

2,700 repairs, creative solutions and an unofficial discipline

Paris, 08.09.2024



Involvement in the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games: Ottobock takes stock

What does a security barrier have to do with a handbike? Why does a wheelchair rugby player need a bicycle tyre? And what is behind the unofficial discipline?

As the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games concludes tonight with a magnificent Closing Ceremony, Ottobock is taking stock; with around 2,700 repairs, the team of prosthetists, orthotists, wheelchair and other specialist technicians were in greater demand than ever before at the Paralympics.

The international medical technology company provides technical services for the athletes prior to and during the competition. This allows the athletes to take part in their respective sports and allow them to focus on their competition. The Ottobock team were available for the athletes every day from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. supporting them with advice and technical assistance.

Around 55 per cent of the repairs were made on wheelchairs, 45 per cent were prosthetic, orthotic or other repairs, e.g. sunglasses or a device for pulling a suitcase. The 45 per cent also includes the fittings at the polyclinic in the Paralympic Village. Here, a team of physiotherapists and orthopaedic technicians were responsible for fitting the athletes with supports, compression garments and 3D-printed insoles. However, the experts not only helped in the main workshop and the polyclinic in the Paralympic Village, but also in 14 small outdoor workshops directly at the competition venues.

Creativity and team spirit paid off

At one of these competition sites, in Clichy Sous Bois, a great deal of creativity and urgency was required; a hand bike rider from Germany had an issue with the shock absorbers on her bike being too low and not compliant with regulations. At risk of being excluded from the competition, she approached the on-site team who quickly used their initiative and creativity to saw a metal strut out of a security barrier and used it as a replacement part, thus ensuring her participation in the Paralympics.

Ingenuity was also required for wheelchair rugby; German national player Marco Herbst needed a solution for his prosthetic socket (the interface between his limb and the prosthesis) to improve his grip on the rough sports wheelchair tyre. As the piece of tyre on the socket kept coming loose, the technicians obtained a bicycle tyre from a sports equipment shop in Paris and quickly riveted it to the socket - a significant improvement for the athlete.

‘We tried out a lot to find out what works best. The one with the piece of tyre on the socket simply works best to get me moving quickly in wheelchair rugby. It’s great that the Ottobock team also got me a bicycle tyre. Simply great support,’ says a delighted Marco Herbst when he picks up his wheelchair at the Ottobock Technical Repair Service Centre.

#UnofficialDiscipline attracts attention

Even in everyday life, para-athletes have to compete in 'competitions' like all people with disabilities: broken lifts, missing ramps, stairs, cobblestones, narrow doors, etc. To draw attention to these challenges, Ottobock launched a symbolic new discipline - the 'Unofficial Discipline' - with the support of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). With great success: billboards, posters and video projections in public places in Paris provided a talking point during the Paralympic Games. In addition, more than 20 top Paralympic athletes and 50 Ottobock brand ambassadors brought the unofficial discipline to life and into the digital world. Thousands of people from all over the world took part in the initiative on social media, which aims to break down barriers for people with disabilities.

Paralympic Games change perceptions for the better

However, it was not only the 'Unofficial Discipline' that attracted attention and led to discussions during the Games - the Paralympic Games themselves also had a significant impact on the perception of people with disabilities in society. The exceptional sporting achievements of the athletes inspired spectators on site and millions of people worldwide.

The transformative aspect of the games was noticeable in the way people with disabilities were treated. The games helped integration and to rethink accessibility - both physically and in people's minds.

'The Paralympic Games in Paris showed how our technical commitment not only ensures the athletes' participation, but also raises awareness of accessibility. It's inspiring to see here on site how much is being achieved as a result. We absolutely have to keep up this momentum,' explains Georgia Näder, Vice President of Futuring Mediterranee & Business Transition at Ottobock.

The next step for Ottobock is to open a new Patient Care Centre in Paris. 'The most important thing for us is to be close to our users. Breaking down barriers also means going to where our customers are, both online and offline,' says Georgia Näder, who is also responsible for Ottobock's business in France. The opening at 2 Rue Sigmund Freud is scheduled for autumn 2024.

Before the Games and after the Games

Ottobock will remain a technical partner of the Paralympic Games until at least 2032. Planning for the 2028 Summer Paralympic Games in Los Angeles has begun, and preparations for the 2026 Winter Games in Milano Cortina are already in full swing at Ottobock.

Picture:



Marco Herbst is happy with his new socket



To avoid pressure points from the prosthesis, one of the technicians grinds the edge of the socket. (c)Ottobock



Full concentration during the repair of an Italian athlete's prosthesis. (c)Ottobock



The unofficial discipline draws attention to barriers in everyday life in the heart of Paris. (c)Ottobock

About Ottobock

For more than 100 years, Ottobock has been developing innovative fitting solutions for people with reduced mobility. As a Human Empowerment Company, Ottobock promotes freedom of movement, quality for life and independence. This is supported by more than 9,000 employees. With innovative power, outstanding technical solutions and services in the fields of Prosthetics, Orthotics, NeuroMobility and Patient Care, they enable people in 135 countries to live their lives the way they want them to. As the world market leader in wearable human bionics, the company founded in 1919 is constantly setting new standards and pushing ahead with the digitalisation of the industry – together with its partners, the medical supply companies and international research institutions. Since 2018, Ottobock has been transferring its expertise in biomechanics to

exoskeletons for ergonomic workplaces. The international activities of the company are coordinated from the head office in Duderstadt (state of Lower Saxony). Ottobock has been supporting the Paralympic Games with its technical expertise since 1988.

Contact person:

Anna Sophia Heinrich

Corporate Communications

Ottobock SE & Co. KGaA

Prenzlauer Allee 242 | 10405 Berlin | Germany

T +49 151 64062757 |

annasophia.heinrich@ottobock.com | www.ottobock.com