

**INTERNATIONAL TABLE TENNIS COMMITTEE**  
**FOR THE DISABLED**



**TECHNICAL DELEGATE**

**EVALUATION REPORT**

**Name of Tournament: Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games**

**Ranking Factor Applied for:     100**

**Name of Responsible Federation:   SPOC**

**Name of Organising Competition Manager:     Neil Harwood**

**Dates of Play:     October 19 – 28, 2000**

**Name of Technical Delegates:   Oivind Eriksen, Norway**  
**Christian Lillieroos, USA**

**Report submitted to IPC and ITTC:     December 8, 2000**

## **Executive summary and Final evaluations**

– This was the 11<sup>th</sup> Paralympic Games' Table Tennis event and by far the best organized. It is still possible to improve based on that the Olympics get more resources and the Paralympic Table Tennis is about a 4 times larger competition. Pretty much all matches were played on their scheduled time, which is the most important service for the athletes. The service for the spectators could be improved. Especially the lack of display of the score for a team match was a weakness and that no printed material was handed out to them. The ITTC selection system was dramatically improved from Atlanta 1996 but far from perfect. The selection of alternates at a late time needs a serious overhaul, and the formality of handling protests was another weakness in the system. The rule change to not allow any changes in classification at the Games made a dramatic improvement for the organizers to make decisions and plans in advance.

### **These are the recommended changes for the 2004 Games by the Technical Delegate.**

**1) Play the individual events first and the team events at the end.** All athletes present will play in the Individual events but some will not play in the Team events. To make the preparation fair for everyone, if the Individual events are played first it is the same for everyone. It takes the training issue away for the athletes that only play in one of the two type of events if all the athletes that play later in the tournament is also playing in the first part of the tournament. The Field of Play is a lot easier to control during the individual events in comparison to the team events. In the beginning of an event it is also a lot more difficult to control the athletes and to get the staff to work efficiently.

**2) Use 4 days for the Individual events and 5 days for the Team events.** In these Games it was the opposite. The team event had around 625 matches played this time and the individual events had only about 480 matches played. The Individual events have more victory ceremonies, but they can be presented in the afternoon as well.

### **3) The Spectators needs to get more information.**

- a) Each table has one electronic score board that was positioned on one wall. In the Olympics each table had two electronic score boards close to the table. Even if they only use 4 tables compared to our 12-16 it must be way to get more display to the spectators. In the team events the current score board do not show the score in he team match. A Team match is best out 5 individual matches. The score only show the current played individual match. In the competition court it has to be displayed who is playing by name and country and what the score is in the team match.
- b) The spectators deserves to get information in writing about the time schedule when which player will play at what table. They shall also have some easy information about the classification system and some human interests stories about the players. TV and the printed press was very well serviced and taken care of, but not the spectators. It was no spectator entertainment planned at all. No live player interviews on the field of play, no small short dance shows, no sports legends present, nothing to entertain the spectators beyond being told on the speaker system who is playing on what table.
- c) Special final session was planned on fewer tables, which was intended for an extra set of final tickets to be sold. This was neglected and no extra tickets were sold in Table Tennis. With no printed information available nobody knew about it, but it should have been sold as an extra event like in some other sports.

**4) If possible us more warm up tables. The ideal number for an event off this size is to use twice the number of training tables as competition tables.** In this case with 12 competition courts it should have been 24 training tables instead of the 16 that was used here. More wheelchair spaced courts could have been used to fit more tables. In reality only about 10% of the players needs large spaced courts for training. Most of the standing players play close to the table the same way as the wheelchair players all the time in training. If no ball persons are available for training, it is just more work to pick up the balls in a larger spaced training court.

**5) Have all athletes seated together close to the field of play.** To make the control of field of play easier. Most coaches are walking and need to have access to the wheelchair athletes if they are spectators. Many times the whole teams would like to sit together and cheer on their teammates when they are playing.

**Overall it was a very good Table Tennis tournament. With the above adjustments it will be even better 2004. The first notion for 2004 is that the Hall will be larger than in Sydney with more spectator capacity, larger field of play, more capacity for training tables, and a video board for the spectators. The standard of play shows that more high level athletes can be accommodated. The increased spread of good players out side of Europe is encouraging and it is a sign of good regional development in Table Tennis. This time we had 3 gold medals from wild cards, and they were all from Africa/Middle East. One thing that was especially encouraging was the media interest, especially in a country where Paralympic Table Tennis is not so popular.**

### **Evaluations in details by category**

**Accommodation:** The accommodation in the Village for the athletes and officials was the best that I have ever been in. The laundry service was especially nice. The food service was also excellent. I appreciated very much, due to my personal dietary habits, that I could always read the ingredients in every thing served.

