

## Paralympic Games and social integration

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## 1. Human beings...

*"I am sure that the social integration of the disabled, which we wish for in all fields, will spread naturally and inevitably to top level sports competitions."*

José María Arroyo

(COOB'92 and Fundación ONCE (Eds.), 1993: 17)

In his opening speech at the Opening Ceremony of the IXth Paralympic Games, the President of the ONCE Foundation could have *expressed* better the long standing aspirations as well as the patient struggle of disabled athletes the world over for full social acceptance, integration and recognition.

*Estadi Olímpic*, Barcelona, September 3rd, 1992, 6 PM. In a tremendous expression of empathy, understanding and solidarity, 65.000 spectators and guests, able-bodied individuals and disabled persons intermingled, greeted with deep respect, wide open hearts and genuine enthusiasm some 4,158 athletes and other participants from 82 delegations stemming from the five continents. An incredible atmosphere of *humaness* permeated space, time and everyone present. Participants and spectators were as one. And everyone knew from the very beginning of the ceremony that they were taking part in an unprecedented gathering of human beings. No distinctions. Just human beings, caring for each other, united in their aspirations for an ever better world.

"We are all disabled in some way..." said Pasqual Maragall, President of COOB'92, as he introduced the ceremonial speakers to all present and to the whole world as well as through the broadcasting media. "I am a blind man..." declared after him ONCE President José María Arroyo, "...on this day however, I feel I am a very fortunate man. I can sense perfectly your emotion and your hope" (COOB'92 and Fundación ONCE, 1993:94, 95).

Unforgettable moments of emotion were indeed experienced. Day after day, during the entire IXth Paralympic Games, Barcelona 1992, astonishing demonstrations were made of dire will power, dedication, energy, skill, and thought as well:

- in the prominent acts of disabled athletes Santos Poyatos, Purificación Santamarta and her guide dog Dan, Neus Álvarez Costa, Bertrand de Five Pranger, Antonio Rebollo, amongst others, during the soul-stirring rituals of the Opening Ceremony;
- in the spirited contributions of disabled actress Glòria Rognoni, director of the Paralympic Ceremonies;
- in the moving and forceful social message of disabled cosmologist Stephen W. Hawking;
- in the magnificent efforts of all 3.020 athletes competing during 10 days in the disciplines and events of the 15 sports on the program of Games (COOB'92 and Fundación ONCE (Eds.), 1993: 129, 153).

## 2. Sports without limits

"Sports without limits": the thought provoking theme chosen for the Barcelona IXth Paralympic Games. A positive and doubly meaningful slogan:

- on the one hand emphasizing the variety of limitations overcome by so many individuals and a salute to so many who have challenged themselves successfully and were prepared and ready to perform in top-level sports for the sensorially and physically handicapped;
- yet, on the other, pointing to the need for continuing the struggle for increased societal awareness around the world for citizens with disabilities and the matter of their integration into all facets of community life, including sport and high quality competitive and performance opportunities.

July 28, 1948: a milestone date: 16 paraplegic (14 men, 2 women) competed in archery on the field of Stoke. The Stoke Mandeville Games were born. The use of sport as remedial exercise and means of social reintegration and recognition, under the vigorous and pioneering leadership of Sir Ludwig Guttmann, would take on an unprecedented and world-wide momentum not only for spinal cord sufferers, but eventually also for other categories of disabled persons.

July 28, 1948: coincidentally, also the date of the Opening Ceremonies of the Games of the XIVth Olympiad-London, the first celebrated after World War II which left in its wake so many young and not so young people severely disabled and socially isolated. Few people at the time (except perhaps Sir Ludwig) would have dared forecast that the Stoke Mandeville Games would be so successful from the start and would rather quickly flourish into a broad and influential network of national, continental and world-wide competitions culminating in the present-day multidisability Paralympic Games Movement.

