



# Athletes and Abilities

IN COOPERATION WITH



## THE ONE AND ONLY

Lena Schroder is a single lady in an all-men ice hockey team

## STRONGER THAN EVER

Andrew Parsons on the power of the Paralympic movement



Deutscher Behindertensportverband e.V.  
National Paralympic Committee Germany

Medienpartner

TAGESSPIEGEL



# CONTENT

## 4 | PASSION CONNECTED

Pictures from the Paralympics

## 6 | MARCHING FOR PEACE

North and South Korea are getting closer again

## 7 | MIXED ZONE

Short but interesting: The crowd's favourite and a Smoothie to go



Christiane Putzich,  
German wheelchair  
curling skip

## 8 | SINGLE LADY

The Norwegian Lena Schroder is the only woman in Para ice hockey

## 9 | CHANGING THE WORLD

IPC-President Andrew Parsons on the power of the Paralympics

## 10 | "WHAT A PITY"

The German NPC criticizes the participation of Russian athletes

## 11 | LOOKING FOR LIKES

How disabled people conquer Social Media



Anna Schaffelhuber,  
German alpine ski star

## 12 | CLICK, CLICK, GOAL

E-sports could become inclusive

## 13 | FROM POOL TO COOL

A visit to the Korean curling team's training session

## 14 | FUN IN THE SUN

How fans turn the snowboard event into a big party

## 15 | ASIAN YEARS

Looking forwards to the Paralympic Games in Tokyo and Beijing

## 16 | A SECOND LIFE

Two success stories of the German Social Accident Insurance

## Imprint

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**Title:** The visually impaired Ski racer Henrietta Farkasova from Slovakia (left) with her guide. Photo: Karl-Josef Hildenbrand/dpa



Clara Klug, German  
nordic ski star, and her  
guide Martin Härtl

# EDITORIAL



Foto: Mike Wolff

## Strengthening Human Rights

For us at Tagesspiegel, the Paralympics are journalistic red-letter days that reoccur every two years. Since the Games in Athens 2004, "Athletes & Abilities" has been as much a part of us as our daily political reporting. And politics play an important role in Pyeongchang as there is a struggle for global peace here, too. But amid all the political tension there are also hopeful signs: After some back and forth, athletes from North Korea are participating at the Games taking place south of the border. Yes, sports can connect people - let us hope that understanding will win gold.

Again, we also have a partner newspaper: this time it is "Hankyoreh", whose editors campaign strongly for human rights and independent reporting.

As social media are playing an increasingly important role - also for "Athletes & Abilities" - we have a great team ready so you can follow the Games on the Internet every day. And we are thrilled that several of our alumni reporters from past editions of "Athletes & Abilities" are supporting our new team in South Korea. They are passing on the torch and still remaining on board with the same great enthusiasm they once started out with in 2016 in Rio, 2014 in Sochi, 2012 in London...

I knew it from the start when "Team Pyeongchang" met for their workshop in Berlin: it fits, this will be great!

**LORENZ MAROLDT,**  
Editor-in-Chief Der Tagesspiegel



Foto: promo

## For the Olympic idea

Ever since "Athletes & Abilities" was born the newspaper has stood for understanding, friendship and openness. Young reporters from different countries come together and work hand in hand to experience the Paralympics and report on the Games. Through their work they give us insight into sports and bring people together through topics that are especially relevant to accident insurance institutions. As accident insurers we know that sports are one of the most important ways to help people get "back on track" after severe injuries. In this context, the Paralympics are a showcase and a medium at the same time to motivate each and every individual to participate in sports.

Political shadows have never succeeded in darkening the core idea of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Thus, the Olympic idea can play out one of its best qualities in Pyeongchang: understanding. The Paralympics in particular represent the idea that human diversity is our greatest wealth and that we must honour it. "Athletes & Abilities" will thus also advocate diversity and inclusion in Pyeongchang because it brings people together - readers, journalists and of course the athletes!

**JOACHIM BREUER,**  
Chief Executive German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV)



Foto: promo

## Never give up

There is the known story about my escape from Syria to Berlin, when the engine died and my sister Sara, two guys and I lightened the load and steered the boat through the waves, until arriving safely in Lesbos. Afterwards I was invited to the Olympics in Rio - an amazing experience, that I will never forget. The goal for an athlete is to win, if it is a medal, honour or a personal challenge. For me, I always want to become better and better in swimming, I have a dream and I will work, train and fight for it. For my life I always think: „I will never give up!“ Metaphorically, to be an athlete is my motivation each day, on the good ones and the bad ones.

The Olympic philosophy is to respect for fellow human beings regardless of race, nationality, religion or gender. We should listen, listen to the people and their stories, their way of living and accept it. No one is born as a criminal. My advice to athletes who will be competing at the Paralympics for the first time? Try to capture this special feeling of the movement for your entire life. Never give up and stay true to yourself. If you are struggling, then look for your options to get out of it. There are possibilities, sometimes it seems to be risky. Then go the first small steps and you will see, which the next steps are. Keep in mind, you are not alone. Look for people around you, who can make things easier. Everyone needs sometimes help, me too.

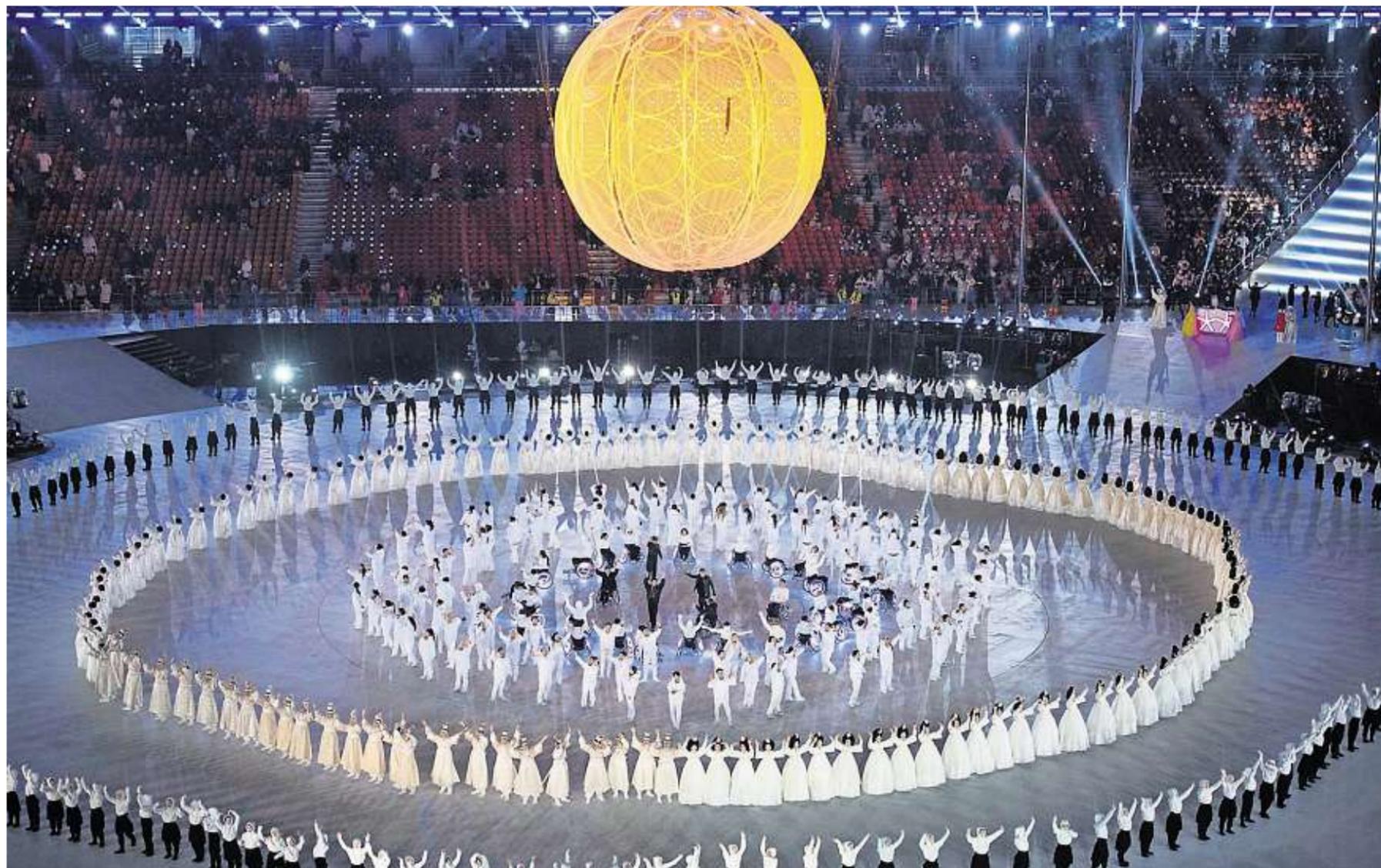
**YUSRA MARDINI,**  
UN Refugee Agency Goodwill Ambassador and Olympic athlete in Rio



Foto: Thilo Ruckert

## Our Team 2018

In Pyeongchang, thirteen young reporters from Germany, Korea and the UK are continuing the tradition of "Athletes & Abilities". Some, like David, Joanna and George, even for the second or third time - being a Paralympic reporter seems to be addictive. So this year, alumni from the London, Rio and Sochi Games have joined forces with new colleagues, like Sun, Benjamin and Jana, to experience the fascination of Paralympic winter sports. From our homebase near Pyeongchang Olympic Park, they set off early every morning to make their way to the sports venues. They blog live from biathlon, curling, ice hockey and all the other disciplines posting on social media and staying in touch with their editors Ronja, Benjamin and Ann-Kathrin via WhatsApp. Evenings generally belong to a homecooked meal, researching and writing articles for the newspaper and reflecting on the adventures of the day. What a great time they are having! TONG-JIN SMITH



Four years of waiting came to an end with the colourful and emotional Opening Ceremony on March 9.



