96	3
2004	Athens, Greece	28	19	25	72	3
2008	Beijing, China	19	10	21	50	7