To an observer of the international sporting scene, it appears that the sports movement for the "disabled" was bound from the start to converge on the sports movement for the "able-bodied". "Stoke Mandeville Games", "Olympic-Year Games", "Olympics for the Paralyzed", "Sports Movement for the Paralyzed", "Olympics for the Disabled", "Torontolympiad" (sic, the particular label of the Paralympic Games held in conjunction with the Games of the XXIst Olympiad-Montréal-1976), "International Games for the Disabled", "Special Olympics", "Paralympic Games", are expressions that bear witness to the vigorous process by which the sports movement for the disabled has focussed its energies, expanded and diversified its programs and services, acquired international stature, penetrated public consciousness. It is now a manifest and an increasingly accepted fact that sports, and indeed their logical extension into top-caliber performance, is no longer the sole prerogative of the "able-bodied" and/or "normal" individual<sup>1</sup>.

The impact of the social and educational message associated with the entire movement continues to be considerable world-wide. From a philosophical perspective, the motto of the Barcelona'92 IXth Paralympic Games "Sports without limits" was perfectly in tune with Pierre de Coubertin's vision of Modern Olympism. For him, the core values of sport were to be found in the *manner*, in the *spirit* with which an athlete, as a whole human being, acts and achieves, often *in spite of apparently unsurmountable obstacles* as

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<sup>1</sup> For other published material on this topic, see references above: Landry, 1993: 51-55; Landry, 1994: 496-499.

Guttman wrote in 1976 (Guttman, 1976: 195-197). In that perspective, the expression "Paralympism" appears somewhat superfluous, pleonastic; "Olympism" is sufficient... it says it all.

The acquisition of international identity and momentum by various facets of the international sporting movement for the disabled does not go without new problems and challenges. The very advent of the *1st Paralympic Congress* held in conjunction with the IXth Paralympic Games in Barcelona, the six aims expressed in its official program, and the 13 recommendations adopted unanimously by the plenary session of the Congress (Fundación ONCE, 1993: 692-698) stand as a clear statement of intent, by the various memberships in the field of sports for handicapped persons, to exchange views, share knowledge and experiences, debate issues, and work cooperatively at strategies, programs and services directed at the development and consolidation of the overall movement, as well as at a *rapprochement* with respect to the Olympic Games. Clearly, the VISTA'93 International Conference held in Edmonton, Canada, in May 1993 (Steadward, Nelson, Wheeler, 1994:582) was a further effort in the same direction, just as was also the Second Paralympic Congress held in March 1994 in association with the XVIIIth Olympic Winter Games of Lillehammer<sup>2</sup>.

### 3. "Human" performances

It appears that the Paralympic Movement has in recent years taken up a very difficult philosophical and social challenge. In as much as the contemporary pursuit of excellence -in all fields including international (and Olympic) sport- has become a metaphor of the world system, the Paralympic Movement has in recent years had a strong impact on the matter of social values and behaviour models, especially so since it has successfully affiliated with the IOC and the Olympic Movement. The Paralympic Movement has favourably raised public consciousness, trans-nationally and trans-culturally too, with respect to the philosophical concept and meaning of a *human* performance, thereby opening the debate wider and pointing to a number of difficulties and paradoxes pertaining to a long tradition -so deeply entrenched in western philosophies- of valuing, accepting and recognizing sporting performances first and foremost in absolute quantitative terms.

To many observers of the Olympic Movement, there is a striking contradiction between the universality of play and games as cultural manifestations, on the one hand, and, on the other, the present outlines of high performance sports including those of the Olympic program. In spite of Coubertin's initial dream ("... all countries... all sports"), the current Olympic program is hardly the reflection of the cultural identities of a very large number of nation-states. The prevailing objectives underlying international competition, its present variety of forms and manifestations, and the governing structures themselves are clearly those of western of culture, predominantly that of Europe and North-America. From a philosophical and historical perspective, competitive, high performance (including "Olympic") sport has radiated from Western centers, mostly following former colonial trade and control lines. It has then rapidly managed to get peripheral acceptance and support, thereby producing a so-called "universal" sports movement which in fact bears the strong imprint of the sociocultural code of the senders (Galtung, 1991: 147-155; Landry, 1991: 51-69).

