



#10 – Parallel

Nacer Zorgani: Hi, it's Nacer Zorgani, I work at Paris 2024 in the volunteer programme. What is it? What do volunteers do, what are their roles, what are their missions? To answer these questions, to talk about the programme, to talk about the volunteer experience, join me with those who have done, are doing and will do the Games. Welcome to A Volunteer's Uniform!

Jingle (Introductory music)

Nacer Zorgani: The portal has been open since 22 March and will remain open until 3 May. You can apply for the Paris 2024 volunteer programme. You can apply for the Olympic Games, but also for the Paralympic Games. And to talk about these famous Paralympic Games, two athletes. And which athletes from the sportswomen's generation? Ludivine Munos and Charlotte Fairbank. Thank you for being here!

All: Hello!

Nacer Zorgani: As usual, I'm going to start with my colleague from Paris 2024, but not only since you are also a multiple Paralympic champion, a multiple world champion and a multiple European champion in Para swimming. Ludivine Munos, what are you doing for Paris 2024?

Ludivine Munos: So I'm responsible for Paralympic integration and accessibility. These are very complicated words, but in a nutshell, we need to make the Paralympic Games visible to all those who do not know about them, and we also need to ensure that the Olympic and Paralympic Games are accessible to the athletes, but above all to the spectators who come to follow this great event!

Nacer Zorgani: Charlotte, you are an international wheelchair tennis player, ranked 27th in the world, 3rd best French player. What do you think volunteers represent?

Charlotte Fairbank: A volunteer is someone who welcomes us, who guides us, who supports us. The volunteers gave me a lot at the Tokyo Games and I know they gave a lot at the Paris Games for all the athletes.

Nacer Zorgani: Ludivine, you have been to the Paralympic Games several times. How do you see the role of volunteers changing during the Games?

Ludivine Munos : At the beginning, there were fewer of them, they represented less of the magic of the Games. They were mainly there to accompany people who got lost... Today, they also create an atmosphere. We saw that in London, with volunteers on the way, spectators dancing and singing! In addition to the atmosphere, we also provide support for people with disabilities, for example. We're not just going to guide people, we're going to show them the right service and the right reflexes, so we're going to train all these volunteers and explain to them that they should speak up.

Nacer Zorgani: Do you think we train more today?

Ludivine Munos: We train more, we have many more tools at our disposal, we can communicate more easily by email and video. We can push a lot of content onto the volunteers. Before, this was not the case, we would arrive on site and finally we only had the training two days before, we were less involved, we knew less what to expect.

Nacer Zorgani: Charlotte, can you tell us a bit about wheelchair tennis?

Charlotte Fairbank: Yes, so in a nutshell, wheelchair tennis is like able-bodied tennis. In fact, it's just that you get two bounces. That's the only rule that changes and then, chair tennis, the name says it, but all the athletes, all the players, have to have their butts in a chair... And there you go, you travel, you make the same sacrifices as the able-bodied athletes do and you go and get the points you need to move up the rankings every week.

Nacer Zorgani: And how do you prepare when you are a Paralympic athlete, when you are in a wheelchair?

Charlotte Fairbank: We train hard every day. I do between two to four hours a day. You need to prepare not only on the tennis level, but also on the physical level. I have a physical trainer who has been working with me for a couple of years..... And I think the most important thing is the mental coach. You really need a mind of steel to get to the Games. You must have that mindset to keep fighting every day, or at least every week, to keep winning matches and keep moving up the rankings to qualify for the Games.

Nacer Zorgani: Let's project ourselves a little bit, let's say it's August 2024, Ludivine, we're all three spectators, what's going on?

Ludivine Munos: It's August 2024, we're a bit lost, we've got a ticket in our hand, we've got a ticket on our smartphone, and we don't know exactly where we're going, and then we meet someone in uniform. Because he has the right outfit, you recognise him as a volunteer, and you don't hesitate to ask him. What's more, he tells me he wants to smile, and he puts me in the right mood for the afternoon.

Nacer Zorgani: What happens to the athlete during the Paralympic Games in relation to the volunteers?