**Venue:** The hall was the State Sports Centre in the Sydney Olympic Park 2km away from the Village. It was the same facility used in the Olympics for Table Tennis and Tae Kwon Do. The access control to the field of play was a big challenge. The athlete's wheelchair seating was there and the standing athletes had there's up in the stands. It was very difficult, especially during the team events, to control unauthorized access to the field of play by the non-playing athletes. Some standing athletes could just not go up to their designated seats, it was too strenuous. The recommendation for the next Games is to play the Individual events first, and to work on having all athletes seated at the same place, close to the field of play and not to high up. More training tables will be needed as well.

**Floor:** All the 28 tables had a wood floor as a base with a red Tara flex Table Tennis floor on top. Some courts did not have an even flooring which affected the wheelchair players more than the standing. If a player is playing with a non locked chair it is very important that the floor is even, other wise the chair will start to move if it is like down hill and the opposite problem might occur on the other side. This was probably due to that the building and the floor was getting old.

**Lighting:** Very good intensity and no glare. 1000 lux was used, and that was less than the 1,500 used in the Olympics but it was good enough and no complaints.

**Airflow:** The regulation states that it is needed to be maximum 10 cm air moving per second. The airflow was easy to control due to some airlocks that was installed and the air conditioning system was very seldom on.

**Spectators and seating capacity:** For the Olympics the seating capacity was always a full 5,000, and for the Paralympic Table Tennis event it was only 3,000. This is due to that Paralympic Table Tennis plays about 4 times as much matches than the Olympic Table Tennis event and needs 12 competition courts compared to the Olympics that only used four. 2,000 seats were taken out to make the field of play large enough to accommodate the additional Competition courts. The arena was full almost every afternoon, with sometimes lines of several 1,000's outside waiting to get in. The final session with fewer courts and a better presentation and show were all scheduled to be at night but then it was almost never full house. The largest problem with the spectators was that no printed material or program was available at all, so it was difficult to follow what went on when 12 courts was used. During the Team events, due to that the Olympics do not have team events, the results and electronic score board system was not set up to show the score in the team match. It could only show the score in the match that was currently played.

**Referee's table:** A designated referee table was arranged but it was not elevated, which made it very difficult to have a good view over the field of play. It needed to be at least 2 feet (1/2 meter) over the playing floor. The results desk was elevated but they had only space for one referee. The head referee and he TD had to sit at the floor level table.

**Gluing room:** A special ventilated room was assigned for gluing that was nice.

**Official's room:** All the 48 umpires had an officials lounge close to the Training Hall. The ITTC executive's had access to the very nice Paralympic family lounge where meals were made available.

**Training venue:** 16 courts were used for warm up and training. That was the same number of warm-up courts that the Olympics used, and they only had 172 athletes compared to the Paralympics 272. The team event was scheduled first and the athletes that did not play in the team event but only in the individual events, had a big need for training, which sometimes created some challenges in the scheduling. Not enough tables could be allocated for this. This was still a better scenario than Atlanta in 1996 where only 10 training tables existed. The athlete lounge was conveniently located in the Training venue where drinks and snacks were made available. The Massage tables were located there as well, but only 4 out of the promised 6 tables were there and it was very little service. It was promised 6-massage therapist, but it was almost never more than one available. Only the teams that brought there own therapist received necessary service for recuperation in-between matches. Medical service was organized close to the training hall and no reports of serious problems were reported, only a need for more massage therapists was reported.

**Equipment:**

Tables:	28 JOOLA Olympic stationary tables, where 16 were for wheelchair play. ITTF and ITTC approved
Balls:	Double Happiness *** ITTF, white
Scorers:	JOOLA, blue
Net/Post:	JOOLA , ITTF
Sorrounds :	JOOLA, blue

### **Competition days :**

July 12 – 18: Training days  
July 19 - 22: Team Events (622 Individual matches played)  
July 23: Rest and the IPC Sport Assembly.  
October 24 – 28: Individual events. (466 matches played)

An improvement for 2004 is to give the team events 5 competition days and the Individual events 4 days. For the sake of training issues and the challenges with the access to field of play I would also in 2004 recommend to play the Individual events first and to finish with the team events.