Some concepts or aspects of western culture that have had an indelible influence on modern and Olympic sport can be succinctly characterized as follows:

- *Entrenched cultural belief.* Legitimacy and valorisation of striving, achieving, domination, supremacy. Consequence: performances are judged, classified, and valued in absolute terms; sporting competitions typically manifest themselves vertically; rankings, records, medals, "Being No. 1..."
- *Concept of space.* Causal forces of the social universe are highly concentrated in the West and radiate to the periphery. Prestigious international sporting activities are mostly of Western origin.
- *Concept of time.* Life is drama, movement; there must be progress, linear or exponential. Sport also is drama, crisis: catharsis (winning); apocalypse (losing).
- *Concept of knowledge.* The universe, nature, and beings are conceived in terms of well-defined dimensions, most of them quantifiable. Sporting achievements, performances, are operationalized in strict quantitative/qualitative dimensions nowadays divisible in minute fractions.
- *Concept of nature.* Under its many variables, nature must be mastered, conquered. Control/management of factors affecting behavior and performance. High performance unfolds in super-controlled, lab-like conditions.
- *Person-to-person relations.* Individualistic combined with vertical: competitiveness, "survival of the fittest..." Citi-us-Altius-Fortius is conceived as limitless process and goal, the pursuit of which must be encouraged, sustained, rewarded.
- *Transpersonal relations.* Hierarchies are in structures/operations of various configurations of "actors", "believers", "followers". Hierarchies are also within and between sport governing bodies, classification of gains and wins; ultrasymbolism of records and medals; IOC, IFs [International Federations], stand central and sovereign in the international sporting order.

These are some of the cultural characteristics and antecedents of contemporary elite sport. Yet in this perspective, it is nonetheless a fact that modern sport offers unique opportunities and channels for self development and self expression, genuine occasions to obtain and surpass what has "already been done". Yet on the other hand, it is also a fact that there is an inescapable propensity of the elite/high performance sporting systems to conceive and value performance in net or absolute terms, i. e. in ranking people solely on the basis of results. Process, possibilities, and/or conditions limiting performance (as relevant factors indeed with respect to the -at times paradoxical- matter of "equality of opportunity"), surprisingly perhaps, hardly ever come to the fore. To this point in time, and regrettably perhaps for the immediate future, this situation is likely to continue to stand as an obstacle of particular significance on the converging courses of the able-bodied and disabled sport movements.

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<sup>2</sup> See LOOC-94, *Second Paralympic Congress: Toward the year 2000 in Society and Sports*. Information brochure. Lillehammer: Royal Norwegian Ministry of Cultural Affairs (Unadated), pp. 7.

#### 4. Olympism... or Paralympism?

Time and again throughout his life, Coubertin insisted on the transcendental character and value of performance in sport. For him, the three words of Father Didon *citius-fortius-altius* encompassed the philosophy of "Olympism". One can speculate that originally, the Renovator had willfully placed "altius" at the end of the Olympic motto to emphasize, no doubt, the immaterial, moral aspects of his program of Olympic education (Coubertin, 1894: 1). To Coubertin, what was most worthy of commendation in an athlete was his/her *ambition*, *willpower*, and *self control*, not first and foremost the *result* achieved. To him, beauty and nobility in sport resided indeed in the nature and form of a given sporting activity, yet also just as much in the higher values ("altius"), the *manner* in which sport is indulged in, the *spirit* permeating personal commitment and involvement<sup>3</sup>.