Ludivine Munos: When the athlete arrives, he is very focused on what he is going to do in the call room. I have really great moments with the volunteers after my race. When you leave the mixed zone, which is the journalists' zone, when the journalists have asked you all the questions, when you are identified to go to the doping control, you have a person who stays with you and accompanies you to make sure that you go to the doping control without getting lost and without forgetting to go!

Nacer Zorgani: Of course, that person is a volunteer! Ludivine, the Paralympic Games, we're talking about them today, they're just as important as the Olympic Games... What are the special plans for these Paralympic Games?

Ludivine Munos: Right from the bid file, our approach was to put the Olympic and Paralympic parts on the same level. So, the project is twofold to guarantee a level of service that matches the performance of these athletes.

Charlotte Fairbank: I would like to take part in training sessions on how volunteers should behave towards people with disabilities so that they feel comfortable and so that as many volunteers as possible are made aware of disability.

Nacer Zorgani: And it's important to remember, Charlotte, you're one of the ambassadors of the Paris 2024 volunteer programme, tell us an anecdote you'd like to share about an interaction with a volunteer.

Charlotte Fairbank: In Tokyo, I've got a little anecdote. There was a short distance between the entrance to the sports complex and the fields, so the volunteers would wait for us with little carts to take us. And it's true that these little moments of sharing that we had in this car were very interesting and very pleasant because we really felt the support, the encouragement... I love languages and frankly, after 2 weeks, I had the Japanese base! They also gave us little souvenirs... The intention was to really support us and you can really feel their presence.

Nacer Zorgani: Ludivine, same question, as an athlete, an anecdote or something that has marked you?

Ludivine Munos: It was at the closing ceremony, the Paralympic ceremony, the very last one. We are done, so it is really after the public thanking speech that's done for the volunteers. All the people who have contributed to this huge party, and then, when it's all over, it's the moment when we can hug, chat, share, exchange origami, exchange a pin, exchange a phone number, and keep this often eternal contact with these people who have contributed to a small part of our lives that we will keep in our heads forever.

Nacer Zorgani: Charlotte, what experience would you like people to have when they come to the Games, whether they are spectators, volunteers, or employees of Paris 2024?

Charlotte Fairbank: I want them to have the same experience that I had in Tokyo: very emotional moments. I want them to feel proud to be there and I want them to have the opportunity to build real relationships with the athletes or just the people around them in the Paralympic Village or whatever. I really think that's going to happen because, given the amount of investment we're putting into it, it's going to be really great moments, very emotional and sharing.

Nacer Zorgani: Ludivine, beyond the ideal experience that Charlotte has just described, do you think there will be a significant impact?

Ludivine Munos: I am convinced of the positive impact of contributing to something quite transformative that we have never seen in France and that we will see for the first time. And also that it will leave a memory for everyone and that it will change society's view of what an athlete with a disability can do, going beyond the limits of what is possible, beyond the capacities for tomorrow and making everyone want to surpass themselves every day, to do sport and then join this fraternal movement!

Nacer Zorgani: We are coming to the end of the podcast and, as is our tradition, each of our guests will make a small commitment to our listeners to motivate them to apply for the Paralympic Games! Charlotte, Ludivine, we are all ears!

Ludivine Munos: I invite everyone to join me because I promise them one thing: everything they will experience during the Olympic and Paralympic phase will leave them with an eternal and tangible

memory, in the sense that they will also leave with the volunteer uniform. So they will have a physical memory and an unforgettable memory. I can still talk about it 20 years later!

Charlotte Fairbank: And I mean more or less the same thing, I think they're going to have a very, very emotional time. I think it's going to be really incredible. A moment to live together. I think the Paris Games are going to be historic on many levels and, as Ludivine says very well, they also have an outfit from Decathlon which is going to be incredible, so I'm a bit jealous of that aspect! I really invite you all to apply to share some good moments together.

Nacer Zorgani: Ludivine, thank you for being here! Charlotte, thank you too! And for those of you who are listening, don't forget...

Ludivine Munos: ...to participate!