### **Number of Participants:**

Men:	195	
Women:	75	(27.8%)
Total:	270	
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Wheelchair players:	146	
Standing:	104	(2 missed due to late injuries)
Intellectually disabled:	20	
Severe disabled (class 1, 2, 6)	56	(21%)
	272	players entered 270 competed.

40 nations took part in the Table Tennis competition.

The participation in the four regional selection tournaments 1999 was:

57 nations

656 athletes.

87 nations and 1,527 athletes participated in ITTC sanctioned events as of 10-01-2000.

All these athletes competed for the 272 available Paralympic slots.

1996 in Atlanta Table Tennis had 210 slots and 194 entries (30 nations) with only 591 available world ranked athletes from 50 nations in the world. In 1992 Barcelona Table Tennis had 264 Table Tennis athletes.

It was two “last minute” cancellations due to injury, in Women class 10 and Men class 6. In either of the two events it did not have any effects on their Individual time schedule. The loss of the Men class 6 player did affect the team draw and severely affected the time schedule. In the Team event class 8 it was nine teams to start with, which made up 3 groups of three teams. One less team made it 8 teams and the draw had to be two groups of 4 teams. A team match takes 2.5 hours to complete. A round robin group of three teams is 3 matches where as a group of four are six team matches. This made it a total of 12 team matches in the round robin face compared to the original 9 with all the nine teams entered.  $3 \times 2.5 \text{ hours} = 7.5 \text{ hours}$  more playing time to squeeze in. The solution was to let another team in if it was available in the Individual events. South Africa had the possibility to make a team, and they had also requested that before, so we know they were interested. They had a player in class 8 and in class 6 (The same composition as the missing team). The decision was taken by the TD to let them in. It was supported by the results staff from IBM, the Competition management staff, the referee, and by SPOC. It was sent to the IPC entry committee where it was rejected because at the time of registration for the two South African athletes credentials, their entry did not include a team event. This close scrutiny of the rules and inflexibility with the reality caused major problems for the referee and the TD who had to spend several hours trying to rearrange the time schedule. In the future a rule has to be implemented to give the TD some flexibility in situations like this when practically it is obvious that the best solution would have been to let the team from South Africa play. If the same situation happened in a World Championship the solution would be to let them enter.

**Transport:** My personal T1 transportation was excellent with a good driver. The T-3 service had sometimes a hard time finding the State Sport Centre, but that is to expect in a large organization like this when changes to the routes has be done on regular basis. I heard no complaints from the athletes or coaches about the transportation from the Village to the venue; it seemed to work very well. The General impression about Transportation was very positive.

<b>Officials:</b>	Classifiers:	Dr. Aart Kruimer	Nederland
		Dr. Rafael Martinez Cayere	Puerto Rico
		Dr. Sheng Kuang Wu	Chinese Taipei
	Referee:	Stephen Lee	Australia
	Deputy referee:	Aksel Beckmann	Denmark
		Aly Salam	USA
		Fran Keyone	Australia
	Chief Racket controller:	Odd Gustavson	Norway
	Racket controller:	3 from	AUS
	Umpires:	48 Umpires.	
		Twenty-seven from	AUS
		20 from 17 different nations	

Pre Games administration of the International Technical Officials was a big task. The plan that the IPC Games Liaison committee agreed to with the organizers was near impossible for the IPC Table Tennis committee to complete. ITTC needed to arrange 76 credentials for the Games, and was given the responsibility to be Travel Agent for the 41 International Technical Officials that lived out side Australia. 32 of the accreditations were from Australia, and SPOC could have done those, which would have saved ITTC a lot of work. The travel work composed of receiving the faxed travel documents from SPOC, distribute the same information to each individual, wait for an answer if the arrangements were agreeable, and if not solicit changes to SPOC, they sent another travel agenda, and continue this procedure until both parties are satisfied in each of the 41 travels. For a volunteer to be forced to do all that work is not acceptable. The Games Organizing committee has to be given the responsibility to organize the travels themselves.

It was impossible for ITTC to complete the two tasks with Travel arrangements and the administration of credentials on time. ITTC do not have any paid staff that could do any of that and could not find out from the HQ if the budget could be used to pay someone.