Just as "play" can be labelled the "raw material" of sport, so can one choose to describe the constituent atoms of the molecule of "Olympism" functionally as: the pursuit of *excellence* in sport; *fair play*; disinterestedness as regards *material* gains; rejection of *discrimination* under any and all its forms; promotion of mutual *respect*, understanding, cooperation and *peace* between individuals and nations. In Coubertin's mind, the notion had from the start indispensable *social* and *cultural* connotations. One can sense throughout his writings that his cherished hope was to have the spirit of "Olympism" spread beyond the sports arenas to permeate the daily activities which are at the heart of social and community life (Landry, 1991: 60-65). In the course of its thirty-seven years of history, the Paralympic Games Movement has manifestedly developed and matured along the course of the higher ideals of Olympism. Clearly, the Paralympic Games have served:

- as a unique testing ground for overcoming difficult barriers and severe limitations;
- as golden opportunities and stepping stones for self expression and self realization;
- as an open stage where truly remarkable levels of enthusiasm, energy, confidence; audacity, courage, skill, and remarkable achievements can be (and indeed have been repeatedly) demonstrated.

If Olympism is "...a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. [...]" (Fundamental Principle n. 2, September 5th, 1994 Edition of the Olympic Charter), there is then little basis or need to use a different expression ("Paralympism", Para=Greek for "next to") to allude to an ideology which in every way also speaks of " [...] Blending sport with culture and education, seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles". It can be argued that there is nothing in the Olympic Charter now in force that characterizes athletes and sporting performances in such absolute terms as to serve as a basis to preclude the Disabled Sport Movement from converging toward major international sporting events or to discourage it from continuing to seek some form of formal inclusion in the Olympic family and

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<sup>3</sup> ["...Ce que l'on admire [chez l'athlète], ce sont l'*ambition* et la *volonté*: ambition de faire plus que les autres, volonté d'y parvenir. Rien n'est enthousiasmant comme l'emballage final [d'un geste sportif]; mais ce spectacle est enthousiasmant, par *réflexion*, pour ceux qui savent ce qu'il a fallu [à l'athlète] de poignante énergie et de possession de soi-même; les autres *ne comprennent pas*: ils admirent de confiance. Tout [l'Olympisme] tient en ces trois mots [du Père Didon]: *citius, fortius, altius*; plus vite - plus fort - plus haut. Ils forment un programme de beauté *morale*. L'esthétique du sport est une esthétique *immatérielle*". [...]. [Emphasis added]. (Coubertin, 1896: 146-149).

program. In terms of the primary process through which a man or a woman advances on the road to, or up the ladder of relative perfection, there is little philosophical difference indeed between "olympism" and "paralympism", between an "olympic" athlete and a "paralympic" athlete. Early in this century, Coubertin had been surprisingly liberal concerning the extension and uses of the expression "Olympic"<sup>4</sup>. Later on, he also put in a nutshell the essentials of "being an athlete": "Athletae proprium est se ipsum noscere, ducere et vincere" (Coubertin, 1929:14).

In doing just that, scores of handicapped persons throughout the world have created a new awareness of the human potential and abilities of the disabled. Some feats of vision, generosity, courage, endurance, and sheer dedication to a cause -as was for example the case in Canada with the incredible challenges that disabled athletes Terry Fox and Rick Hansen set for themselves- captured public imagination and empathy, "spurred heart-thumping national pride", made an indelible social imprint, created and guaranteed lasting philanthropic legacies the likes of which are difficult to find in numbers. Terry Fox lost his battle with cancer; he passed away on June 28, 1981. But his indomitable, truly Olympian will has been passed on, like the Olympic flame, "creating new inspirations". His *Marathon of Hope* across Canada raised more than 23 million dollars, all of which went to support and enhance cancer research. When Rick Hansen wrapped up his round-the-world trek in Vancouver in May 1987 (29,901.55 miles in a wheelchair), his name and his cause made national and international headlines, bringing again to the fore the need for increased awareness of the potential of disabled persons. In the course of his odyssey tour, the "Man In Motion" raised and deposited some 19.5 million Canadian dollars in a legacy fund destined to support spinal cord injured persons in their attempts to rebuild their lives.

And what extraordinary example of athletic achievement was given to the world at the Barcelona Paralympic Games by Purificación Santamarta, the blind athlete from Spain, as she won the gold medal in the 100 m, 200 m, 400 m, and 800 m events of the B1 category, establishing new world records on each occasion. How merited it was that she received her fourth gold medal from none other than Spanish President Felipe González (COOB'92 and Fundación ONCE, 1993:166, 167, 335-336).

