



International 2.4mR Class Association

March 9, 2015

International Paralympic Committee
c/o ISAF

Subject: Re-instatement of Sailing in 2020 Paralympics

Dear IPC Governing Board Members,

The news that IPC voted to drop sailing from the 2020 Paralympic Games came as a huge shock to the sailing community. The International 2.4mR Class wishes to express our views on why we believe that IPC should consider reinstatement of sailing into the 2020 games in Tokyo.

World Wide Reach

The International 2.4mR Class Association is responsible for the 2.4mR single-handed Paralympic class of sailboat. The association is the delegated authority for maintaining worldwide membership and the rules surrounding boat specifications and measurement. We represent over 30 countries and in excess of 325 members worldwide. Our membership takes an active role in guiding our class rules and we represent both able-bodied and disabled sailors. The records from current boat builders indicate the 2.4mR Class boat has been sold in over 41 countries and has the greatest reach of the Paralympic sailboat classes. Our Class Association works with the sport bodies (ISAF and IFDS) to ensure that rules are fair and equitable. The 2.4mR is truly the most accessible and unique sailboat in the world.

Entry Level to Paralympian and Beyond

A sailor must progress from entry-level to Paralympic boat. Sailing and racing is a progression from learning to sail and continuing up the equipment ladder to more sophisticated boats including the Paralympic equipment. Often Paralympic hopefuls in entry-level boats are not considered when looking at the overall participation of Paralympic sailing worldwide. Retired Paralympic sailors often continue to participate in the sport after their Paralympic campaign. These individuals assist by mentoring, coaching, and giving back to the sport through such things as committee work and empowering the next generation of Paralympians.

Complex Environment

Sailors practice their sport in an extremely complex environment. Two forces of nature (wind and water movement) are constantly changing and provide challenges at every moment during a race. One event could take place on a calm, small fresh water lake with the next on an ocean of salt water with huge waves. In the outside environment that sailing offers, sailors must be ready to sail in hot, cold, wet, dry, calm and windy conditions. No two races are the same and the outcome is never guaranteed.

Able and Disabled Equality (from Able-bodied to severely disabled)

The 2.4mR boat is used for both open and disabled events. Able-bodied sailors compete directly with disabled sailors on a level playing field. In “open” events all sailors start and race together and no distinction is given for a person with a disability. The 2.4mR class rules allow modification within the boat to assist any disabled sailor to effectively sail at a top level. Even the most severely disabled can compete.

Gender Equality

Gender is not an issue in the 2.4mR Class. Men and Women compete equally with one another on the racecourse. Although there are fewer women than men competing in the class, women have proven to be tough competitors and are always represented at the top of leader board. Often in boat classes the light weight of the sailor cause a disadvantage. In the 2.4mR it has been proven that a person weighing 45kg can compete equally against a person weighing 100 kg.

Age Equality

Age is no barrier in sailing competitions. Young sailors have lots of energy and are quick to learn. On the other side the older sailor usually has greater experience and a larger knowledge base to work from. This allows for a good equalization in abilities and it is often shown in results.

Community Support

Disabled sailors are often supported by the larger sailing community through yacht clubs and sailing centres. The sailing community does not look at them as disabled people but as sailors that have much to offer and learn from. As a class we are well represented by both disabled and able-bodied sailors. This is a very complimentary arrangement as many able-bodied go the extra mile to assist the disabled sailors in the physical challenges that they face around the boat park. These issues are mostly land based when sailors need to launch and rig the boats. Once on the water a sailor becomes a sailor and in competition everyone is out to win on equal terms.

Disabled Sailors Excel in Open 2.4mR World Championships

Over the past 10 years during our “open” 2.4mR World Championships disabled sailors have been well represented often making up about 25% of the competitors. In fact during the last 10 World Championships sailors with disabilities have won the Championship title on 3 occasions. Disabled sailors have been in the top 3 overall places in 8 of the last past 10 World Championships. This shows that disabled sailing is robust and thriving on a worldwide scale.

2.4mR Class Involvement

The 2.4mR class is run by its membership. This democratic process ensures that individuals can make a difference. The Executive of our class is composed of some disabled sailors, not because it is mandatory but because it is representative of our class. The 2.4mR Class understands our Paralympic members and their determination to go for gold. Often the Paralympic sailors push the able-bodied to a higher level. Disabled sailors are a strong and core part of our community and we support their efforts.

Skills and Sporting Excellence

Sailboat racing is a sport that is undertaken by individuals that thrive on the competition not because it is easy or simple but because it has such a wide range of challenges to achieve success. It is a sport that is universal with the lines between able and disabled blurred. It requires both cognitive and physical skills. Once racing, sailors are on the own and do not receive any outside assistance from coaches or others unless they are in an emergency situation.

Sailors are responsible for much more than just sailing the boat. They need to understand the environment, the race rules, work with logistic challenges, maintain equipment to the highest standards as well as keep themselves in top physical condition. They must be good managers and planners as well as athletes.

Sailor Involvement

Our class and its members were not apprised of the issues surrounding the sport allocation process and feel disappointed that we were not on the front lines of the decision. There was a lack of transparency in the decisions that affect all Paralympic hopefuls.

Clearly sailors need to be more involved in the decision making that affects our sport. In the future the 2.4mR class and its sailors will demand a greater involvement in the fundamental operation and the key decisions involving Paralympic opportunities. The 2.4mR class and its membership can provide some leadership in this role. Our class is ready, willing, and able to support activities to enhance and grow our sport. Efforts will continue to ensure a wider range of countries participate in 2.4mR sailing around the world.

Re-instate Sailing in Tokyo 2020

IPC's Vision:

"To enable Paralympic athletes to achieve sporting excellence and inspire and excite the world."

IPC's Aspiration and Paralympic Values:

"Courage, Determination, Inspiration, Equality"

Sailing and competing in the 2.4mR class sailboat embodies all of IPC's *Vision, Aspiration, and Paralympic Values*.

On behalf of the Executive, Committees and Members of 2.4mR Class we ask you fully consider re-instating sailing to 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games.

Sincerely,

Bruce Millar (Canada)
International 2.4mR Class President

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Paralympic Sailor - Athens 2004, London 2012