

# Summary Report on Japan-Korea Seminar on the Paralympics “Looking Ahead to the 2018 Pyeong Chang and 2020 Tokyo Games”

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This report is a summary of the seminar co-organized by The Nippon Foundation Paralympic Research Group and Waseda University's Faculty of Sport Sciences, open to the public, held at Waseda University, Tokyo, on January 30, 2015.

The seminar began with keynote addresses on the significance of the Paralympic Games by Mitsunori Torihara (President, Japanese Paralympic Committee), and Sung Il Kim (President, Korean Paralympic Committee).

Session 1, “What the Paralympic Games Left Behind: The Legacy and Lessons of Past Games,” was moderated by Motoaki Fujita (Professor, Graduate School of Health & Sports Science, Doshisha University), and included presentations and discussions by the following panelists: Kazuo Ogoura (Director, The Nippon Foundation Paralympic Research Group), Hea-Ja Chun (Professor, Department of Sports Science, Soon Chun Hhyang University), Kunio Nakamori (Secretary General, Japanese Paralympic Committee), Suk Man Hong (Paralympian athlete – track), and Junichi Kawai (Paralympian athlete – swimming – and Chairperson of the Paralympians Association of Japan).

Session 2, “Expectations for the Paralympic Games: Looking Ahead to Both the 2018 Pyeong Chang and 2020 Tokyo Games,” was moderated by Yoshiyuki Mano (Professor, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Waseda University), and included presentations and discussions by the following panelists: Takeo Hirata (Professor, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Waseda University), Jong-chul Park (Paralympian athlete – powerlifting – and Manager of the Department of Education & Training, Korean Paralympic Committee), Aki Taguchi (Paralympian athlete – shooting – and Director of the Paralympians Association of Japan), Seung-Gweon Choi (Professor, Department of Special Physical Education, Yong-In University), and Hiroshi Ochiai (Editorial Writer, The Mainichi Newspaper).

The main points were as follows.

## The Social Impacts of the 1964 Tokyo Paralympics and 1988 Seoul Paralympics

The Paralympics 50 years ago became a springboard for bringing visibility to the issues of people with disabilities and promoting welfare policies in Japan. The Games had a wide-ranging impact on society. For example, the public saw people with disabilities gaining employment, and a volunteer spirit was cultivated. National games were held as a second part to the Tokyo Games, which included people with disabilities other than spinal injuries. This led to the subsequent participation of people with various types of disabilities in the National Sports Games for Physically Disabled Persons and the Paralympic Games.

In Korea, the Paralympics became a springboard for bringing the general public and people with disabilities closer together. The facilities of the athletes' village, used for both the Olympic and Paralympic Games, were turned into residences and university housing. People with and without disabilities began to live in the same space, and this in turn changed the general public's perception of people with disabilities. With regard to economic legacy, a 10 billion Korean won (approximately 2 billion Japanese yen at the exchange rate in 1989) fund was established, which became the funding source for the prize money and pensions of international tournament medalists. Today, in Korea, sports for disabled people receive the same level of government support as sports for non-disabled people.

## Paralympians' Perspective

For people with disabilities, the Paralympics are both an opportunity to challenge themselves in society and to exceed their own limits. On the one hand, a high level of competitive ability may be desirable to make the Games more enjoyable for viewers. On the other hand, focusing only on competitive abilities would cause people with severe disabilities to lose out on opportunities to participate. The Paralympics may be able to contribute to creating new value by stepping beyond the paradigm of competitions.

We as athletes need to think about what messages we should communicate in order to deepen people's understanding of the value and attractiveness of the

Paralympics. We hope that challenging our respective limits in each sport will enable us to share the value and attractiveness of the Paralympics with the general public.

Many Paralympians in Japan consider costs and the lack of training facilities and coaches as major challenges. Significant progress has not been observed in these areas over the past several years. While many athletes wish to utilize official training facilities, few are able to do so in reality. To have any hopes for a medal, Paralympians require the same level of training facilities, coaches, support staff, and medical science support as Olympic athletes. It is hoped that the situation will improve in the lead-up to 2020.

### Significance and Expectations of the Paralympics

Hosting the Paralympic Games will drive reforms which will open up a new era of disabled sports and encourage inclusive social transformations. Paralympic tournaments have appeal as elite sports tournaments. Seeing athletes test their limits by utilizing their abilities to the maximum will inspire, and give courage and hope to many people. Watching these tournaments will deepen people's understanding and interest, and by extension, change society's perception about disabilities, and lead to a transformation into a barrier-free and inclusive society. The significance of hosting the Paralympic Games lies in achieving a society in which everyone can participate equally, regardless of whether or not they have disabilities.

To stimulate public interest, it is important that the Paralympics are understood, watched, experienced, and commercialized.

It is especially important to increase the understanding and interest of young people, including primary and junior high school students, in disabled sports. It is hoped that activities are implemented to reach people by making use of school education and various sports event opportunities. University involvement is also essential. It is hoped that specialization in disabled sports is established at universities.

The evolution of the media thus far makes clear that the media plays a significant role in deepening the understanding and interest of the general public. The Paralympics are expected to further evolve by borrowing the power of the media. Internet media in particular will open up a variety of possibilities. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the use of new media, such as SNS and Twitter, will determine the

success of the Games.

It is hoped that disabled sports will become a part of corporate philosophy. Hosting the Paralympic Games will become an opportunity for companies to elevate their global brand image. It is further hoped that a model will be developed in which supporting the Paralympics will lead to benefits for companies, and that this model will spread. If athletes enhance their competitive abilities and “win,” this will likely lead to the promotion and growth of the disabled sports business and increased “financing” for further improvement of competitive abilities.

Olympic and Paralympic tournaments are being strengthened in an integrated manner. Such efforts include the joint utilization of training facilities, joint team activities, and the hosting of joint games. Based on the concept of reverse integration, it will be meaningful to implement initiatives in which non-disabled people participate in sports that disabled people have an advantage in, including wheelchair sports. In the course of this integrated advancement of the Olympics and Paralympics, sports business is anticipated to evolve in the commercial sector.

Everyone involved in the Paralympic Games, including the tens of thousands of volunteers, will become an important legacy of the Paralympics as human “assets” that contribute to the evolvement of disabled sports in the future.

With the winter and summer Paralympic Games being hosted consecutively in Asia, a major legacy will be to ensure they have vital ripple effects on the Paralympic Movement not only in Korea and in Japan, but also internationally.