Three formidable legends... each one indeed of "Olympian" if not of "Olympic" proportions...! We are here at the core of the nucleus of the deeper and broader concept of "Olympism". In the case of Canadians Fox and Hansen, and in that of Santamarta, the female athlete *par excellence* of the Barcelona Paralympic Games, the public everywhere, intuitively, knew it, and responded accordingly<sup>5</sup>.

In point of fact, who can argue that at the very core of the notion, "Paralympism" is different from "Olympism"? And could not the same be said of the notion of *Olympic Movement*? From the structural

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<sup>4</sup> "[The word "Olympic") est un terme qui est dans le *domaine public*. Si vous ne craignez pas le ridicule, si votre effort est assez considérable pour être comparé à celui que nécessite l'organisation d'une Olympiade régulière, *utilisez-le*. Personne n'a le droit de vous en empêcher. Mais de grâce, ne commettez pas cette hérésie de l'appliquer à une seule catégorie de sports et de célébrer des cultes de petite chapelle sous le vocable d'une grande église. [...] Ce qui est olympique est universel. Les Jeux Olympiques sont le temple de l'activité musculaire sous *les formes les plus diverses* sans qu'il y ait à leur *conférer des degrés* dans une hiérarchie de beauté et de noblesse. Ce qui est beau et noble, ce n'est point tel ou tel sport en soi, mais la *façon* dont il est pratiqué, l'*esprit* dont il est animé, l'*âme* qu'y met l'homme [...] Il ne peut rien y avoir d'olympique en dehors du contact et de la collaboration des diverses branches de sport unies sur un pied de parfaite égalité pour le *perfectionnement de l'humanité*."]



viewpoint, the main actors of the "Olympic Movement" are usually described and taken as the International Olympic Committee, the National Olympic Committees, the International Federations, the Organizing Committees of the Olympic Games OCOG. To those, one should obviously add the rank and file of the institutions and individuals on which the entire edifice rests: the National Federations, the Clubs or similar units, and, last but indeed not least, the athletes, and those who support them directly. In today's world, through be it strictly from a structural standpoint, the Olympic Movement is a well integrated and powerful system in contemporary sport (Galtung, 1991; Landry, 1991:51-69). Yet, in a broader sociological sense, one could be justified in also considering as "shareholders" of the "movement" (and thus of "Olympism") any and everyone *thinking* and *acting* within the *letter* and *spirit* of the Olympic Charter. Again in point of fact, who would argue that at least conceptually, the "Paralympic Movement" does not fit into the broader concept of "Olympism" and of the "Olympic Movement"?

## 5. Perspective and Merit

In the course of its first century of existence, the modern Olympic Movement has reflected and at times also anticipated global social evolution. To many observers, the Olympic Games themselves have been a revealing indicator of change, a window as well, through which one could observe the dominant socio-economic principles and practices, policies and strategies "at work". The same can also be said about the "Paralympic" and the "Special Olympics" Games celebrated in Spain in 1992, and of those celebrated in association with the 1994 Olympic Winter Games, in Lillehammer<sup>6</sup>. A significant trend amongst others: never in the history of the Disabled Sport Movement have its major Games been so elaborate nor have converged so closely to the Olympic Games proper.

The Xth Paralympic Games (summer) are already scheduled to take place in Atlanta, August 16-27th, 1996, shortly after the Centennial Olympic Games and in close association with them. Again, the Paralympic Games will be preceded by a *Paralympic Congress*, the third of its kind. Its theme -*Humanity, Equality, Destiny*- indeed speaks for itself, both philosophically and socially<sup>7</sup>. But there shall be even more in Atlanta. The *Paralympiad* [sic] -*a two year celebration of the triumphs and achievements of people with physical disabilities*- will take place. For the first time in Paralympics history, a series of formal cultural events will, celebrate the work of disabled artists of international renown, increase public awareness for the Paralympic Games and promote greater understanding between people *with* and *without* disabilities<sup>8</sup>.