With very short notice the IPC HQ's Sport Department decided to do the administration work with the credentials. They did an excellent job and saved Table Tennis and SPOC from a disaster. At the end SPOC decided based on the situation to do the credentials for the Australian officials as well. Table Tennis had the highest number of ITO's of any sport. The reason for the requirement of 48 umpires is that each court needs 2 umpires, and we used 12 competition courts (Compared to Atlanta's 14 and Barcelona's 16 courts) 12 hours each of the 9 competition days, and we therefore need two shifts of umpires, most likely the most competition hours of any sport. The referee did an excellent job and handled one protest situation very well. This was the first time in Paralympic Table Tennis that Racket controllers were used. In Olympic Table Tennis it has been used since 1993. Their duty is to test that the player's rackets are legal, that no illegal chemicals are used in the glue, that the rubber sheets are not too shiny, and that the racket is evenly surfaced. It was a good experience and the next time it will be used is in the 2002 World Championships. The new racket control situations created some situations that forced the referees to make difficult decisions, but it was handled excellent and efficient. All umpires were also for the first time ITTC certified. After 2 years work on perfecting the system, the certification was first introduced at the 1998 World Championships. Now the requirements to be selected as umpire, is (among the existing 300 certified officials) to have the best result on the exams.

### **Meetings:**

- a) The 17<sup>th</sup> was the team leader meeting. The draw for all Individual and team events in the qualification round and final round were conducted. The draw was planned with the referee who conducts the draw, but the TD who oversees the draw sets up the principals. The presentation material for the round robin draws was not done well. It was very difficult to follow the draw procedures, where each group had its own paper and the team leaders had to flip paper for each of the 270 individual draw positions, instead of having each event on one piece of paper. During the single elimination draw it was projected with power point on a screen, and that part of the presentation was very good. It was different understandings on how the draw should have been conducted. It was solved during the beginning of the meeting but it was an initial confusion. Most of the initial set up of the draw is fixed with every athlete seeded based on the latest ITTC World ranking and few issues are debateable with the use of that principle. It was a different system than in the Olympics that created some initial challenges. Mostly because the Olympics have a lot larger entries in each event and only the winner in the groups advances to the second round, whereas in the Paralympics it is smaller events and the top two athletes advances. It was evident that ITTC has to improve on the rules for the conduct of the draw so these types of interpretations are hold to a minimum for this level of tournament. The meeting also informed the team leader about the Athlete presentation procedures, access to field of play enforcements and the interpretation of rule 61 for manufacturer identification. During this meeting it was not enough language services offered, so many nations did not understand many of the directives.
- b) The Sport Assembly was held during the rest day, and 53 out of possible 87 nations were represented. The assistant TD's (and Chairman) together with the members of the executive committee needed to use a lot of their time during the days before the Assembly for preparations. The assembly was very well conducted with the support of a Power point presentation. Compared to the 1996 chaotic Assembly it was a big improvement that received several good comments from the IPC observers and the national delegates. The IPC Sport department gave excellent support to the Assembly with the centralization of the administration with nominations, motions, and mandates. This was the first time all papers were checked at the entry by IPC, which led to a comfort of order among the participants.

**EDP:** An ITTC Umpire seminar with all the 48 umpires was held to further their education, and to assure an even interpretation of the rules among all the officials. A classification seminar with 5 classifiers was conducted. All the classifiers that attended the seminar were senior classifiers. Therefore they focused mostly on the evaluation of the recent research on the new classification regulation to lower the classes from current 11 to the new goal of 9.

**Classification:** 13 out of the total 270 players, all with a Paralympic Review Status (PRS), were classified. To be selected as an athlete in Table Tennis at the Paralympic Games one of the minimum requirements was to have an International Classification card. Even the 5% wild card entrants had in their selection criteria that they needed to be classified by a full classification panel before January 1, 2000. None of the PRS athletes changed their class, and they were notified of the results after they completed their last match in the Games to not interfere with their preparations.

**Results:** The results department was functioning very well, and the service to the News department was excellent. The participating countries got the complete result book delivered the day of the Closing ceremony. ITTC got 5 result books mailed to the TD. The Results forms were given to the ranking director electronically, and the results for the ITTC ranking were processed very early. One time schedule error occurred in the system the 2nd day that resulted in a protest.

