



International Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability

PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2008

Inclusion of ID athletes in London 2012

This newsletter is unusual in that it concentrates exclusively upon the efforts being made to re-include athletes with intellectual disabilities in future Paralympic Games in time for London 2012.

Presentation to IPC Governing Board

In Beijing on 04 September, Peter van de Vliet and I presented a summary of the progress-to-date being made by the INAS/IPC joint working group. I was at pains to emphasise the truly collaborative nature of the group's activity, with the whole group working together to achieve the same ends. Peter concentrated more on the contribution being made by the group's scientists.

The group has deliberately avoided any temptation to revisit the arguments of the past and, instead, it has set its sights on the need to have in place (before London 2012) systems, processes and procedures that will address the three main areas of concern: eligibility, sport specificity and on site protest and appeals.

Joint Statement

During my presentation to the Governing Board, I argued that the single most important need coming out of Beijing was for a public statement of intent (by INAS-FID and IPC) signalling to the membership of both organisations the significant progress being made by the working group and the need for ID athletes to have access to IPC-sanctioned competition from as early as possible in 2009. The statement that was eventually agreed is already in the public domain, but it is reproduced below for ease of reference.

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the International Sports Federation for Persons with an Intellectual Disability (INAS-FID) are pleased to issue the following joint statement on their efforts to re-include athletes with an intellectual disability in future Paralympic Games and other IPC-sanctioned competitions.

Mindful of the need to move forward as quickly as possible and to do so together, in 2007 a joint INAS-FID/IPC working group was established with the following terms of reference:

To appraise the present position, consider the options and make recommendations that, taken together, may ensure the re-inclusion of athletes

with an intellectual disability in the London 2012 Paralympic Games and beyond. An effective sport input needs to be ensured throughout the process.

This joint working group has already met on three occasions and both the IPC Governing Board and the INAS-FID Executive Committee are satisfied that significant progress is being made and that the re-inclusion of athletes with an intellectual disability in London 2012 and beyond remains a viable and reasonable objective.

The activities of the joint working group are focused on the resolution of three key areas of concern: eligibility, sport specificity and on site protests and appeals. Significant progress is being made in all three areas and it is anticipated that systems, processes and procedures will be available for pilot testing during the early part of 2009. These systems are being developed using a scientific approach that is fully compliant with the new IPC Classification Code and engages actively with the relevant sports.

To provide athletes with an intellectual disability with the competition experience necessary for them to prepare for London 2012 and to provide the joint working group with the evidence base necessary to test and refine the systems that will be required for successful re-inclusion, opportunities will be created from as early as possible in 2009 for athletes with an intellectual disability to be given access to both regional and world-level competitions in a variety of sports.

It is envisaged that the inclusion of athletes with an intellectual disability in future Paralympic Games, beginning with London 2012, will be formally ratified by the IPC General Assembly in November 2009.

The IPC and INAS-FID recognize that this is an ongoing process, requiring constant refinement and continuous improvement. However, they are pleased with progress to date and they remain confident that the continued efforts of the joint working group and those associated with it will enable athletes with an intellectual disability to be re-introduced to Paralympic competition in time for London 2012.

What next?

The joint working group will meet again during October and there will be a one-day conference associated with the INAS-FID European General Assembly due to take place in Sweden towards the end of November. A group of INAS-FID volunteers will be recruited (and trained) to become a properly accredited INAS-FID international classification panel. A number of events will be identified in 2009, including our own Global Games, which will (i) provide athletes with intellectual disability with the competition experience necessary for them to prepare for London 2012, (ii) provide the joint working group with the evidence base necessary to test and refine the systems that will be required for successful re-inclusion and (iii) provide the newly recruited INAS-FID classification panel with opportunities to gain valuable experience of the systems, processes and procedures that will be required for London 2012.

Summary

As the joint statement made clear, this is an ongoing process that will require constant refinement and continuous improvement. However, I am genuinely pleased with the progress being made and I am confident that, if the INAS-FID membership supports the actions being proposed by the joint working group, athletes with intellectual disabilities will be re-introduced to Paralympic competition in time for London 2012.

I look forward to reporting on further progress in my next newsletter.

Bob Price
President INAS-FID