



## #16 – IN POSITION!

**Nacer Zorgani:** Hi, I'm Nacer Zorgani – I work for the Paris 2024 volunteer programme. But what is the volunteer programme? What do volunteers do, what are their roles, what are their assignments?

To answer these questions, to talk about the programme, and to talk about the volunteer experience, join me with the men and women who have made, are making and will be making the Games what they are.

Welcome to “In the Volunteer's Uniform”!

### Jingle

**Nacer Zorgani:** After a summer featuring test events, in this beginning of autumn looking like an Indian summer, as we told you, the Paris 2024 teams are hard at work sending you proposals for Olympic and Paralympic volunteering.

Some of you will receive a proposal for the Olympic Games, others for the Paralympic Games and some of you will be proposed an assignment for both the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

And so, if you're available for both periods, you can take part in both editions of these Games, which will be held in France for the first time, as far as the Paralympic Games are concerned, at least.

So you might ask: how can you take part in the Paralympic Games if you don't know what they are, what they involve or what they represent? Well, that's fortunate! In October, on 8 and 9 October to be precise, two major Paralympic events will be taking place.

To talk about that, we have two guests who know a thing or two about the topic: Marie Mainguy, Senior Communications Project Manager for Paris 2024 and formerly employed for 12 years by the French Para-sport Federation, and Lambis Konstantinidis, Director of Planning, Coordination and Paralympic Integration of Paris 2024.

Thank you for joining us! Hello!

**Guests:** (in unison) Hello!

**Nacer Zorgani:** I'll start with you then Marie, You're out of the office somewhere in Paris preparing for these two days on 8 and 9 October. Can you tell us a bit more about it?

**Marie Mainguy:** Well, it's a very important time for the Paralympic Games. On Sunday 8 October, the second Paralympic Day will be held at Place de la République, and the following day, at 10 am, the Paralympic ticket office will officially open.

**Nacer Zorgani:** Why did you choose this particular square for the day?

**Marie Mainguy:** The square is a central, popular location, and we know that it's going to attract a lot of Parisians, so we're going to have plenty of people there. The Place de la République square in Paris is also a place of protest, and a very lively location.

And we wanted to use this second Paralympic Day as a manifesto, to really anchor the presence of para-sports in the city.

**Nacer Zorgani:** In the heart of Paris. Lambis, let's turn to you. Why did you come up with the idea of a Paralympic Day? Where did that come from?

**Lambis Konstantinidis:** The idea for Paralympic Day came about because it didn't exist! We've had Olympic Days for decades, but we needed to mark the occasion with energy and a special day dedicated to the Paralympic Games and Paralympic athletes, to educate the public and make them want to come to the Paralympic Games as spectators or volunteers, or even to work with us.

We need to showcase the athletes, sports and so on. And we thought the best way to do that was to dedicate an entire day solely to these athletes, their stories and their performances.

**Nacer Zorgani:** Since we're talking about the Paralympic Movement, can you tell us how the Paralympic Movement came into being?

**Lambis Konstantinidis:** So we'd need 40 podcasts, but I'm going to keep it very short! The Paralympic Movement is, as its name (which includes the words 'Olympic' and 'para') suggests, a movement that co-exists in parallel with the Olympic Games.

This movement was created in 1948 by Dr Ludwig Guttmann in Stoke Mandeville in the UK, to help rehabilitate the wounded after the Second World War, a few days after the London Olympic Games in 1948.

The idea was to help these people rehabilitate themselves through sport. The movement became international in 1952, and since then it's really grown.

Since 1988, since the Seoul Games, we have used the same venues and the same host cities as the Olympic Games, and since Athens 2004, we have had a single organising committee for both events.

**Nacer Zorgani:** What characterises the Paralympic Movement and the Paralympic Games?

**Lambis Konstantinidis:** First of all, the symbol of the Paralympic Games is not the Olympic rings, but the 'agitos', which symbolise the eternal movements of a person's spirit. They are green, red and blue, which are the colours represented in the largest number of flags in the world.

What's also very important to understand is that the Paralympic Movements have a real social mission to transform people's minds through sport. It's not just sport that's extremely important, but also changes in perception and changes in people's place in society.

**Nacer Zorgani:** Coming back to French society, Marie, what can we expect from Paralympic Day on 8 October?

**Marie Mainguy:** So there's a lot to look forward to; it's going to be a big day, and we've got a great programme! We're going to have 24 para-sports at the Place de la République, 17 sports that the general public will be able to watch during the Paralympic Games and 7 sports that we call para-sports, i.e. sports that can be practised in France as a leisure activity. Because these are not competitive sports, but that's also the objective of the Paralympic Movement, as Lambis explained so well: to make sport available to everyone.