Tyler Carron from the US Para ice hockey team watching Italy play Norway.



The flame entering the Olympic Stadium in Pyeongchang in style.



Our young reporters working on location at the Paralympic Games for "Athletes & Abilities".



# Cheerful, Peaceful

The Winter Games in Pyeongchang started with a powerful opening ceremony – in icy cold weather. But the audience danced themselves warm. That's also what fans and friends did during the races. Never before have there been so many visitors at Paralympic Winter Games. Keep going!



A warm welcome for the athletes at Gangneung Hockey Centre.

The opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Paralympics began with dazzling colors in the sky and featured K-pop, warm speeches and traditional Korean drums. With a record high participation of 567 athletes from 48 countries and record ticket sales, the excitement in the stadium was stronger than the icy weather.

Despite having walked under a united flag in the Olympics, North and South Korea entered separately on opening night. It is the first time athletes from North Korea are participating in Winter Paralympics. They are joined by Georgia and Tajikistan who are debuting in Pyeongchang, too. Other firsts made headlines right from the start. Among them Dan Cnossen's first ever gold medal in biathlon for the USA. Korea beating Japan in ice hockey on day one set the tone for the homecrowd and contributed to local enthusiasm for the Games. Another favorite event, snowboarding brought out the crowds with fans dancing and joining the action on the sunlit slopes of Jeongseong Alpine Centre.

Adding colour and diversity, groups of school children came to cheer on their favorite teams. As their voices resonated "Germany, Germany" through the Gangneung Curling Centre they pushed the German team from win to win. All in all, the Paralympics have so far been a great success.

SOOYEON JO, 20 YEARS



All smiles at the welcoming ceremony for Team Germany in the Athletes Village.



Photos: AFP, Imago (2), Thilo Ruckert (8)

Former athletes accompany the Korean flag during the Opening Ceremony.



Photo: Ann-Kathrin Hipp

One Korea. Fans watching the biathlon competition cheer with the flag that shows the country as one.

A fusion version of the Korean traditional folk song "Ari-rang" begins the unified march of the two Koreas at the opening ceremony of 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics, waving the blue-and-white united flag: this is the first time in 18 years, after their first united march in the Sydney Summer Olympics. Unfortunately, however – plans to march together for the Paralympics ceremony last Friday were foundered, due to North Korea's refusal to march under the united flag with the omission of Dokdo Island. The ownership of this island remains continuously contested by Japan, and was left out purposely from the flag of the united Korea as the IPC prohibits any illustrations of potential political dispute. Regardless, the symbolism of the united march at the Olympics remains powerful; not to mention the joint inter-Korean women's ice hockey team – indeed, South Korea as the host in Pyeongchang has paved the way for communicative interaction of the two Koreas. The passion of Pyeongchang has been anticipated to become another turning point for South Korea internally as well. Pyeongchang, serving as the venue of this

## New Horizons

The passion of Pyeongchang was anticipated to become another turning point for **South Korea** – and to open a **new chapter** in its history

global festival under the vision "New Horizon", the influx of positive energy and cultural exchange can in fact become both a fresh impetus for moving away from recent political depression and open a new chapter in Korean history. It was only last year that a streak of candlelights warmed the streets in Gwanghwamun Plaza in central Seoul. All exits of the subway stations leading to the plaza were packed with hundreds of people lined up to reach the main venue. Young children held the hands of their mothers and fathers, grandparents, to safely penetrate the crowd and join the candlelight relay. University students in their school

jackets represented their student body with huge banners upheld firmly. A congested yet determined air embraced these Koreans as they together marched for the salvation of their democracy. It was a sign of civil protest against the peddling scandal of a woman named Choi Soon-Sil – whose influence on the former president and state administration were revealed, corrupt relationships with the government and sports-related foundations. As former President Park Geun-hye was impeached by a Constitutional Court ruling in March 2017, it seemed the peaceful candlelight demonstrations lit the failing flame of their democracy. With al-

most no civilian injuries with an organized police force on safeguard. The succession by current President Moon Jae-in embodies the people's yearning for political reform, and of course hope for honesty and peace. As the peninsula remains divided after the Korean War, peace has always been a main agenda for the two Koreas. And with the Pyeongchang Games as a "precursor" for the upcoming North-South talks, to be realized in April 2018, as well as the meeting bet-

**Two North Korean athletes compete – the slogan: "Passion. Connected" fits.**

ween US-President Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un consecutively in May, many are starting to have positive outlooks on the future of the peninsula. The historical development of South Korea is quite well-known, as it proved a story of staggering economic growth, partnered with industrialization and democratization. But there is more to Korea than its economic and political development as it boasts a rich cultural legacy. Korea's history and culture can be represented by "Hangeul", the Korean alphabet. Traditional Korean music involves not only royal court music but also folk music mostly sung by the working class; pansori, which narrates a themed story of the common people, was designated as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. Contemporary Korean culture today is well recognized, most notably "K-pop" which reaches a wide global audience via Korean singers' world tours as well as online. Now, it may be time for the slopes of Pyeongchang to add another thread to its rich history and legacy. The Pyeongchang Paralympics welcomes round about 670 athletes from 45 countries. Pyeongchang's slogan, "Passion. Connected" embraces the hope that the world will come together under a single passion for sports. A new beginning is certainly ready to be seen – providing a blueprint for peace on the peninsula, and North East Asia as a whole. . SUN KIM, 20 YEARS

## "Cultural Bridges to North Korea"

**Goethe-Institut Korea was founded in 1968 and has since been working towards mediating between Korean and German culture. Are Germany and Korea similar in some way?**

One important joint topic in the German-Korean exchange is of course the topic of division and reunification. Despite all the differences between the inner-German division and the situation on the Korean peninsula there is great interest in Korea regarding the German experience during and after reunification. Among many other aspects what unites both countries is also a great love of music.

**You have said that decisive progress has been made through project work in North Korea for both Koreas. Currently,**

**the situation is still rather tense - but what achievements are there?**

We try to maintain contacts to cultural institutions in North Korea. For a few years, a reading room in Pyongyang allowed access to books and magazines from Germany. The Munich Chamber Orchestra has been to North Korea for concerts



and workshops. For the future, we are hoping that the political situation will ease and that we can walk the cultural bridges to North Korea more actively again.

**Goethe-Institut Korea is a project partner to "Athletes & Abilities" and has arranged that a Korean edition is being published in co-operation with the Korean newspaper "Hankyoreh". What are your aims and wishes regarding this?**

Para sports and also topics like inclusion, participation as well as an independent and self-determined life for people with disabilities continue to play a secondary role in Korean society. Also, interest in the Paralympics in Korea has not been very strong. Based on this situation Goethe-Institut Korea saw an opportunity to



Marla Stukenberg, 55, is the director of the Goethe-Institut in Korea. She is responsible for the East Asia region.

give para sports in Korea more publicity and at the same time support journalistic exchange between Germany and Korea. We are very happy that the Korean edition will be published on March 16.

QUESTIONS BY JISU YON, 20 YEARS

# MIXED ZONE

## Scott Meenagh: A veteran on skis

Paralympian Scott Meenagh reflects on nordic ski performances at Pyeongchang: "That was a really painful gutsy race, I've left everything out there," said 28-year-old Scott Meenagh, Great Britain's only nordic skier to be competing at the Pyeongchang Paralympics. That he had given his all was evident by the way he propelled himself exhaustedly over the finish line of the 15km sitting cross-country ski event in the Alpensia. This was the second of the six events the hard-working athlete has entered. Former army veteran Meenagh explains he is in it for the race experience, having been introduced to this sport less than two years ago via the Paralympic Inspiration Programme.

