

# FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARA SPORTS

## THE HISTORY OF WHEELCHAIR RUGBY

Wheelchair rugby was invented in Winnipeg, Canada in 1977 by a small group of Para athletes. They wanted to create a game for athletes with impairments of both arms and legs. They took ideas from basketball, rugby and ice hockey and came up with a new game that is now known as wheelchair rugby. Using specifically designed manual wheelchairs, Para athletes compete in teams of four to try and score goals. Contact between wheelchairs is permitted and encouraged. As one of the only full-contact Paralympic sports, it is not surprising that the game has become very popular. Today it is played in more than 40 countries and has been played at Paralympic Games since 2000.



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## GOALBALL

Hanz Lorenzen of Austria and Sepp Reindle of Germany invented the game of goalball in 1946. During the Second World War many people lost their sight. They devised a game to help their rehabilitation. During the 1950s and 1960s the game was played competitively.

Teams are made up of six players with three members playing at any one time. To ensure fair competition everyone must wear eyeshades. In international competition all athletes must be legally blind, meaning they have less than 10 per cent vision.

The sport made its Paralympic debut for men in Toronto in 1976, and women took part in goalball at the New York Paralympic Games in 1984.





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## BOCCIA

Some consider the game of boccia or bocce to be the earliest game ever played by mankind, having its origins in ancient Greece and Egypt. Players threw large stones at stone targets to practice and hone their throwing skills. It is a sport that belongs to the boules family which includes the games of bowls and pétanque. The game has continued to develop over the years to become one of strategy, skill and pin-point accuracy. Today it's played by athletes with impairments that affect all four of their limbs. Many participants use an electric wheelchair for mobility. One of the major adaptations of this game is the use of assistive devices, like ramps and head pointers which has made the game accessible to those with severe limb impairments. The rules also permit people without impairments to act as assistants. They set up ramps and place balls ready for the Para athlete to propel.

The game has been played at Paralympic Games since 1984.



**EVERY GAME IS INVENTED BY SOMEONE, EVEN IF WE DON'T  
KNOW WHO.**