During the first three decades of their existence by name (since 1960), the Paralympic Games (summer) have been held seven times (1960, 64, 72, 76, 84, 88, 92) in the host *country* of the Games of the Olympiad; four times (1960, 1964, 1988, 1992) in the host *city* of the Games of the Olympiad. As for the Winter Paralympic Games, they occurred on two occasions (1992, 1994) in the host *city* and *facilities* of the Olympic Winter Games. Also noteworthy is the fact that in Barcelona, Albertville and Lillehammer, the Paralympic Games were staged in the same facilities as those of each of the Olympic Games concerned.

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<sup>5</sup> See for example: "Herats beat strongly", "Paralympic People", in COOB'92 and Fundación ONCE, 1993: 283-301; Jorden, 1987: 8-12; Shatenstein, 1982: 457-464.

<sup>6</sup> Paralympic Winter Games were held in Lillehammer (for locomotor and blind athletes), March 10-20, 1994, in the wake of the XVIIth Olympic Winter Games.

<sup>7</sup> See ACOG'96, *The Third Paralympic Congress*, August 12-16, 1996: A World Congress on Disability. Information brochure, pp. 7.

A remarkable achievement indeed, and a strong indicator of the convergence of the two phenomena. In addition, for the first time in history, the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games were staged in Barcelona by the very same *organizing committee*<sup>9</sup>.

With respect to symbolism and the sending of a socio-cultural message, convergence was remarkable in Barcelona between the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The flame was the same; kept alive after the Olympic Games at the Barcelona City Council Hall, and then joyously carried through 30 municipalities and a distance of 248 kilometers by 505 bearers (COOB'92 and Fundación ONCE, 1993:61-75). The torch was the same, Catalanian artist André Richard having discreetly set two distinctive identifying inscriptions on a unique, beautiful, and single torch design. And furthermore, the Opening Ceremonies struck the imagination with their deeply significant and artistic complementarity: those of the Games of the XXVth Olympiad climaxed in a message of joy, hope and peace addressed to the world: *Friends for Life*; those of the IXth Paralympic Games stood as a vibrant tribute to courage and creativity, culminating in powerful inspirational messages from dignitaries (Maragall, Arroyo, Cabezas, and Hawking) passionately delivered to the handicapped athletes present, yet also sent to all the citizens of the world, handicapped or not: *The Triumph of Light*.

## 6. Elite sport and social accountability

The immense successes of the Olympic and Paralympic Games staged in 1992 in Barcelona and Madrid (in the latter case, the first *Paralympics* for athletes with mental handicaps)<sup>10</sup> have underscored again that such periodic and international events are truly and irreversibly an integral part of the world system of interrelations and interdependence. The young and/or recently restructured Nation-States have understood. Full of hope, they have joined the Olympic and Paralympic families (or made representations to that effect). On the sports fields, they come indeed to perform, to do their best -but also for other purposes. They come indeed also for -identification-differentiation-acceptance- mutual respect. Having an NOC, being an Olympic or Paralympic athlete, and marching in the Opening Ceremonies of the "Games", have nowadays very much to do with global intercommunication, i.e. new aspirations for world-wide identification, acceptance and recognition of nations, peoples and individuals *with a difference*. The logotype of the IXth Paralympic Games, designed by Josep Maria Trias, was a most notable signal of the kind. It stood as a subtle adaptation of the initial logo of the Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games emphasizing the profound desire for integration present not only in "Paralympic" athletes, but also in millions of handicapped people the world over (COOB'92 and Fundación ONCE, 1993: 74-75). The World's most prestigious international competitions and Games nowadays find themselves in a unique position to contribute further to the current momentum of positive social change. For the Olympic Movement, leaning in that direction by giving fuller acceptance and legitimacy to athletes with a disability does not constitute a mutation in, but rather a re-surfacing of, the fundamental values of Olympism: the promotion of mutual understanding, mutual respect, and cooperation (Landry, 1993). This matter takes on particular importance as regards the social mission of both the Paralympic and the Olympic Sport Movements.