He is one of three ex-servicemen in team GB's group. Aged 21, he was injured after stepping on an explosive device in Afghanistan while on active service. After his injury and following a year of rehabilitation and support from Help for Heroes, he switched sports and became captain



Foto: Maite Borchert

of the British Armed Forces rowing team at the 2014 Invictus Games. Now he has discovered nordic skiing and is passionate about it.

Meenagh explains the demanding nature of nordic skiing: "You not only have to be physically strong and fit, you have to be technically a good skier, you had to have focus and clarity, and you have to keep your head up and ski well." From his time in the military Meenagh explains he has learned to be "comfortable in chaos," which he believes is a skill transferrable to sport. He explains: "when you're racing sometimes things don't go the way you want them to go-you might break a pole, you might break a ski, having composure under stress is a real skill you need for this sport".

The deserved gold-medalist in this nordic skiing event, was the former US navy lieutenant commander, and one of 18 veterans, Daniel Crossen from Team USA.

JOANNA BARTLETT, 26 YEARS



Foto: Thilo Rieckels

## Singing for sports

Tenor Hwang Young Taek sang the national anthem of Korea at the opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games. His performance was touching, especially because the 52-years old Korean was a Para tennisplayer himself. Hwang is paralysed. "I want to bring hopeful messages and inspire other people", says Hwang. Singing at the opening ceremony made his skin crawl. With an audience of 21.000 spectators it was the biggest performance of the so-called "wheelchair-singer" and his first step to the global stage.

SALOME BERBLINGER, 20 YEARS

## Smoothie to Go

Competing in cross-country skiing and biathlon as well as writing books about healthy smoothies: German athlete Steffen Lehmkner has not only gone from not knowing about the Paralympics during the last winter games to competing himself in Pyeongchang. He has also published two books containing a number of his favorite smoothie recipes. "I noticed that something was missing and researched how I could improve my performance in addition to training", he told TV broadcaster ZDF earlier this year.

MARIE MENKE, 20 YEARS

## The crowd's Favourite

Over all tribunes visitors sheer towards mascot Bandabi cruising on a snowboard through the stadium, waving and dancing. Due to his white chest fur being evocative of a half-moon, he is often called 'moonbear' as well. Coming from Korean mythology, Bandabi symbolizes courage, determination and a strong will – a mind-set all athletes embody, too. Alongside the Olympic mascot Soohorang they intend to arouse especially the Korean's excitement for the ongoing events.

LEA STRATMANN, 18 YEARS



Foto: Thilo Rieckels

## Naturalized – but not allowed to compete

For various reasons, athletes participate in the Games with a newly acquired citizenship. As appealing as it may sound, the outcomes do not always turn out to be favorable.

Yoomin Won (29) is one of them. A Korean-born who lost two legs and a finger on his right hand in a car accident, Won immigrated to Canada at the age of 12 and became a Canadian. In 2017, he started Para Nordic Skiing. Within just a week of starting, he received a silver medal in Cross Country and Biathlon 4km at a Korean winter para-sports competition. The Korean Paralympic Committee and the Korea Nordic Ski



Foto: Image/Action Plus

Federation for the Disabled promoted special naturalization of Won. He was naturalized to a Korean national on July 26 2017 and was titled the "First Paralympian to be naturalized" in Korea.

In Pyeongchang, Won was to compete in Para Nordic Skiing. However, it turned out that Korea Paralympic Committee overlooked one of the relevant International Paralympic Committee regulations. It reads, a naturalized athlete can participate in the Paralympics with a newly acquired citizenship "provided that a waiting period of at least three years has passed since the competitor last represented his/her former country." Won was on the Canadian national wheelchair basketball team in the 2016 Rio Paralympics.

When athletes change their nationalities in the international games, they cannot restore their initial nationality. For Won, who used to be on the Canadian national team for wheelchair basketball, being an athlete in Canada could have guaranteed him around 30,000 dollars a year.

Won expressed disappointment on social media: "A year and 21 days since I have started para nordic skiing, cross country and biathlon, and 33 days before the opening ceremony, I was told that I cannot participate in the Paralympics." But he will continue training to prepare for the 2022 Beijing Paralympics.

SOOYEON JO, 20 YEARS

**T**he Paralympics always feel like a brief glimpse into the future. A future where gender and (dis-) ability don't matter anymore. Instead all that matters is the sport. Nowhere encompasses this more than at the Gangneung Hockey Arena, where the jubilant crowd cheered alongside an athlete looking set to be one of the stories of the games, Lena Schroder.

The 24-year-old forward was named on Norway's 17-man para ice hockey roster. Here, the use of the term 'man' is a deliberate one. Whilst the Paralympics is held up, and rightly so, as the poster boy of inclusivity for all in world sport, this hasn't always been the case for Para Ice Hockey. With Schroder the first woman named in a Para Ice Hockey squad since 1994. As such she's suddenly starting to receive a lot of media attention.

"I hope that the focus on me doesn't detract away from the focus on our team as a whole." She said. "Because I am just one of the players. Or at least I hope I am!" She's been one of the players for a long time: making her international debut in 2014. "I am used to playing with the guys and they are used to playing with me. I think both of us are comfortable and the guys and I use the same locker room and everything... I just feel like one of the guys!"

This view is echoed by her team-mate Morten Vaernes who doesn't think of her as a different member of the team. "That's not something we think about really... she's a teammate. That's it!"

Except she isn't. 24 years on from her compatriot Brit Mjaasund Oejen's ground breaking appearance whilst competing in the 1994 Lillehammer Games, a girl playing in the man's sport of Para Ice Hockey still raises eyebrows. "I understand why it's a big deal. Hopefully people who don't know there are female players will get their eyes opened" she added.

Slowly awareness into the women's game is rising. A series of exhibition matches held since 2011 between Europe, Canada and the US are helping with this as is a viral campaign by the Canadian Women's Para Ice Hockey Team to increase funding from the Canadian Paralympic Body in their sport. Whilst Schroder, like many within the para ice hockey commu-

nity would love to see the women's game enter the Paralympics, currently this is still quite far off. "Now only the US and Canada have a team and so all the other countries just have to play with the guys" Schroder said. This must have its benefits however.

"Of course." She said. "Generally the level of the guys is higher than the ladies and when you play with people who are better than you, then you get better." Getting to the stage where you are good enough to even compete with the men is incredibly tough however. With Schroder, the sole female in Pyeongchang illustrating this. "I hope to be the role model for other girls in the sport" she added.

# One of the Guys

**Lena Schroder** is a Norwegian Para ice hockey player, competing as the single lady in a team of men – could this become the new normal?



Photos: Thilo Ruckels

## Game Makers.

Lena Schroder plays for Norway and feels just like "one of the guys". During the Paralympics' match against Italy she did not play though. And Norway lost.

The Paralympics therefore offers a glimpse into the future. A future where a person isn't defined by their gender or their disability. Instead all that matters, in a sporting context, are the stories of determination and talent, redemption and despair, success and disappointment. The Paralympics medal table offers such a glance. It's not separated by gender or classification. Neither should life. Maybe that's what head of the IPC, Andrew Parsons had in mind when opening the Pyeongchang Games. "Together we can change the world through sport" he said. A sport where gender and disability doesn't matter anymore. It's just sport. **GEORGE SIMONDS, 22 YEARS**



Ambitious. To win gold at the Paralympics was Forster's dream.

Foto: Julian Stratensthalde/pa

## She went for Gold – and got it!

**The path to the Paralympics is long, and it takes more than just good performance to be on top of the podium. German monoski racer Anna-Lena Forster made it – and won her first gold medal.**

All athletes competing in the 2018 Paralympics have completed the most intensive training phases. This also applies to the 22 year old monoski racer Anna-Lena Forster, who is part of the German Ski Alpine Team. Her right leg is missing from birth, her left leg is shortened. But the young athlete, who has been practicing skiing since she was six years old, has no shortage of experience. At the moment, the preparations for the Paralympics dominate my whole day – it consists entirely of skiing and strength and endurance training", Forster said in December before the start of the games. In Pyeongchang it was her goal to win gold. Finally, on the

fourth day of the competition, after two previous races in which she could only finish fourth place, she managed to win a gold medal in Super-Combined. It is her first medal at a Paralympic competition. For Forster it means a big relief and a huge burden off her shoulders, as the previous competitions were not successful for her.

