

Total English

Upper Intermediate

The Other Olympic Games



Speaking

1 Discuss these questions with a partner.

- 1 Look at the photo and the title of the lesson. What do you think the 'other Olympic Games' are?
- 2 Who do you think can compete in these games?
- 3 What kind of sports are included?
- 4 Could these athletes compete in the Olympic Games?



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Reading

2 Read the article and find answers to the questions in Exercise 1.

The Other Olympic Games

When the excitement of the Beijing Olympic Games has died down and the athletes, successful and unsuccessful have all gone back to their homes, Beijing can start preparing for the 'other Olympic Games' – the Paralympics – which takes place in September 2008. These are world-wide Games on the same scale as The Olympics, but for people with disabilities rather than able-bodied competitors.

The Paralympics began in 1948 in Stoke Mandeville, a small town outside London, when Sir Ludwig Guttman, a neurologist, set up a sports competition between Stoke Mandeville Hospital and other hospitals, to coincide with the London Olympics of that year. Guttman had been working with World War Two veterans with spinal injuries at Stoke Mandeville, and he had been helping his patients to overcome their injuries by using sport.

Guttman's idea was taken up by other spinal injury units and similar competitions were held. In 1960 400 wheelchair athletes were brought to Rome, where the Olympics were being held that year, to take part in the 'parallel Olympics', or Paralympics, as it is now known. Since then a Paralympics has been held in the same year as the able-bodied Olympics, and often in the same city. By 1988 in Seoul, South Korea, the Paralympics was staged on the same scale as the Olympics, and in Barcelona in 1992 the Paralympians performed in front of large audiences.

The sports initially included in these Games were those that could be managed by people with a spinal injury, such as archery. But over the years athletes with a range of disabilities have been allowed to enter and the number of sports has increased in line with this. Wheelchair racing was brought in for the Games in Japan in 1964 and since then more sports such as sailing, wheelchair rugby and equestrian events have been added.

The level of performance in the Paralympics often brings up the question of whether Paralympians might be able to compete alongside able-bodied athletes. The question was answered in part in the Beijing Olympics by Natalie du Toit, a South African swimmer who lost a leg at the age of 16 in a motorbike accident. Du Toit competed in the 10-km open water swim, and finished 16th, ahead of many of the able-bodied swimmers.



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The spirit of the Paralympics is to focus not on what the athletes can't do, but on what they can do. In this the aims of the occasion are no different from those of the Olympics. As Natalie du Toit says, "I'd like to be a role model for everyone who has problems to get up and fight." When the Paralympics starts this month, a spectacle that is far removed from its humble beginnings in Stoke Mandeville, we will certainly see a lot of people who are committed to the idea of getting up and fighting.

3 Read the full article, including the sentences from Exercise 3, and find evidence in it to support the following ideas.

- 1 The Paralympics started from an idea of a doctor working with ex-soldiers.
- 2 The Paralympics have been getting more popular since they started.
- 3 A range of different sports are now included in the Paralympics.
- 4 It is possible for a Paralympian to beat able-bodied athletes.
- 5 The Paralympics has a positive aim.

Vocabulary

4 There are several phrasal verbs and verbal expressions in the article. Find phrasal verbs and expressions which mean the following:

- 1 subside (paragraph 1)
- 2 happen (paragraph 1)
- 3 organise (paragraph 2]
- 4 start (paragraph 3)
- 5 participate in (paragraph 3)
- 6 introduce (paragraph 4)
- 7 raise (paragraph 5)
- 8 arise, stand (paragraph 6)

5 Complete these sentences with the correct form of some of the expressions from Exercise 4.

- 1 The college sports department wants to _____ a sports competition between all the schools in the town.
- 2 I don't want to _____ an awkward question here, but who's going to pay for this?
- 3 The Beijing Olympics _____ from 8 to 14 August, 2008.
- 4 Several new rules were _____ to the competition this year to make it fairer.
- 5 When the noise of the clapping _____, the band began to play.
- 6 A number of students from the university _____ the riots outside the American embassy.



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Speaking

6 Discuss these questions in small groups.

1 The Olympic motto is 'Citius, Altius, Fortius', which means 'Swifter, Higher, Stronger'. Do you think it's a good motto?

2 Have you ever watched any of the Paralympic events? If yes, what did you think of them? If no, why not?

3 How much more of an achievement was it for Natalie du Toit to complete in the able-bodied Olympics than to compete in the Paralympics?

4 Oscar Pistorius is a South African runner who has lost both his legs, and runs on carbon 'blades'. In February 2008 his request to try to qualify for the Beijing Olympics (able-bodied) was rejected because it was considered that his blades gave him an unfair advantage over able-bodied runners.* Do you agree that he would have an advantage? Is it possible that technology could mean that disability becomes an advantage rather than a disadvantage?

* *The decision was overturned three months later.*



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Answer key

2

1 The Paralympics – Olympic Games for the disabled

2 Athletes with a range of disabilities

3 Mentioned in the text: archery, wheelchair racing and marathon, sailing, wheelchair rugby, equestrian

3 Yes – the swimmer Natalie du Toit for example competed in the Beijing Olympics.

3

1 Sir Ludwig Guttman, a neurologist, set up a sports competition ... to coincide with the London Olympics ... Guttman had been working with World War Two veterans with spinal injuries (paragraph 2)

2 By 1988 ... the Paralympics was staged on the same scale as the Olympics, and in Barcelona in 1992 the Paralympians performed in front of large audiences. (para 3)

3 ... the number of sports has increased ... Wheelchair racing was brought in ... in 1964 and since then more sports ... have been added ... (para 4)

4 This South African swimmer, who lost her left leg at the age of 16 in a motorbike accident, ... finished 16th, ahead of many of the able-bodied swimmers. (para 5)

5 The spirit of the Paralympics is to focus not on what the athletes can't do, but on what they can do. (para 6)

4

1 die down 2 take place 3 set up 4 take up 5 take part in 6 bring in 7 bring up 8 get up

5

1 set up 2 bring up 3 took place 4 brought in 5 died down 6 took part in



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