<sup>8</sup> See: ACOG'96, *Press Guide*, February 1995: Paralympics, Paralympiad, pp. 89-90.

<sup>9</sup> Documentation pertaining to the Paralympic Games Movement, both published and unpublished, personal archives of F. Landry.

That international events of such magnitude and character as the Paralympic Summer and Winter Games can be planned, organized and successfully conducted is *de facto* proof of the existence of high quality expertise, extensive experience, international leadership and readiness to cooperate among and between specialized sport governing bodies as the IPC, its International Member Organizations, and their respective memberships of national and international disabled sport organizations. Worthy of international recognition and praise are not only the IOC and many IFs<sup>11</sup>, but also the governing bodies of the disabled sport movement such as the IBSA, ISOD, ISMWSF, CP-ISRA, and INAS-FMH, amongst others.

Decidedly, the international sporting community has endorsed the aims and purposes of the Paralympic Movement. At the Closing Ceremony of the 1992 1st Paralympic Congress of Barcelona, IOC President Samaranch unequivocally pledged his encouragement and support to the Paralympic Movement (Fundación ONCE, 1993: 708-713); and since then, President Samaranch has indeed fulfilled his promise.

Yet, the acquisition of international identity and momentum by the Paralympic Movement does not go without problems and further challenges. The most obvious one has to do with inter-sport governing-body relationships. Extreme care ought to be taken by the Paralympic Movement to avoid conflicts of interest with the IOC and the IFs, particularly with respect to the delicate matters of marketing campaigns, searches for sponsors, advertizing principles and long established procedures in international and Olympic sport. Also for the Paralympic Movement lurks the danger of becoming top-heavy, of concentrating ever more energies and financial resources on fewer rather than on the equally deserving majority. The sensible chord of overall social responsibility and accountability should thus continue to be the guiding light of the Paralympic Movement. This does not appear to be always the case as concerns the ever-resource-hungry-elite-high-performance-sporting-system. On that topic, there will obviously always be matters of philosophical, scientific, social and economic nature worthy of continuing analysis and debate. Such are the requirements and price of "playing hard ball" in the complex and highly competitive sports world.

## 7. The light of inspiration

Stephen W. Hawking's address and the first verse of the "Paralympic Anthem" sung at the Opening Ceremonies of the IXth Paralympic Games of Barcelona, three years ago, stand as solemn reminders of the central objective of the sports movement for disabled or handicapped individuals: the noble task of remaining equally at the service of the many as well as of its elite. Recently, and to the satisfaction of so many around the world, the Paralympic Movement has experienced sharply increased visibility and success.

On the potential of *any* and *all* human beings...

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<sup>10</sup> See: ANDE, *Paralympics Madrid '92. Program Guide*, n. 35, September 1992, pp. 76.

<sup>11</sup> As an example, the IAAF has for years included such events as the 1500 m events (wheelchair) for handicapped athletes in its international championships and Grand Prix.

Three years ago, loud and clear resounded in Montjuïc Stadium, the computerized voice of cosmologist Stephen W. Hawking<sup>12</sup>:

"Those of us who are disabled should not think of ourselves as set apart. Rather, we are normal beings who just have certain special needs. [...] We are all different. We are all special in our own way. Each one of us has within us a spark of fire, a creative force..." And with respect to the service potential of the Paralympic Games movement, the words of the Paralympic anthem summarize it all <sup>13</sup>.

"Born in silence like the dawn, it grows and spreads over all the world. It is a force that moves mountains, and day by day, reaches new horizons. The flag you have hoisted waves proudly in the wind. Your achievement has been a cry of courage and heroic feats." Josep Maria Andreu, Paralympic Games Anthem, verse 1. Barcelona, September 3rd, 1992.

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<sup>12</sup> See: *The Stephen W. Hawking Message*, in Opening Ceremony Program, IXth Paralympic Games. COOB'92 S.A., September 3, 1992 (Unpagged document)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. See: *The Anthem of the Paralympic Games*.

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