## SHE STEPPED OUT OF HER RIVAL'S SHADOW

Indeed she managed her first descent at the Games with a lead in and with top speed, but then she suddenly fell. Team mate and rival Anna Schaffelhuber won gold in both previous races; Downhill and Super-G. "I always stood in her shadow and this is the first time I stepped out of

it", Forster said right after the race on Tuesday. Forster's preferred disciplines are the technical ones, not the speedy ones. "I want to make the best use of the skills I've acquired in the last few months of training and win the gold medal in the slalom!", Forster said prior to the competition – and has realised this goal now. Before this year's Paralympic Games Forster participated in the 2014 Paralympic Games in Sochi. At that time, however, she was still the rookie and was absolutely satisfied to have been there at all, even without winning a medal. Four years later, things look completely different. Forster stepped out of the shadow of her rival, Schaffelhuber, and could become dangerous for her in the next race as well. Her hard work is now paying off – she can face Schaffelhuber at eye level.

**JANA RUDOLF, 20 YEARS**

**Mister Parsons, how do you see the current “health” of the Paralympic Movement?**

We are stronger than ever! We have amazing Para athletes in the four corners of the Globe, the best partners and sponsors, the numbers of viewers around the world are always increasing, a sound governance structure, a committed membership and about to start the biggest Paralympic Winter Games ever. Our movement showed great unity, resilience and efficiency to overcome the difficulties of the last summer Games. Of course, we have our challenges, as any other sport organisation, but overall we are in a very positive moment.

**What are your plans for the next four years whilst you're in charge of the IPC?**

If we are stronger than ever, the challenge is to take advantage of this and to take the Paralympic Movement to its next level. That is why membership development is crucial for me. We need National Paralympic Committees and International Federations to provide high quality services to their Para athletes. The IPC is here to support them, to take them to their next level in terms of management, governance, sport, commercial, etc. I also want to reposition the IPC internationally as one of the most important sport organisations in the world also delivering societal change on daily basis. It is critical to strengthen the relationships we have, including the IOC and build bridges with new and stronger organisations. The professionalisation of the classification process is also one of my priorities.

**How do you see the relationship between sport and politics? Do you feel the IPC has a political role to play?**

I believe passionately that sport has the power to change the World. It is one of the most efficient tools of education, health, citizenship and peace. When sport is part of a set of policies to make the World a better place; that is fantastic. Sport is a philosophy of life. Therefore, what we can never allow is that sport becomes a hostage of political agendas that has nothing to do with human development.

**What impact do you think the exclusion of Russia from the Rio Games / Pyeongchang will have on the health of the Paralympic Movement? How important is the acceptance of specific “neutral” athletes in minimising this?**

I think the suspension of the Russian Paralympic Committee for both the Rio 2016 and Pyeongchang 2018 Paralympic Games sends out a very clear message that doping will not be tolerated in Paralympic sport, especially doping that is systemic and that covers multiple athletes and multiple sports. I do not think the Rio 2016 Games suffered as a result of Russia's non-participation. With the evidence we had been presented by the McLaren Report in July 2016, no-one knew which Russian athletes were clean and which were not. As the Paralympic Movement's governing body, our duty is to ensure a level playing field for all athletes. Our decision at the time was necessary and proportionate to the situation we faced. Seventeen months on, we face a different picture in Russia and it is important that once again our decision is necessary and proportionate to what is in front of us. Although the RPC remains suspended they have made significant progress and we have to recognise this. Russian Para athletes are now regularly tested and are amongst the most scrutinised Para athletes in the world.

**How big an obstacle does you think the issues of classification are in the continued credibility of the Paralympic Games?**

Paralympic classification is our strongest asset within the Paralympic Movement. Without it we cannot have Paralympic sport. At the same time it can also be our Achilles heel and cause us some problems.

Many of the recent issues that have come to light have involved athletes wrongly claiming they or their rivals are in the correct class. Ahead of Rio 2016, we investigated the classification of more than 80 athletes from 24 countries following reports from athletes, coaches and parents. No athlete was found to be cheating classification and the main outcome was that some classifiers



Foto: Christophe Ena/picture alliance/AP Images

Andrew Parsons, 41, believes that sport has the power to change the World.

# “We are stronger than ever!”

**Andrew Parsons,** President of the International Paralympic Committee, talks about the next level of the **Movement**, facing a different picture in **Russia** and how the IPC is trying to increase Para sport participation around the world

had followed incorrect procedures. These issues were then addressed with the relevant international federations.

We are working hard with all international federations to improve classification across all sports as we want the main talking points in Para sport to be about athletic performance and not concerns regarding classification.

**There have previously been criticisms of the games not being a truly global event, with a few nations providing disproportionate numbers of athletes and numbers of medals won.**

The Rio 2016 Paralympic Games attracted 159 countries and had TV coverage reaching a cumulative audience of 4.1 billion people in more than 150 countries so I think the summer Games is considered a global event.

Although we need to increase participation from smaller countries, I was happy that in Rio 83 countries won at least one medal, the most ever in Paralympic history, while six countries won their first ever Paralympic gold medals. I think this is a sign of great progress and our development arm, the Agitos Foundation, will continue its great work trying to increase Para sport participation around the world.

The winter Games are much smaller than the summer Games, but in the last few editions we have increased the number of athletes and countries taking part, as well as the amount of media coverage. The Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games were broadcast to 55 countries, reaching a global cumulative audience of 2.1 billion people, half a billion more than Vancouver 2010.



Foto: Michael Kappeler/dpa

# Honesty wins

**Doping** is as much a topic at the Paralympic as in any other professional sport. In Pyeongchang, testing has increased to deter potential violators

The German anthem rings out, fans are cheering. Anna Schaffelhuber holds up her gold medal. The German para alpine skier had five of these moments during the Winter Paralympics 2014 in Sochi. "I'm doing everything for this one moment at the Paralympic Games. Doping should not rob me of my moment in 2018 because I do give up a lot for my sports", says Anna Schaffelhuber in a video for the #MyMoment campaign of the German National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA). Under the hashtag athletes and fans are advocating clean sports.

Athletes with disabilities are just as prone to take performance enhancing drugs as athle-

tes without disabilities. Whether increased muscle growth through anabolic steroids or asthma spray for expanded bronchia - again and again athletes let themselves be seduced into using these medications. The Russian team is accused of systematic state initiated doping - during the Paralympic Games 2016 in Rio Russian athletes were barred from participation. In Pyeongchang 2018, Russian athletes are competing under neutral flag following a decision of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). Among them para nordic skier and biathlete Mikhailina Lysova, who was permitted to start last minute, although her name appeared in the McLaren Report. Thus, the IPC has not completely excluding Russia. A decision that has been strongly criticized by the German National Paralympic Committee (DBS). "It is a pity that the IPC has departed from its strict anti-doping policy", says DBS President Friedhelm Julius Beucher. "Allowing Russian athletes to start is a smack in the face for clean athletes."

German and international institutions are fighting doping with special qualifications for athletes and coaches as well as doping tests. In Germany, the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) is responsible for testing during training periods. NADA is also alerted when significant performance leaps occur. German athletes are registered in the Anti-Doping Administration and Management System (ADAMS) and have to be ready for testing at all times. In many countries, things are different. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) thus conducts additional tests to bring testing up to a global standard. In the process, WADA is confronted with many challenges. According to Thomas Abel, professor for Paralympic Sports at the German Sports University Cologne, it is difficult to conduct random tests, if doping experts are required to name the exact purpose of their trip upon entering a country. WADA has drawn conclusions from these experiences. For instance, it spoke out against Russia's participation at the Paralympic Summer Games in Rio 2016.

During the Games, tests are conducted by the IPC. According to IPC spokesman Craig Spence, in Pyeongchang, testing has increased by 22 percent to 600 tests in comparison to four years ago in Sochi. "Over the years, the number of anti-doping violations has increased slightly. At the same time, we have also conducted more tests", Spence says. For instance, in 2012, four violations were recorded among the 1,436 conducted tests and in 2016, there were 14 violations among the

2,748 tests. In fact, upon arrival in Pyeongchang the German team was tested nine times before competitions started. Still, by contrast, Olympic athletes are tested far more often. The reason being considerably higher incomes in Olympic sports.

However, a positive test result does not automatically mean a violation against anti-doping regulations. This can be the case for athletes both with and without disabilities as certain medical conditions may allow athletes to apply for an exception allowing them usage of otherwise forbidden substances and methods. In 2016, NADA granted 18 exceptions to the DBS. All in all, NADA has granted 75 exceptions among a total of 8,000 athletes.

