SPIRIT IN MOTION
As the Paralympic movement grows in stature every year, we look at the history of the games

THE PIONEER
DR LUDWIG GUTTMANN, a Jewish doctor born in Germany and specialising in spinal injuries, came to England in 1939. In 1944 he takes up a post at Stoke Mandeville hospital to treat patients with paraplegia. But Guttmann is concerned with more than the patients’ physical problems – he believes in rehabilitation. The seeds of a movement are sown...

WINTER PARALYMPICS

1972 • 1976: The first Winter Paralympics take place in Örnsköldsvik, Sweden. Slalom, giant slalom and Nordic skiing for amputees and visually impaired athletes are the main events. Ice sledge racing is a demonstration sport. 198 athletes from 15 countries take part. Ten subsequent Winter Paralympics take place

• 1984: Downhill is added to the programme in Innsbruck, Austria. Sit-skiing or mono-skiing is a demonstration sport, to become a medal event at the Nagano 1998.

• 1994: Super-G is added at Lillehammer, Norway. Ice sledge hockey first features, one of the most popular attractions for spectators at the Winter Games.

• 2006 Wheelchair curling is added in Turin, Italy.

• 2010: Vancouver Games are attended by 500 athletes from 42 nations.

• 2014: Despite concerns over Russia’s military interventions in the nearby Crimean Peninsula, the Sochi Paralympic Winter Games feature 500 athletes from 45 countries in 72 medal events in five sports, and snowboarding debuts.

1948 The Stoke Mandeville Games for the Paralysed, an archery event between two teams of disabled athletes, takes place at hospital on the same day as the opening ceremony for the 1948 Summer Olympics at Wembley.

1949-1951 Stoke Mandeville Games

1952 The International Stoke Mandeville Games (ISMG) takes place – the first international Games, where a team from Holland also participates.

1953-1959 International Stoke Mandeville Games

1960 The ninth ISMG* takes place in Rome - overseas for the first time. It features 400 athletes from 23 countries and later becomes known as the first Paralympics. The competition is confined to those with spinal cord injuries.

1964 Tokyo, Japan: Tokyo is the last Games, until Seoul 1988, when Olympic and Paralympic athletes compete in the same city.

1972 Heidelberg, Germany: Nearly 1,000 athletes from 43 countries take part.

1976 Toronto, Canada: Two new impairment groups are added in 1976 – athletes who are blind or have a visual impairment and athletes with amputations.

1980 Arnhem, Holland: Athletes with cerebral palsy compete for the first time and Ludwig Guttmann dies at the age of 80.

1984 Stok Mandeville and New York: The Games are split over two venues, with the wheelchair events taking place at Stoke Mandeville amid stirring scenes.

1992 Barcelona, Spain: Brit Chris Holmes wins six swimming golds and superstar Tanni Grey-Thompson, at her fourth Paralympics to get mass media sponsorship, with a budget of $81 million.

1994-1998 The Paralympics are ‘presidentialised’ and nowhere is this more so than in the US, and responsiveness more a focus of attention than in the past.

1999 International Paralympic Committee (IPC) is formed on 22 September 1999 as a non-profit organisation. It aims to develop sports opportunities for all people with an impairment, from the beginner to elite level.

2000 Sydney, Australia, in excess of one million tickets are sold to the public and Tanni Grey-Tompson, at her fourth Games, wins four gold medals.

2001 Seoul, South Korea: The Paralympics take place in the same city as the Summer Games, and the momentum gains momentum. Simon Jackson is the only British person to win a Paralympic judo gold and Tanni Grey wins her first medal of many.

2004 Athens, Greece: Back at its birthplace, over 3,800 athletes take part. South African Oscar Pistorius, the ‘bladerunner’ (T44 sprinter category), wins his first gold medal at a Summer Games and becomes a poster boy for the movement.

2012 London: ParalympicsGB wins 22 gold medals. Dave Weir, Jonnie Peacock, Sarah Storey and many more become household names, as elite sportspersons and women.

2013 Oscar Pistorius is arrested for shooting and killing his girlfriend, model Reeva Steenkamp. Found guilty of culpable homicide in September 2013, he is sentenced to five years in prison and banned from athletics for the full term.

2014 The International Paralympic Committee celebrates its 25th anniversary in September.

2008 Beijing, China: Britain’s highly prepared team wins 102 medals. Charismatic 13-year-old swimmer Ellie Simmonds wins two gold medals and the hearts of a nation. Sarah Storey moves from swimming to cycling for gold again.

2010 Tanni Grey-Thompson is created a Life Peer.

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