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Examining Opportunities for Athletes with a Disability Within and in Relationship to the International Olympic Committee: A Case Study

Overview

The Disability in Sport Initiative, within the Center for the Study of Sport in Society at Northeastern University presented the International Olympic Committee with a questionnaire (Appendix A) in order to gather baseline data to examine the commitment of the International Olympic Committee in the area of international disability sport. The questions focused on partnerships or agreements with international disability sport organizations including the International Paralympic Committee, Special Olympics International and the International Committee for Deaflympics. Several open-ended questions were also presented to the International Olympic Committee regarding future efforts and possibilities with respect to athletes with disabilities.

The Disability in Sport Initiative has only examined and analyzed the responses and feedback provided by the International Olympic Committee, and the findings indicate a strong, evolving partnership with the International Paralympic Committee, and less comprehensive relationships with Special Olympics International and the International Committee for Deaflympics. The findings also emphasize an effort to maintain activities related to athletes with disabilities external to efforts within and internal to the International Olympic Committee.

Based on findings from the questionnaire, the Disability in Sport Initiative has outlined two recommendations for the International Olympic Committee to consider as it moves forward to address athletes with a disability within and in relationship to its governance.

Findings

The International Olympic Committee has indicated and provided information regarding relationships with international disability sport organizations including the International Paralympic Committee, Special Olympics International and the International Committee for Deaflympics. The International Olympic Committee also provided information regarding future efforts and possibilities with respect to athletes with disabilities.

Partnerships or Agreements

The International Olympic Committee "has signed two agreements with the IPC confirming IOC financial and organizational support for the IPC and securing and protecting the organization of the Paralympic Games."

The International Olympic Committee has "recognized Special Olympic International since 1992 and has provides financial support for the Swiss Special Olympics National Games."

The International Olympic Committee has "recognized the International Committee for Deaflympics since 2001 and provides financial support to the Deaflympic Games."

In addition to the mentioned relationships, the International Olympic Committee indicated its "financial support to the World Transplant Games Federation for the World Transplant Games."

Future Efforts and Possibilities

The International Olympic Committee indicated that it does not have plans for future efforts and possibilities to address athletes with a disability internal or within the International Olympic Committee. With this, the International Olympic Committee did not provide information about current activities or efforts beyond relationships with external partners to take a leadership role with respect to athletes with disabilities.

While the IOC has included representatives from the International Paralympic Committee within several of the management structures, they still serve as Paralympic representatives and not Olympic representatives to address all athletes with disabilities within the International Olympic Committee.

Recommendations

Based on our findings with respect to partnerships or agreements as well as current activities and future opportunities, the Disability in Sport Initiative would like to put forth two recommendations with respect to the International Olympic Committee and athletes with disabilities.

1. Take a leadership role to foster increased cooperation and dialogue between and with international disability sport organizations. This can be accomplished by fostering discussion and development regarding internal activities of the International Olympic Committee to embrace opportunities for all athletes with disabilities. Specifically the IOC could consider the creation of an IOC Disability and Sport Commission, and host a meeting with international disability sport organizations, international sport federations, and outside "third-party" agencies.

2. Encourage further research and analysis into the organization and management of opportunities for athletes with a disability within the International Olympic Committee and the Olympic Movement.

Appendix A

I. Requests for Data and Information

A. Please list and briefly outline up to five major points describing the official partnership and/or agreement between the IOC and the IPC.

B. Please list and briefly outline up to five major points describing the official partnership and/or agreement between the IOC and SOI.

C. Please list and briefly outline up to five major points describing the official partnership and/or agreement between the IOC and CISS.

D. Please list and briefly outline up to five major points describing the official partnerships and/or agreements between the IOC and any other international disability sport organizations.

I. Open-Ended Questions

1. Has the IOC considered establishing a Commission on International Disability Sport? If yes, please provide more information. If no, please explain.

2. Has the IOC considered organizing an IOC World Congress on International Disability Sport? If yes, please provide more information. If no, please explain.

3. Does the IOC envision the possibility of disability sport events as Olympic sport events on the Olympic Programme at some point in the future? If yes, please provide more information. If no, please explain.

4. Does the IOC envision enhancing opportunities for athletes with disabilities in the same way and at the same level as women in the Olympic Movement? If yes, please explain. If no, please explain.