

The Stoke Mandeville Games - 1948



The Stoke Mandeville Games - 1948 onwards

The Games were originally held in 1948 by Sir Ludwig Guttmann, who organized a sporting competition involving World War II veterans with spinal cord injuries at the rehabilitation hospital in Stoke Mandeville, England. The games started as part of a pioneering therapy helping veterans to develop their physical strength and develop self respect.

In 1952, the Netherlands joined in the games, creating the first international competition for the disabled. In 1960, the Ninth Stoke Mandeville Games were held in Rome, Italy, following that year's Olympic Games. These are considered to be the first Paralympic Games.

While the Paralympic Games evolved to include athletes from all disability groups, the Stoke Mandeville games continued to be for wheelchair athletes. Games were held annually in Stoke Mandeville under the direction of the International Stoke Mandeville Games Federation (ISMGF), which became the International Stoke Mandeville Wheelchair Sports Federation (ISMWSF).

Dr Ludwig Guttmann continued to work at the hospital at Stoke Mandeville helping the disabled as well as helping to promote and expand the games. The games grew rapidly and soon well over 100 countries were sending competitors to take part.

The Great Britain team has always performed exceptionally well relative to its population size. This was in part due to its pioneering work with disabled soldiers after WWII.



Sir Ludwig 'Poppa' Guttmann (1899 - 1980)

Dr Ludwig Guttmann was a German-born neurologist who founded the Paralympics and is considered one of the founding fathers of organized physical activities for the disabled.

One of the leading pre-World War II neurologists in Germany, Guttmann worked at the Jewish Hospital in Breslau until 1939, when he was forced to flee to England. In 1944, Guttmann was asked by the British government to found the National Spinal Injuries Centre in Stoke Mandeville near London, at the Stoke Mandeville Hospital. He was appointed the position of director at the Centre, a position he held until 1966. As director, he believed sport was a method of therapy, and used it to help build physical strength and self-respect.

By 1952, Guttmann's Stoke Mandeville Games for the disabled had grown to over 130 international competitors. Over the years, they continued to grow, impressing Olympic officials and the international community.

In 1956, Guttmann was awarded the Fearnley Cup, an award for outstanding contribution to the Olympic ideal. Starting in 1960 in Rome and continuing to today, the Paralympic Games are held after the Olympic Games, usually in the same city. In 1960 Guttmann also founded the British Sports Association of the Disabled.

Guttmann received Great Britain's OBE and CBE and was honoured worldwide.

Glossary

neurologist - A doctor who specialises in dealing with problems with brains, nerve damage and spinal cord injuries.

paraplegic - Someone who has no feeling in their legs and usually uses a wheelchair.



Summer Paralympic Games

- 1948 - Stoke Mandeville
- 1960 - Rome
- 1964 - Tokyo
- 1968 - Tel Aviv
- 1972 - Heidelberg
- 1976 - Toronto
- 1980 - Arnhem
- 1984 - Stoke Mandeville and New York
- 1988 - Seoul
- 1992 - Barcelona
- 1996 - Atlanta
- 2000 - Sydney
- 2004 - Athens
- 2008 - Beijing