"Some people are more inclined to do illicit things than others. Athletes who dope are aware that they are playing fast and loose

## German NPC criticizes participation of Russian athletes

with their bodies. People with disabilities are also not immune, although they may have more respect for their bodies based on their experiences", says Abel. There are hardly any differences between athletes with and without disabilities. However, only very few athletes can actually use one particular method: people who are paraplegic from the seventh cervical vertebra upward have a reduced pulse of 120 beats per minute. By manipulatively creating a dysreflexia - also known as boosting - in form of increased bladder pressure tetraplegics can for instance increase their pulse to 160 beats per minute. Thus, they experience a considerable performance enhancement in terms of strength, speed and tenacity. It is not until after the competition that the athletes drain their urine via a catheter. They hereby expose themselves to a higher risk for kidney congestion or even prolonged health issues. In winter sports, boosting plays a secondary role. Athletes in track and field, wheelchair rugby and cycling are more prone.

The Paralympic Games are pure adrenalin. Years of training, full concentration on competition day and the joy of sport should pay off in the end. So that this can become a reality, every athlete has to be honest - towards her competitors and herself. This is how Anna Schaffelhuber and other clean athletes stand on the podium and truly enjoy their moment.

SALOME BERBLINGER, 20 YEARS

# Top of the Class: Understanding Classifications

**The Paralympics celebrate diversity in sport; with diversity comes the challenge of making competitions fair: Classification is the current answer, but can leave spectators with questions.**

Why is the athlete that crossed the line first not the winner? When at the Paralympics, this might be because of classification. The aim of classification is to create a level playing field so that athletes can compete against athletes with similar levels of impairments. The Winter Paralympic Games offer opportunities for people with eight broad types of impairment. Sport class refers to how much an impairment affects performance in a particular sport. This is determined by "classifiers",

either medics or technical experts in the specific sport. All athletes at the Paralympics need a sports class to compete in and this can be assigned a few days before the Paralympics start at the latest. Athletes also have the opportunity to appeal, if they feel they are in the wrong class. As conditions change an athletes sports class may change e.g. visual impairment deteriorating with time. In some circumstances athletes may have a say in which category they compete in. For instance, an athlete with a limb impairment may choose a path in sit-skiing or standing-skiing if appropriate. Anna-Lea Forster, is a German Paralympic downhill sit-skier who competes un-

der the class LW12, which refers to athletes that have leg impairments but have minimal or no trunk impairment. LW10 and LW11 are classes of sit-skiers with less trunk stability. Standing-skiing LW1-4 classes involve varying types and degrees of lower limb impairments, whereas LW5-8 classes refer to arm impairments, and LW9 is a class for athletes with both arm and leg impairments. The time achieved on runs is multiplied by a factor - the higher the level of impairment the more time gets factored out. The young British Paralympic downhill skier Millie Knight has a visual impairment and has been assigned classification "B2." This means her level of visual

impairment is less severe than B1 - which implies very low visual acuity and/or no light perception - but more severe than B3. On the other hand, team sports such as wheelchair curling and Para ice-hockey contain only 1 class implying broadly that all players have an impairment of the lower part of the body of a specified level.

Joe Bajan, currently refereeing Para nordic skiing at Pyeongchang reports that this sport is moving more towards "first across the finish line" races, for example with the use of staggered starts taking into account different impairments. This could make the events easier to follow!

JOANNA BARTLETT, 26 YEARS

# Taking over power

Stories about disabilities have long had the pattern "victim or hero" – social media can change this. And also the point of view

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Disabled has a motto: "Not without us about us." It should always apply, not least when the media report on people with disabilities. For a long time, however, these two stories have always been told: one of the "victim", who has been "tied to the wheelchair" since a "tragic accident." And that of the hero who "despite a handicap" does this and that. With regard to Germany at least, one can say that the media are trying to make it better, and they do. This is not least due to the commitment of the "Leidmedien", a team of media professionals with and without disabilities who do workshops in editorial offices. The fear of using inappropriate words is great. How to report "correctly" on disability?

But maybe the decisive revolution has already begun: People with disabilities have initiated it themselves. On social media - on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter - anyone, no matter what profession he or she pursues, can share content with other people, their followers. "Representing oneself instead of being represented can change a lot. You seize this power", says Berlin blogger Laura Gehlhaar. On her homepage [lauragehlhaar.com](http://lauragehlhaar.com), she clarifies clichés about disabilities, talks about her everyday life in a wheelchair and about urban life. For her "bullshit bingo", she's collected the phrases she often hears – "Great you're still going out."

For Laura Gehlhaar, this phrase glorifies her as a heroine just because she manages to get out of the door. It shows what disability still means in people's minds: "They have the image that it must all be very bad." That's why she blogs, sits in

talk shows and has written a book („Kann man da noch was machen?", Heyne Verlag). She is also active on Instagram – just like many Paralympics athletes. Social media can break down barriers. The "follower" feels closer to the one he or she is following, has the feeling of sharing, even though appearances are certainly deceptive. Many German Para athletes, such as track and fielder Heinrich

**German Paralympic Media Award**  
**For the 18th time, German Social Accident Insurance awards the „GPMA". The Media Prize honours outstanding journalistic contributions on rehabilitation and disabled sports. The award ceremony will take place on 25th April 2018 at the DGVU headquarters in Berlin's Glinkastraße. Further information is available at: [www.dguv.de/gpma](http://www.dguv.de/gpma)**



Click and like. US Para snowboarder Amy Purdy has 273,000 followers on Instagram.



Popov, use Instagram with wit and charm. Popov has 19,000 followers. But the real Instagram star is probably US Para snowboarder Amy Purdy. 273,000 people follow her. The pictures she posts receive thousands of "likes." Purdy is the advertising face of Coca Cola and appeared on TV on "Dancing with the stars." Her Instagram photos convey the image of a glamorous world. She is proactive in dealing with her disability. And doesn't tire of stressing that with willpower everyone can achieve anything. She is often seen in a mini dress with her lower leg prosthesis exposed, wearing high heels and nail polish on her plastic toes. You almost don't even recognize the prosthesis as such.

Is this how to bring disability into the centre of society? Neither victim nor hero? Laura Gehlhaar from Berlin is sceptical: "Do I have to show that I can be as 'normal' as possible so that you can like me?", she asks. For the time being, the question remains unanswered. Society

still has to prove that it really wants people with disabilities in its midst. A news anchor with disabilities on the evening news - when it's not about the Paralympics - would be a start. We need more of those who push into the public eye, not because they have a disability, but because they belong to society. Instagram can only be a beginning.

RONJA RINGELSTEIN



**Something to say.** Berlin based blogger Laura Gehlhaar.

## Teamspirit through Frostiness

Bobbing up and down in their bright red skiwear in freezing temperatures, they guide visitors and members of the media to bus stops and different venues or hand out information material. The 5,700 Korean and international volunteers represent a fifth of the entire workforce at the Paralympic Winter Games. Some of them even sacrifice their semester break from university or take holidays from work because they want to be part of the Games. Jai Hu Kim is one of them: The 21-year-old university student was born

and raised in the United States. But at the same time, he has been firmly rooted in South Korea since his earliest childhood. Together with 100 team members, he volunteers in the Transport Department which is responsible for all the shuttle buses and any problems regarding their schedules – whereas some volunteers have already been in Pyeongchang since February for the Olympics. According to the Press Operations Department every volunteer completed a training-camp to prepare for the job. But Jai Hu was just



Part of the team. There are 5,700 Korean and international volunteers.

thrown in at the deep, he says. "On my first day at the Olympics, they took me to one of the bus stops and quickly pointed out the bus lines. Afterwards, I was supposed explain routes I hardly knew myself", he says. By contrast, volunteers working in the security screening areas actually received a three-day training on how to use the equipment properly. In other cases, some volunteers faced rather uncomfortable situations: "At temperatures of about -18°C we spent over nine hours standing outside", Jai Hu says. Many volunteers quit. He stayed. He witnessed a team spirit developing. If he had to do it all again, he would. Spending his holidays to be part of the Games is a valuable experience, Jai Hu says.

LEA STRATMANN, 18 YEARS

A full orchestra warms the stadium with traditional Korean drum beats – the stage is set for the stars to enter. As they slowly approach the main stage, the MC's introduction is drowned out by the screaming audience. "They" are athletes in the virtual world: athletes who play e-sports.

E-sports, also called "electric sports" or "pro gaming." Competitors vie for victory in a digital environment. These players do not need a real field as they compete via video games. And yet, they share similarities with athletes in physical sports. They form teams based on individual player's specialties, led by a captain and supported by a coach.

The e-sports industry in Korea continues to grow rapidly every year, constituting al-

## E-SPORTS FEDERATION FOR DISABLED FOUNDED

most 15 percent of the global e-sports market in 2017. Last year's major success of the game "Playerunknown's Battlegrounds" seems to be one of the core reasons why Korean e-sports flourishes, with "Starcraft II", "League of Legends", and "FIFA" additionally setting records. E-sports as a global trend has also reached Germany as it is on its way to expand in e-sports on a large scale - especially after the formation of the German e-sports association called eSport-Bund Deutschland (ESBD) last November.