### **Protest:**

The second day an error occurred where two time schedules were circulated. This happened after a late change in the time schedule was done right before the draw was conducted. The new time schedule was featured in the team leader meeting, and all team leaders were given the start time for every match in the whole tournament. After that the old database was mistakenly reinstalled in the result system and every time schedule published afterwards had a new time schedule in one round robin group. It was unintentionally published at 4 different times, but no official paper went out to alert anyone that a change was done. One team was ready to play at the new earlier time but the other team was not ready. The referee made the call to move the match to the intended starting time 8 hours later. The team that was ready to play in the morning filed an official protest. The jury composed of the TD, the referee, and the Competition manager, addressed the protest that was accompanied by the protest fee of AUS\$50. The referee felt that he was personally too involved in this decision, so he let one of the deputy referee's take his place on the jury. The TD chaired the meeting. The decision by the jury was to accept the protest in favour of the team that was present on the last published earlier time and have the team that was not ready at the earlier starting time lose on default. The jury acknowledged that the organizing committee had made a mistake but due to the frequent publishing of the new time schedule, and the comprehensive information system that the Paralympic Games provides, it had to be interpreted as the official schedule, even if the situation was very unfortunate for the defaulted team. The losing team advanced from the group in second place anyway despite the loss and the two teams ended up playing in the final again and now the team that earlier lost on default now won the gold. "-Somebody above rules in mysterious ways".

### **Other staff:**

- a) The competition Management staff was very competent, with a good understanding of the difference in-between the Olympic and Paralympic competition, and produced the best ever Paralympic Table Tennis tournament.
- b) The organizers provided a good language service department. Especially the class 11 intellectually disabled players needed on occasion a lot of service.
- c) The Sport information desk was positioned close to the Athlete assembly area and was staffed with good people, and the service was excellent.
- d) The organizers had the best ball persons that I have seen in any tournament. One of the contributing factors was that they did not allow any of the volunteers to be under 15 years old. They were all from the same high school that has a reputation of high level of education. The first day it was still some challenges because they only had one day to train, which was not enough. The training days before the competition started had no assigned ball persons, which was a weakness, and could also have been used for additional training.
- e) The News service department was the best ever. They produced 53 Table Tennis articles, which was the second highest number after Athletics. They did several creative human interests stories that attracted the public's attention. Table Tennis had the youngest athlete ever to compete in a Paralympic or Olympic games. It was the 11 year old class 10 Polish Girl. They made a public announcement with IPC vice President Francois Terranova and Lizzie the Mascot giving her an award before one of her team matches.
- f) The presentation crew did a good job. This is the most critical part of a Paralympic Table Tennis event. The presentation is very challenging with as many as 12 courts. It was some initial issues on how to make the lower presentation levels the best for the spectators and not to lose more time than necessary. The 2.5 hours allocated for the team matches was not enough. The first day, due to the problem with the rejected team entry in class 8, it was no reserve time, which created constant delays. The wheelchair team matches needed 3 hours, whereas the standing team matches needed 2.5 hours to be completed. The competition was close so even in the preliminary rounds almost nobody had easy matches; therefore most of the team matches went to ties.



All these issues affected the presentation especially the first and second day. One big mistake was made the first day when a larger scale presentation with music etc started and a match was forgotten. They were still playing in the second game and had to stop when the score was 15 – 15 for three minutes. This caused a lot of justified complaints. The competition management staff recognized what was going on and made good corrections and it never happened again. The TD was at the time together with the presentation staff, but it was obvious that it created a crisis in chain of command. The TD cannot tell the presentation manager directly what to do, it has to come from the competition manager. After that the TD's position was changed to the field of play and if it was any issues that needed to be dealt with, the TD communicated directly to the Competition manager. The physical location of the TD was not sufficiently thought through. If the referee table on the field of play would have been positioned higher it could have been a good place.

g) The field of play staff had a very difficult job to do to keep the FOP clean from unnecessary athletes. If the individual event is first it is a lot easier to control the FOP. It is very important to select the right people to work on the FOP. It has to be people who dare to stop the athletes. After a couple of days it was a lot better, but it was always a challenge to control.

**Any other matter:**

The **Victory ceremonies** were much better organized this time. The schedule was arranged to create as many presentations as possible to spread the events out over time to make each presentation more special. A team of people was in charge of that operation, and arranged for an official awards presenter for each presentation. The award podium was made in a very creative way to adjust for the different number of athletes that could take part in the ceremony. The national anthem was played and a special military squad elevated the flags.

Christian Lillieroos,  
Technical Delegate for Table Tennis

December 8, 2000