

The IPC's weekly update on coronavirus disease (COVID-19) - 28/05/2020

The purpose of this update is to keep everyone within the Paralympic Movement informed of the latest developments with the COVID-19 pandemic and how it relates to the Paralympic Games and Para sport.

This week we have our first Paralympic athlete making a guest contribution. Triple Paralympic gold medallist Stephen Miller is one of the first Paralympians to appear on Airbnb Online Experiences, a new digital initiative from one of the IPC Worldwide Paralympic Partners. This allows athletes to tell their story or show off their expertise in a virtual environment, safely connect with members of the public and earn revenue from doing so.

Born with cerebral palsy, the British club throw and discus athlete hosts an online experience that is all about the power of positive thinking. Miller details examples from his career of where a positive mindset has benefited him and how his techniques can be of value to others. He also has a message for fellow Paralympians: do not underestimate the value of your story and the lessons that you've learned in your journey towards being a Paralympic athlete. He believes there are opportunities to be made in these challenging times. Impressively, Miller is already pulling in the five-star reviews on Airbnb.

This is not the only initiative we have detailed, this week, of potential revenue opportunities for athletes. British Paralympic swimming champion, businesswoman and disability advocate Liz Johnson launched a global online marketplace for persons with disabilities. Her goal is to connect persons with disabilities and ambitious employers to work on freelance projects remotely. You can find out more about her venture [here](#).

We continue to use the International Paralympic Committee's (IPC's) digital channels to increase awareness of all the positive work that is taking place in the Paralympic Movement right now. Sports, National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) and athletes continue to do amazing work around the world, but we wanted to highlight one inspiring story this week.

We really want to use this mail to highlight initiatives that NPCs and International Federations (IFs) are doing, but also show work that they are doing to restart sport. If you would like to let us know about your story or raise awareness of any other initiative, then please get in contact at media@paralympic.org.

This week's update contains the following information:

- Realising the value of positive thinking, by Stephen Miller, triple Paralympic gold medallist
- IPC and Tokyo 2020 updates – includes an update of the return of competitive sport in Japan
- World Health Organisation update
- Latest media statements from the IPC – 'Potential impact of COVID-19 on Para Athletes'

Realising the value of positive thinking, by Stephen Miller, triple Paralympic gold medallist

Being in lockdown has taken a while to get used to. I've been a Para athlete for more than half of my life, so I'm used to the routine of getting out six days a week. It's strange not being able to compete and getting out to do what I love, which is to throw the club. But we Paralympians are always adapting. When lockdown happened, I set up a gym at home to keep my strength and condition up.

I've been trying to take the positives out of this situation. As I've been competing non-stop for 25 years, it's an opportunity for me to step back and relax, to just try and get ready for whenever we can compete again. It's been nice to spend time together with my wife and enjoy each other's company. I've also been doing some online learning to try and maximise my time and not waste it.

That's not to say there are not tough moments. The hardest thing for me is not being able to see family and friends because I'm very close to my family. My mum is my coach and we normally see each other every day, so it's been weird not being around her. But it's amazing what technology can do and we're all learning different ways to keep in touch and see the people who we care about.

In fact, technology has also allowed me to do something completely new. Earlier this month, Paralympics partner Airbnb got in touch and asked if I would be interested in being one of the first Paralympic athletes to put themselves on their Online Experiences platform.

Straight away I said yes. I do quite a bit of speaking, and I've always liked to try and help people understand more about my sport and the world of Para athletes. I thought this was a good way to do that. I suppose instead of renting out a room space I'm renting out my head space!

The idea is you offer an online experience to the public. I have seen athletes offering virtual bike rides, others doing yoga and quite a few had engaging motivational talks.

The latter appealed to me. I've picked the theme of a positive mindset. I think it can make a big difference to people's lives if they can change the way they think. For me, a positive mindset is not worrying about what's beyond our control. Instead focus on the things that you do have control over and that can make a difference.

It's about recognising that you have the power to control how you think and how you interpret what is happening to you in your life. You always have a choice. You can choose to think negatively and think the world is against you and that everything is unfair. If you do that, you're going to be unhappy, frustrated and angry, and that's not going to change the situation.

I try and look for the positive. There is always a way to make the most of any situation and then you can always find a way to turn that into your favour. Look at it in a different perspective and say what can I do to make this work for me?

There's been lots of different examples throughout my career when I've gone through hard times and because I made a positive choice it's helped me with success on the field of play. When I started doing sport, it was easy to stop doing something. But my parents instilled me with that positive attitude and they really made me believe that I could do anything I wanted to do, if I put my mind to it. Having their support really helped me believe in myself.

That's why I was able to compete at a young age and then be successful at the Paralympics at the age of 16. I wasn't worried about what was going to happen in the future. I wasn't scared of failure.

That's what I want people to get out of my Airbnb Online Experience. I want people to take something away; things that they can use in their own life. I want to try to get people to join in and think about how they can apply some of my techniques and methods to their own lives. I want people to think about the goals they want to achieve and what kind of skills they need to achieve those goals. I think one of the biggest privileges of being a Para athlete is that we can use our experience to teach others.

My message to fellow Paralympians is do not underestimate the value of your story and the lessons that you've learned in your journey toward being a Paralympic athlete. You might believe it's daunting to think how you could

help other people, but if you think about your success, your hard work and your determination to be a Paralympian, and the different skills and values that you can pass on to others, then it's pretty impressive.

And my advice if you try this? Just be relaxed and yourself. People like to hear your stories and people like to be connected to a Paralympian. And enjoy it as well because it's a nice feeling that you are helping someone else.