Timely as it seems, recognition of e-sports as an Olympic discipline spurs many discussions. There seems to be a positive perspective as the International Olympic Committee regards it „helpful to engage the young generation.“ In fact, two days prior to the Pyeongchang Games a major e-sports tournament took centre stage in Gangneung, the host city for Olympic and Paralympic arena ice events. At the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games e-sports will be a real discipline.

If e-sports were included as an Olympic discipline, it might also open doors for Para e-sports. In fact, there is a representative body: the International e-Sports Federation for the Differently Able (IeSA) which was launched in 2011. However, compared to the International e-Sports

Federation (IeSF) it lags behind in terms of size, participation rate, and sponsorship level. Disabled pro-gamers in South Korea like Seung Hyun Park who has muscular dystrophy or Min Seok Lee who is visually impaired are symbolic for the e-sports industry. But their public attention is comparatively insignificant compared to other players.

However, there is an opportunity here that players with and without disabilities could compete against each other. In the sense of an inclusive sport e-sports

could be a revolution. People's disabilities do not have to matter in a virtual world.

In fact, last year the 2017 National Para students e-Festival was hosted in South Korea aiming to develop a Para e-sports culture. And in 2014, Korea hosted an international e-sports tournament for disabled gamers. Such efforts need to be extended for the e-sports industry to encompass Para athletes. That is, they need more venues and opportunities for training. And that could be a key turning

point for such a massive industry to symbolize not only the young generation but also move towards an inclusive society.

It is still very hot the stadium, even after the music ceremony has ended. The main trophy is on camera and the athletes stare at the golden prize hoping for a new record. These players in the virtual world are professionals, like any other athlete - and so it might be worth asking, "when can we see them compete in the Olympic and Paralympic Games?"

SUN KIM, 20 YEARS



Photo: Marek Majewski/opa

# E-Sports is a Trend – also in Para Sports?

**Gamers** are being recognized as professional athletes. With Para athletes joining the rosters, e-sports could become **inclusive** for all

## Teamwork on skis

As Martin Härtl counts from three to one, a microphone on his collar and an amplifier attached to his waist pass his words on to Clara Klug. After the starting signal, he starts skiing, followed closely by her. "Hop, hop, hop", he shouts, indicating the direction Klug should follow as she is unable to see the slope. Härtl's voice is tense while they make their way to the shooting range of the biathlon stadium. Ever since the duo started training together, they have had one goal in mind: competing for Germany at this year's Paralympics.

In both nordic and alpine skiing, visually impaired athletes compete together with a sighted guide. The latter must not only have the same endurance, he also acts as the athlete's eyes and anticipates if he is ready to speed up or needs to slow down.

While amplifiers are used in nordic skiing, alpine skiers have microphones installed in their helmets. "The second I tell her to do something on the slope, she has to react instantly and trust everything I'm saying", British guide Brett Wild says about competing with alpine skier Millie Knight. "If she doesn't, that can be the difference between making the gate and a massive crash."

It takes trust to rely on a guide's words while on skis. To get to know one another beyond the slope, Wild moved in with fan favourite Knight and her mother over the past summer. During the World Para Alpine Skiing Championships in 2017, Knight had crashed into a barrier behind the finish line, leaving her unsure if she would be psychologically able to compete



To follow. UK-Athlete Millie Knight (right) relies on her guide Brett Wild (left).

in Pyeongchang. Over the last year, the two of them worked to overcome her fear and have made their way back, winning two silver medals on the first competition days at the Paralympics.

To make forming a relationship between athlete and guide easier, the latter often has multiple tasks or is even from the athlete's family: Knight used to compete with her mother as her guide, and her rival Danelle Umstead from the US-American team competes with her husband Rob. Austrian nordic skier Carina Edlinger is both guided and coached by her brother Julian, and Härtl is both guide and coach for Klug. "She can't compete without me, I can't compete without her," he says about turning skiing into a team sport.

MARIE MENKE, 20 YEARS

Photo: Paul Hamau/Reuters

**B**ehind the glass window is the ice rink, where Korean wheelchair curling athletes are wrapping up their morning training session. Their team coach Jong Chul Baek and other staff seem busy monitoring the athletes and the movement of the curling stone via the four screens with skyview. It is just a few minutes before noon when this session should be wrapped up, but the staff and players seem too pre-occupied to even notice that a young Korean reporter has arrived. They still remain engaged in observations of the players. They exchange strategies. They exchange remarks on the athletes' posture. Inside the rink, to the left and right there is a full banner covering the entire wall – a photograph of spectators printed in full size. Here, at the Curling Rink of Icheon Training Center, with the Paralympic Games only a few weeks away, they are playing a real game with a real audience.

It was in Vancouver 2010: the Korean wheelchair curling team brought home a silver medal – the first in Asia. Since it was only earlier last year that a formal curling rink was established in Icheon, the Vancouver team practiced by freezing the swimming pool at the center, or scou-

### THE KOREAN TEAM USED TO PRACTISE ON A FROZEN POOL

ting around for early morning vacancies at the Korean National Training Center at Taereung. "Our entire training lifestyle has changed", says Minja Bang after the Curling Center opened in Icheon. Bang is now headed for her 14th career year in Parasports, starting as an athlete at Summer Paralympics. She began wheelchair curling after she received an offer to form a team in 1995 called "Sniper." Bang recalls, "housing and overall facilities have improved greatly ... we have a video analysis system through which we can meticulously analyze our shot postures through the camera." These improvements seem crucial for the curling team, as they have access to constant feedback from the training staff.

# The Skipper's Stone

The Korean **curling team** trained very hard to reach the semi-finals. In the Round Robin it paid off. A visit to **Icheon Training Centre**



Focus. For Minja Bang the team's work as one is most important.

Since the silver medal in Vancouver, Korea ranks third place in wheelchair curling together with Russia; Canada is in first place with three gold medals, followed by Great Britain with one silver and one bronze. "Our primary goal are the semi-finals," said Jong Chul Baek before the Paralympics started. Until the fourth day of the Paralympic competition, the Round Robin was more than satisfactory for the Koreans: they won five out of six games. They beat the Russians and the Canadian team, among others. Only against Germany they had to admit defeat. Their hard training has so far been quite effective.

Along with his main role of guidance, Baek can deliver "specific experiences" to the players, as he himself experienced life as a national athlete. "Technique delivery is a must, and I try to guide our team with real-experience based training." Baek recognizes "maintenance" as the primary goal – as a "priority after more than two years of arduous training." It is

### IMPROVED: NOW THEY EVEN HAVE A VIDEO ANALYSIS SYSTEM

about maintaining the current condition of our players, technique, and teamwork. Baek says, safety first for not only training, but also during travel to international competition venues.

Wheelchair curling is played as a team, composed of four positions: Lead, Second, Third and the Skip. In accordance with their position, the athletes take turns throwing the stone – getting it nearest the house while pushing the opponent's stone away is how to win. Bang seems to favor this more than anything else in curling as she comes "to share the hard times" with her teammates. There is no sweeper, considering the Paralympic athletes' limitation in movement. "Earnest hope is what is needed most. We have trained as far as possible – we know people's expectations. An earnest motivation is what we need to keep focused." They aim high for Pyeongchang 2018. It looks like it's all paying off.

SUN KIM, 20 YEARS

## "It's satisfying to say they had a fair competition"

### Mr Bajan, how did you become involved in nordic skiing?

One day, over 20 years ago while nordic skiing with my son he heard a bang, bang, bang and asked 'what was that?' I replied biathlon, and explained that it was nordic skiing and shooting. He wanted to go see this, we went to the range and met the club president and basically, I have not left. My son competed as a biathlete, I started to help as a parent, then took coaching and officiating courses.

### How did you become involved in Para nordic skiing?

In 2007 we held the first nordic skiing and Biathlon IPC World Cup on our home venue of Mt. Washington (Canada) and found that I enjoyed IPC even more, then over the next few years helped organize and officiate a number of IPC World Cups

in Canada and Internationally. I worked at the Vancouver 2010 Paralympics, Sochi 2014 and now Pyeongchang.

### What is your role as a referee?

The title is Assistant Technical Delegate and Biathlon International Referee – it is a long title for a much smaller job of organizing the construction and operations of the shooting range, then also to sit on the Competition Jury.

### What do you like best about your role?

The enjoyment of the job is having the range constructed according to the rules and protocols and then having the officials with volunteers deliver the competition according to those same rules and protocols. It is satisfying to say to the volunteers at the end of a competition that the athletes had a fair competition.



Joe Bajan is a Biathlon International Referee from Canada

an individual or sprint race. Our sport is moving towards more "first across the finish line is the winner" races, for example having a staggered start just like the Pursuit in IBU or International Ski Federation.

