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Betreff: **handcycling for athletes with severe disability**
Datum: 17. April 2007 11:45:55 GMT+02:00



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Dear Sir Phil Mc Craven!

I am sending this email to you as president of IPC.

I have been an athlete in wheelchairsports (track and field, handcycling, wheelchair rugby) for the last 25 years and I competed in six paralympic games and won medals there. In that span of time I witnessed several changes in classification. Usually these changes were good and in the interest of the sport and the athletes. Several times it affected the chances of the severe disabled athletes since their classes were deleted or not even installed as necessary as in handcycling (there is only one instead of two).

So I considered it a great idea when the IPC introduced a campaign to support sports for severe disabled athletes. There was even made a brochure, and I had the honor to be one of the testimonials there. You probably know that brochure, and you can find it attached to this email.

But what is the reality? The reality is that for the Paralympics in Beijing again several classes for severe disabled athletes were scratched. There are fewer classes in track and field now without any chance for the affected athletes to compete at that level. In Cycling the Cycling Committee of the IPC made a proposal that would have secured events for severe disabled athletes and women for handcycling while reducing the number of events. Unfortunately this proposal was ignored and replaced by a regulation that destroys chances of competition for severe disabled athletes for men and women. The second technical delegate for the cycling events for Beijing (Alfred Kaiblinger, an expert for cycling) resigned because of that.

Let me explain the details. In handcycling there are two events, the road race and the time trial. Those events are held for three classes, where HCA is the class for quadriplegics, the most severe disabled athletes. For division HCA there will be only a time trial in Beijing, but no road race. This is especially strange since the athletes will be there for the time trial, and the course for the road race has to be there for the other classes. Even if the slots for HCA are allocated by the ring fenced system it is only one event. But what will happen with only one event? NPCs will send athletes for HCB and HCC, the less disabled athletes, since those have two events. They will hardly send athletes of HCA for only one event. So this one is in jeopardy of getting deleted from the program of Beijing and, as far as I can judge from experience, never again be held at Paralympics. This would be for a sport that is rapidly growing and attracting more athletes every year. And to give you an idea about the performances in that class I tell you that the average speeds for races are at about 30 km/h, that converts to 19 mph.

This is only one issue from handcycling. There are others too for other sports but handcycling I know best. So I ask you to do everything possible to prevent this development since it means that only athletes who were lucky enough not to contract a severe disability are able to compete at the highest level. This would further mean that there are not role models anymore for persons who recently contracted severe disability who would never believe that they also can go in for sports, neither for competition nor for recreation and health.

Sincerely yours

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