This is a positive project. I'm looking forward to helping a lot more people around the world and it's something that I love to do. I love to tell my story and to have a powerful way I can reach people anywhere in the world at any time. I am going to try and make the most out of this opportunity.

Click [here](#) to see Stephen's Airbnb Online Experience.

IPC and Tokyo 2020 updates

Sport in Japan returns

There was encouraging news this week from Japan on the reintroduction of mass events, including sport.

The nationwide state of emergency in Japan has been lifted and from this week (25 May), the Japanese government is allowing events, such as concerts, to take place. These allow for either 100 people to attend if it's indoor (200 people if held outdoors) or less than 50% of capacity. On 19 June, it is proposed that this increases to 1,000 people or less than 50% of capacity.

19 June is also the date that professional sports leagues can start again in Japan. Initially there will be no spectators. However, from 10 July it is proposed that 5,000 people, or less than 50 per cent of capacity can attend. If things progress well, and there is no increase in COVID-19, then it has been proposed that from 1 August venues for professional sports leagues can operate at 50 per cent of capacity.

Tokyo 2020 Qualification – Badminton added

Badminton was added this week to the list of sports with updated regulations on Tokyo 2020 qualification. This takes the number with updated regulations to 16 of the 22 sports on the programme of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

The list of sports covered now with updated qualification regulations is: archery, athletics, badminton, boccia, equestrian, goalball, powerlifting,

rowing, shooting, sitting volleyball, swimming, taekwondo, triathlon, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair fencing and wheelchair rugby.

We are in regular contact with all IFs, and we hope to have a complete set of qualification regulations published in the coming weeks.

The most up-to-date version of the Tokyo 2020 qualification regulations can always be found here: <https://www.paralympic.org/tokyo-2020/qualification-criteria>

Para sport event postponements and cancellations

The list of cancelled Para sport events remains on the IPC website and is being regularly updated. You can find details [here](#).

World Health Organisation update

According to World Health Organisation's (WHO's) latest Daily Situation Dashboard on 28 May 2020 14:51 CEST, the number of confirmed worldwide cases has risen to nearly 5.6 million. The USA, Brazil, Russia and the United Kingdom account for nearly half of global cases. John Hopkins University of Medicine is reporting that nearly 2.4 million people have fully recovered.

This week, a resolution from the World Health Assembly called for united, intensified efforts – strengthening multilateral cooperation in response to the pandemic. In addition, the resolution called on countries to ensure equitable access to – and fair distribution of – essential health technologies and products, such as diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines, to combat the virus. Furthermore, the resolution also raised concern that the pandemic may widen existing health inequalities, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable populations. This is an issue of particular note to the Paralympic Movement.

The WHO is hosting a one-hour webinar on 'Returning to work in the context of COVID-19'. It will take place on *Friday 29 May* at 14:00 Geneva; 17:30 Delhi; 08:00 Washington and you can register [here](#), if interested. It will take place in English and French.

The IPC continues to use the WHO and their [site](#) as its main source of information regarding the COVID-19. It provides regular situation reports and have a wide range of guidance on health and protection, travel advice, as well as extensive myth-busting and technical guidance sections.

WHO's WhatsApp messaging service

WHO's WhatsApp messaging service is providing the latest news and information on coronavirus in seven languages: Arabic, English, French, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

Arabic

Send "مرحبا" to +41 22 501 70 23 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41225017023?text=مرحبا

English

Send "hi" to +41 79 893 18 92 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41798931892?text=hi

French

Send "salut" to +41 22 501 72 98 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41225017298?text=salut

Hindi

Send "नमस्ते" to +41 22 501 73 41 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017341?text=नमस्ते>

Italian

Send "ciao" to +41 22 501 78 34 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017834?text=ciao>

Spanish

Send "hola" to +41 22 501 76 90 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41225017690?text=hola

Portuguese

Send "oi" to +41 22 501 77 35 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017735?text=oi>

Latest IPC media statements

Potential impact of COVID-19 on Para Athletes (drafted 18 March, reviewed 30 April)

At the IPC the health and well-being of Para athletes is our top priority and we are working hard to gather as much information as possible on the potential impact of COVID-19 to provide appropriate advice.

Concern has been raised that Para athletes may be at more risk of severe disease from COVID-19, in the same way as has been stated for elderly people and for people with certain underlying health conditions.

However, the Paralympic athlete population is not a homogeneous group. Para athletes are all individuals with very different underlying conditions and health needs, so the notion of a one-size-fits-all approach to COVID-19 is not appropriate or representative of an individual athlete's risk.

Nevertheless, because of the severity of the impairment or any associated immune deficit or chronic condition, some athletes could be more vulnerable. There are no current studies on the potential impacts of coronavirus on Para athletes. The honest answer is that we don't know because this is a new strain of coronavirus and there are very little data available.

Consultation with the IPC Medical Committee and International Federation medical experts, as well as information provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), indicates that there has been no evidence that an athlete with disability in general have a higher risk of contracting COVID-19.

Para athletes are also more experienced than is the general population to following hand hygiene, coughing etiquette and general infection avoidance procedures as part of illness prevention education - this has been a principle of Para athlete education for some time. However, at this time we all should be even more vigilant in this regard.

The IPC will continue to seek advice from the WHO, but ultimately athletes are the best judge of their own body and their medical needs.

Our advice for Para athletes is that they should follow the current medical guidance from the WHO and their national guidelines on prevention and seek advice from medical professionals. We would urge any athlete displaying the symptoms to report to their local medical authorities without delay.

Important website links

- [World Health Organisation](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)