**Nacer Zorgani:** Sports for all that we are familiar with on a daily basis and that are present at both the Olympic and Paralympic Games – judo, athletics – have their own particularities, but are there also sports that are practised exclusively by para-athletes and which at the Paris Games will be exclusively Paralympic?

**Marie Mainguy:** Absolutely. There are some sports that only exist at the Paralympic Games, and that's what the Paralympic Games are all about: discovery.

We have boccia, which is an adaptation of pétanque for people with fairly serious disabilities. There are a lot of people who play boccia in electric wheelchairs, who sometimes need help. The exciting thing about a sport like this is that the performances are absolutely incredible, and the matches are really exciting to watch.

Another sport that only exists at the Paralympic Games is goalball. This is a team sport designed exclusively for the visually impaired. It's played with a ball filled with bells. It's a very intense sport, with a system of attack and defence in which players have to defend using their whole body. It is a very intense sport, indoor sport in a format that's adapted for players with disabilities.

**Nacer Zorgani:** Thank you, Marie, for that insight. Lambis, you've been part of the Games since 2004. If you could measure one impact of the Paralympic Movement on the world, what would it be?

**Lambis Konstantinidis:** Listen, it's hard to imagine that an event alone could trigger a change in society. But there's no denying that what the Paralympic Games do is give visibility to Paralympic athletes. They also accelerate social change.

For example, in several countries, the Paralympic Games have led to accessibility improvements. We have also seen changes to the role of people with disabilities, who have become much more visible in the media, and opportunities for social integration. In London, for example, over the decade since 2012, over a million people with disabilities have been able to find a job because their place in society has been given much greater legitimacy, if I can put it that way, courtesy of the Paralympic Games.

**Nacer Zorgani:** Marie, you were with the French Para-sport Federation for 12 years, at the national level. What changes have you been able to determine?

**Marie Mainguy:** Well, I've been lucky enough to see the before and after. I started my first Paralympic Games in 2008 and the figures speak for themselves. When you look at the amount of airtime it gets on French television and radio, it has quadrupled in a decade.

Before, we used to talk about athletes with disabilities, but now we're talking about Paralympic athletes who have sponsors, who have a career, who have to adapt their training time and their competition time. It's a whole new dimension and it's a way of looking at athletes who are increasingly similar to Olympic athletes.

**Nacer Zorgani:** Over and above these figures and the improved media coverage of para-athletes, have you been able to pinpoint any impact on attitudes?

**Marie Mainguy:** You can't set foot in the Paralympics without being affected; you can't come out untouched.

I've seen it from the journalists' point of view, I've accompanied journalists who've come to follow the French team, and it's very funny to see the extent to which certain sports journalists who find themselves catapulted into the Paralympic Games, who know nothing about it, arrive full of trepidation. They don't know how to talk about it, they're afraid of making a faux pas...and there's a big difference between the first day of the Games and the last.

By the end, they're convinced, they've spent 10 exceptional days with accessible athletes. And above all, they come back! In fact, the journalists who come for the first time ask to be accredited for future Paralympic Games, because they want to follow these athletes and these sports!

**Nacer Zorgani:** We're in the home stretch of the programme, and some applicants are receiving proposals to take part in the Olympic and Paralympic Games. What would you say to them to make them stop hesitating and join the Paralympic adventure?

**Lambis Konstantinidis:** Accept it without hesitation, because they're going to discover emotions, sports and a community that they didn't know existed in parallel. And it's alive, it's full of energy and emotion. And it's due to the Paralympic Games that they're really going to be able to appreciate it.

The Paralympic Games really do change perceptions, and we don't realise it, but it's thanks to the Paralympics that we're going to challenge and question ourselves because we are no longer afraid of differences, we appreciate differences, and we understand that differences are an asset.

**Marie Mainguy:** And I totally agree with what Lambis says, go for it! You'll come away feeling enriched and with a different view of the world around you. It's an experience that you'll take with you and that will be useful everywhere, in your community projects, in your family life, in your career. You won't have the same approach or the same outlook.

**Lambis Konstantinidis:** So our objective is certainly not very modest, but it is actually to change France, to be able to say that there is a before and an after to the Paralympic Games in terms of the place of disability in society, in terms of the place of para-sport in society.

The Paralympic Games are not going to change the world in one fell swoop. It's all the work we've been doing over the years in the associations, in the clubs, with the Paralympic committees and with the organisers, to raise our profile, to educate, and the Paralympic Games are just one step in this wonderful journey that will transform us all.

**Nacer Zorgani:** Thank you very much, Lambis! So there you have it, whether you've received a proposal to become a future volunteer for the Paralympic Games or you're just an ordinary citizen, don't hesitate to come to the Place de la République and meet us during the Paralympic Games.

Marie, Lambis, thank you so much for being with us! See you soon!

**Both:** See you soon!