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Athlete First: A History of the Paralympic Movement

By Steve Bailey. Published 2008 by John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, England. (281 pages, \$100, catalogue number: 978-0-470-05824-4).

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Athlete First: A History of the Paralympic Movement traces the creation and growth of the Paralympic Movement from the 1940s to the 2004 Athens Paralympics. Written by sports historian Steve Bailey, this book offers a detailed academic account of the movement, and the people and organizations that Bailey singles out as its major players. As an outsider to disability sport, Bailey acquires his information from the archives of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), as well as from interviews with experienced disability sport administrators and organizers. The result is a rigorously cited and exceptionally detailed historical account of some of the controversies, conflicts, discussions, and decisions that have propelled the Paralympic Movement to date.

Athlete First is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 1 (A Showcase of Ability) serves as a brief introduction to the Paralympic Movement and its major players: Dr. Ludwig Guttmann, the IPC, and the International Sports Organizations for the Disabled. This chapter also includes an introduction to key concepts surrounding disability sport, such as functional classification, medical and social models of disability, and disability terminology.

Chapter 2 (An Air of Hopelessness) explores the beginnings of what would later become the Paralympic Movement, focusing on the period between the late 1940s and the 1960 Stoke Mandeville Games. This chapter briefly discusses disability sport programs in the United States, but prioritizes the life of Ludwig Guttmann and the sporting programs that he started at the Stoke Mandeville Spinal Injuries Unit in England. As the chapter's title suggests, it represents mid 20th century disability as unequivocally tragic and hopeless. This representation sets up a narrative of progressive empowerment and hope, which remains throughout the remaining four chapters.

Chapter 3 (The Era of Development) charts the administrative and organizational changes that developed between the 1960 International Stoke Mandeville Games in Rome and the 1980 Olympics for the Disabled in Arnhem. Major developments include the establishment of the International Sports Organizations for the Disabled, the inclusion of an increasing variety of disabilities within the games, the addition of the Paralympic Winter Games, and a move toward creating a single, unified body to govern both summer and winter Paralympic Games.

Chapter 4 (Fair not Equal) outlines the difficult and divisive period between 1980 and 1988 that leads to the establishment of a single governing body for Paralympic sport: the International Coordinating Committee. This chapter also focuses

on ongoing debates about what the Paralympic Movement should and should not sacrifice in order to gain official recognition from the IOC.

Chapter 5 (Building Bridges not Walls) documents the quadrennial between the 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games and the 1992 Games in Barcelona. The major focus of this chapter is the creation of the International Paralympic Committee, which comes to replace the recently formed International Coordinating Committee. This change in administrative structure is outlined as part of a controversial shift from a disability-centered and participatory model of Paralympic sport, to a sport-centered model that promotes both nationalism and elitism, even at the expense of participation for some.

Chapters 6 through 8 chart the administrative hurdles, discussions and progressions between 1992 and 2004. Each chapter deals with a Paralympic Summer Games quadrennial: chapter 6 (Spirit in Motion) from 1992 to 1996; chapter 7 (Repair What Needs Repair) from 1996 to 2000; and chapter 8 (Sport is About Emotion) from 2000 to 2004. These three final chapters share major reoccurring themes and debates, such as the relationship between the IOC and the IPC, the integration of disability sport into mainstream sport, the inclusion of athletes with intellectual disabilities in the Paralympics, and the policing of doping in sport. At the end of the eighth chapter, Bailey offers a four-page appraisal of the Paralympic Movement's past and future, weaving the movement's contradictions into a tight and triumphant narrative of progress and empowerment.

Athlete First is an exceptional history of the administrators and administrative organizations of the Paralympic Movement. What *Athlete First* largely neglects, however, are the nonadministrative aspects of the movement, including the innovations, accomplishments, leadership, resistances, and perspectives of Paralympic athletes. Athletes with disabilities are included as objects of tragedy in chapter two, and as objects to be empowered in the remainder of the chapters. They are, however, very rarely portrayed as subjects whose actions on and off the sport's fields help to build, to transform and, importantly, to resist Paralympic institutions.

Despite this critique, I would strongly recommend this book for a wide range of academic audiences. *Athlete First* provides enough background information to be accessible and informative for most students and newcomers to disability sport. At the same time, this book's exhaustive detail and rigorous documentation of sources make it an invaluable archival resource for even the most experienced academics in the fields of sport history and disability sport. Although there are important histories that Bailey has neglected to tell, he has created an historical archive that will hopefully enable and inspire future researchers to question, counter, and add to this history of the Paralympic Movement.

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