### Do you think classification is currently as fair as it can be?

It is reasonably successful and fair as you do not have the same athletes or classification winning all the time. There is always room for improvement and I believe some new classification guidelines are to be released by the IPC soon. At present, I am involved in a data study of blind biathletes to see if and how the various classifications of B1, B2 and B3 have an impact or not on results, strictly from a shooting times perspective.

QUESTIONS BY JOANNA BARTLETT

### Do you think classification limits the potential for paralympic winter sports in terms of audience viewing?

Any sport where the first across the finish line is not the winner is more difficult to follow but it is no different than in the International Biathlon Union (IBU) for

# All aboard

Snowboarding was set to become a fan-magnet – and it delivered. US girl **Brenna Huckaby** went for gold



Board in the Act. At The Paralympics, the snowboarders from the USA have been adored like members from a boygroup. Rightly so: Next to Brenna Huckaby's gold medal, the team won five medals in the snowboard cross.



Photos: Jan Wollas/dpa, Mareike Zierhacks

It could have turned into a disaster. With the starting gates failing to open and disrupting the Snowboard Cross competition, athletes could have been disturbed in their pre-race schedule while the fantastic atmosphere in the crowd prior to the delay could have turned sour. Fortunately a spontaneous entertainment programme was launched by the organisers. With athletes and fans left waiting in the Jeongseon Alpine Centre a dance-off was started featuring the Paralympics' mascot Bandabi and participants from the delighted crowd.

Everything seemed to come together for the event hailed as a fan-favourite for the Games. Glorious sunshine, exciting races and an all but full arena ensured that even a major disruption in form of the malfunctioning gates couldn't spoil the fun. Fortunately the forced break didn't perturb the athletes with Great Britain's snowboarder Owen Pick explaining, that him and his competitors are used to waiting around "as something always goes wrong".

In the stands meanwhile the technicians were being cheered on by a young crowd made up of a wild mix of nations, who also showed outstanding support to all athletes only leaving their place in the stand to flock to the bar in between races. Tears of joy from Australian fans, a topless American supporter getting his groove on on the "Dance Cam" and an army of Dutch supporters shrouding the stands in a sea of orange: the first day of the snowboarding competition had it all. And that was just the fans.

Six medals were up for grabs in the Snowboard Cross with athletes competing fiercely in speedy runs down the icy piste. Snowboard Cross sees athletes of three different classifications navigate a course consisting of steep drops, sharp corners and a big jump, hoping to cross the finish line as quickly as possible. Whilst the qualification rounds are raced individually in order to determine the pairings of the knock-out stages, the latter rounds see two athletes compete head-to-head. With gold medal wins by the Netherlands' Bibian Mentel-Spee, Finland's Matti

Suur-Hamari, the USA's flag-bearer Mike Schultz and Australia's Simon Patmore it was snowboard's shooting-star who shone once again and stole the show. Brenna Huckaby, the first Para-athlete to grace Sports Illustrated's Swimsuit Issue, had travelled to South Korea as the reigning world champion, hoping to add a Paralympic gold to her medal collection. Resembling a "nervous wreck" before her races, she made no errors in her runs, powering through to win the gold medal at her first Paralympic Games, finishing ahead of her teammate Amy Purdy. Asked whether her Paralympic success felt different to her World Championship medals the US Snowboarder said: "It's so, so different. I really didn't think it would be. It's my best medal by far!"

It wasn't a case of 'all eyes on Huckaby', though: fan favourites included two athletes known from the Summer Paralympics. Denmark's Daniel Wagner had won a gold medal in the long-jump in Rio whilst his Japanese counterpart Atsushi Yamamoto claimed the silver in Brazil. The pair came to Pyeongchang with one aim: beat the other. Having retrained as snowboarders the two athletes held their own in the competition with Wagner finishing in a very respectable eight place.

Featuring at the Winter Paralympics for

## "IT'S MY BEST MEDAL BY FAR!"

only the second time the experiences and atmosphere in Pyeongchang should ensure that snowboarding is here to stay. Its successful debut in Sochi, exciting second 'run' in Pyeongchang and magnet for young fans will have impressed the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). Even the mechanical difficulties with the starting gate couldn't stop the fun: after an hour-long break the organisers eventually found a solution for "#GateGate", as it was dubbed in the Mixed Zone: Using a bungee rope instead of the electronic gate ensured the competition could progress – much to the delight of the fans.

BENJAMIN BROWN, 20 YEARS

## The promised Legacy of the Games

**Although each host country ensures a fail-proof legacy, it seems that ensuring efficient use of the venues is more difficult than expected.**

The Pyeongchang Olympic and Paralympic Games will potentially go down in history as a catalyst for inter-Korean dialogue. And whilst a major part of the games' legacy will depend on future developments between the Koreas, other aspects aren't shrouded in foggy uncertainty. The legacy of major sporting events is an important factor taken into consideration throughout the bidding process and covers social, economical, sporting and logistical factors. Although each host country ensures a fail-proof legacy, a look at previous cities and venues shows that – once the fun and excitement ebbs away –

ensuring efficient use of the venues is often more difficult than expected.

Rio de Janeiro is the perfect, or grossly imperfect, example of the disregard with which venues and the infrastructure behind the games is mistreated once the Pa-



Photo: Jeon Heon-Kyun/dpa

ralympics move on. A vandalised stadium, rotting aquatics centre and a shockingly disregarded tennis arena are only three examples of the way host countries have ignored their promised legacy. At the same time, however, it is this factor that is

Jeongseon Alpine Centre. The destruction of nature reserves and financial difficulties down to the costs of the games could haunt the region for 10-20 years, the Korea Economic Research Institute says.

getting more important and helped Pyeongchang win the right to host the games. Yet with the 2018 Paralympics not even completed, doubts are already becoming loud over whether South Korea will be able to deliver on its promises. With key venues such as the Paralympic Stadium and the Alpine Centre set to be dismantled after the games, it seems as though Gangwon-do Province won't face the problem of unused, expensive-to-maintain stadiums. Two things, however, will certainly stay in Pyeongchang: the destruction of nature reserves and financial difficulties down to the costs of the games which could haunt the region for 10-20 years, according to the Korea Economic Research Institute.

JOANNA BARTLETT, 26,  
BENJAMIN BROWN, 20



Photo: Sebastian Kohnert/dpa

Dancing it off. Tokyo already received the flag for the next Games at the closing ceremony in Rio 2016.

The saying goes that good things come in threes and with the 2015 announcement that the 2022 Winter Games are set to be held in Beijing, the IPC is definitely hoping so. This announcement set up an unprecedented run of three Asian games in a row. As these Pyeongchang games begin to draw to a close the focus of the Paralympic family moves onto the second of the Asian Triumvirate: Tokyo 2020.

## TOKYO

The 2020 games in Japan's capital city will not be the first time the city hosted the Paralympic movement with Tokyo also playing host to the second-ever Paralympics in 1964. The organising committee is embracing this legacy with nine of the original venues being re-used for the upcoming games. Not content with being best known as the host of an iconic Beatles Concert the Nippon Budokan will see the old and the new once again come together to host the Judo Competitions. This reflects the shroud of scepticism surrounding host cities in the face of spiralling costs and the threat of 'white elephant' projects.

Whilst the Tokyo games are set to return to old stomping grounds used by the 1964 games the games are not going to be one stuck in the past. As well as the construction of Kengo Mumar's glittering design for the new Olympic Stadium, Taekwondo and Badminton have been added to the 2020 sporting programme. The innovation doesn't stop there however.

Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee chief executive Toshiro Muto said "The Olympic Games is a sports festival, but it's also a chance to show the innovation of scientific technologies." There are a host of technological features currently being planned by the committee including hydrogen powered self-driving cars for athlete transport, a nationwide hotel wheelchair accessibility audit and smartphone apps to guide tourists and fans through

# Asia times three

Whilst the host countries for the next games may not be new, change is afoot for the next two hosts of the **Olympics** and **Paralympics**



Photo: Imagoeconomica/News

Who's next? Beijing is already preparing for the next Winter Games in 2022.

hout their Olympic experience. When interviewed by the Paralympics Zeitung, the President of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Andrew Parsons said "Preparations in Tokyo are well underway, excitement there is like nothing I have seen before so far out from a Games, and I am confident Tokyo 2020 will raise the bar in all areas!"

## BEIJING

The next stop for the Winter Paralympics is guaranteed to raise the bar for host cities. Beijing in 2022 will become the first city to host both the summer and winter games. Like the plans for Tokyo the legacy of previous games is clearly visible in the games proposals submitted. Several of the venues used by the 2008 Summer

Paralympics are being re-used when the games return to the city. Notably the National Aquatics Centre is being transformed into a 4,000-seat curling arena and the Birds Nest Stadium will once again open its wings to welcome the Opening and Closing Ceremonies. IOC president Thomas Bach is pleased with what he has seen so far. "The preparations for the Beijing Winter Games 2022 are really excellent" he told reporters after a tour of the proposed Olympic site earlier this year, as you'd hope bearing in mind most of the venues were built 14 years ago!

Whilst the Paralympic movement generally has received some criticism regarding issues of classification, doping and financial constraints, IPC President Andrew Parsons remains confident on the outlook of the Games, having provisionally accepted Bobsleigh into an expanded 2022 Sports Programme. "The Pyeongchang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games is the first of three Games editions in Asia with Tokyo 2020 and Beijing 2022 on the horizon. It is vital that we take full advantage of this presence in Asia". Parsons and the rest of the Paralympic family will be hoping that with this continued presence in Asia good things really do come in threes.

SALOME BERBLINGER, 20 YEARS,  
GEORGE SIMONDS, 22 YEARS

## Backing the future

An ongoing initiative between the British Paralympic Association and charity Help for Heroes aims to allow the next generation of British athletes to flourish on the biggest international stage. Whilst the Tokyo and Beijing Paralympic Games organising committees are hard at work preparing their cities for the next two Games, they aren't the only group with their focus set on the future. The Paralympic Inspiration Programme (PiP), now entering its fourth incarnation, aims to inspire the next generation of British Paralympic athletes by giving them a first-hand games time experience.

The 2018 cohort, made up of five athletes, arrive in Pyeongchang for a packed four-day schedule. The group will spend a couple of days in the Paralympic village: being subjected to the media spotlight and crucial Games time logistics which can prove a challenge for new athletes. Additionally, the athletes this year will undertake lessons on nutrition, media and anti-doping whilst living alongside participating athletes. One of the Sochi 2014 participants Benji Millard explained recently: "The reason I was there was to take the experience and knowledge of the games into my training for the next couple of years and these will hopefully help in future games."

This year's team are following in successful footsteps. The first British Paralympic Nordic Skier in twenty years,

## ATHLETES PREPARE TO BE PARALYMPIANS

Scott Meenagh, credits much of his success to the programme. "It's been everything. I wouldn't have been introduced to this sport without the Inspiration Programme. It really inspired me but also gave me the skills that I needed to make the dream of being here a reality."

Tim Hollingsworth Chief Executive of the British Paralympic Association echoed this sentiment: "I'm delighted to see this initiative continue as we know what a valuable opportunity for learning this experience provides. We want them to feel motivated from their time in Pyeongchang and to leave the Games with the understanding of what they need to do to achieve their own goals in sport." Alongside Nordic Skier Meenagh there are four members of the 2018 Pyeongchang Paralympics GB squad who have participated in previous PiP programmes with triple Paralympic medallist Jade Etherington amongst the most successful. Current participant and alpine skier Alex Slegg saying: "This is an invaluable opportunity for me. I know that from being part of the PiP programme I will be in the best possible state when my turn to compete at this level comes around." Whilst there is still a long road ahead for Slegg and the rest of the PiP participants, the backing provided by the programme means the athletes can truly set their focus onto the future.

GEORGE SIMONDS, 22 YEARS

# The Happiness they've found

An accident in 2010 changed everything for the happy couple Alf and Karolin: they had to find their way around again – and grew closer together

**A** few weeks before Christmas 2010, Alf Leihe lies motionless in a hospital bed. Paraplegic from the fifth cervical vertebra, a condition called tetraplegia. In other words: all four extremities are affected, bruised spinal cord. The doctors do not know how much of his old mobility the then 29-year-old will be able to regain. If at all. Then he feels it, a twitch. There was something. As so often in his life, there was an incentive: Karolin.

At the time, shortly after the car accident on the autobahn she was still his girlfriend. A university student, 23 years old. He wished for nothing more than to hug her again. For someone who could hardly move his neck, a Herculean task. "I trained every day with this goal in mind", says Alf Leihe today. As he recounts the events he's seated in a wheelchair in a sunlit apartment in Markkleeberg, a few train minutes from Leipzig in Germany. When he speaks, he often moves his arms. He has made it. "Christmas, you held me in your arms", says Karolin Leihe and looks at her husband. He took her name after their wedding two years ago.

The accident has made them closer, she says. The beginning was tough, but they were very lucky. The accident happened on the way from work. Alf Leihe, a professional auto-mechanic was on his way back from a job. His colleague was driving the car. He was asleep and cannot

recall anything. Not even the crash onto the back of the semi-trailer. Luckily. He only remembers waking up in hospital after a two week coma.

Then: "deliverance", as Alf Leihe calls it. Because it was an accident on the job the

## THEY ARE EXPECTING A CHILD THIS SUMMER

German Social Accident Insurance Institution for the woodworking and metalworking industries (BGHM) would cover the cost for treatments. Shortly after the first emergency operation, he was flown by helicopter to the Halle Bergmannstrost Hospital, one of nine clinical centres for

acute cases run by the social accident insurances. Closer to home, closer to Karolin. It's a clinic specializing in spinal cord injuries. Therapy begins with kinesiatrics. Step by step. He practices sitting. Later, he learns to move objects from A to B, a little writing, using a wheelchair, swimming. In the clinic, he is also introduced to his new passion handbiking. Alf Leihe spends eleven months there.

Shortly before his 30th birthday he is released from hospital. Today, seven years after the accident, he is capable of many things he, his wife and the doctors did not expect would ever be possible. "2016, I rode my handbike 600 kilometres." Out into nature. There, he can disconnect. Also from work. Although he can no lon-

ger fix cars, it was clear to him that he could not sit at home and do nothing. He works as a caregiver at a rehab clinic.

That a paraplegic can drive a car sounds rather futuristic and "it is", Alf Leihe smiles. The BGHM covered the modification of the couple's van – allowing the Leihes to be mobile again. But the greatest joy lies in the future: they are expecting a child this summer. With a tetraplegic father quite a complex process: sperm cell extraction, hormone therapy, artificial insemination. Starting a family. Both partners working. Last year, a three-week holiday in New Zealand, parties with friends, bike tours. Sounds pretty normal to the Leihes. And that is the happiness they have found.

RONJA RINGELSTEIN



Love is in the air. The Leihes have arranged their home in Markkleeberg in Germany so that Alf can use everything in the wheelchair.

## "First you have to stop feeling sorry"

**After an accident, Robin's paraplegic. But he is a fighter, athletic, and found his calling in sport.**

At the age of five, Robin Knopf starts gymnastics. 14 years later he falls off a high-bar during sports lessons in school and flies over the mats. He lands on his neck and dislocates his fifth and sixth cerebral vertebrae. Paraplegia.

Since the accident occurred in school the Social Accident Insurance is responsible. A representative from the German Social Accident Insurance Institution for the public sector in Rhineland-Palatinate supports Robin Knopf and motivates him to finish his Abitur - his German high school diploma - in 1983 in hospital. Shortly afterwards, his friends leave for military service, Robin spends a year in the rehabilitation clinic. To study industrial engineering, he is reunited with his friends at the university in Karlsruhe. Later, he works for Daimler and German Telekom.



Streetview. Robin Knopf feels good, when he can achieve new levels in sport.

After his accident, Robin Knopf does not believe that he will ever do sports again. But several months after leaving the rehabilitation clinic, he starts. "First, you have to reach that point when you stop feeling sorry that you can no longer do gymnastics or play football and start looking ahead instead and see what opportunities you have sitting in a wheelchair", says Robin Knopf. Equipped with a sports wheelchair track and field becomes his first station in his athletic career. But not the last.

Friends continue to introduce him to new sports. That is how he is introduced to wheelchair rugby. He even makes it on the national team and plays in both a European and a World Championship. Even today, at age 53, Robin Knopf still trains twice a week with clubs from Frankfurt and Heidelberg. In addition, he also started riding handbike and travels around to participate in city marathons,

even all the way to New York. He spends three days per week training to break his personal record of 2:05:52 and complete the marathon distance in under two hours. Robin Knopf is supported financially by his accident insurance when he purchases and transports his handbikes. In return the accident insurance also profits from his sports. "A win-win-situation", as Robin calls it. "Since my accident 35 years ago, I haven't seen a hospital from the inside." Robin Knopf would like to ensure that others have the same opportunities as he does. "Everyone who wants to do a sport, should be supported by the accident insurance", he says.

For Robin Knopf, the next athletic challenge lies ahead: "In the beginning, making it to the finish line is the goal when you participate in a marathon. But then, there comes point when the 42 kilometres just aren't enough anymore."

BENJAMIN BROWN, 20 YEARS