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## Opinion Article

# Sport and Deafness - ♿

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The handicap caused by deafness is 'hidden', invisible to a superficial glance, it is difficult to focus on all aspects. Deafness is not 'seen': it is recognizable only when it is time to communicate. Because of the impediment of communication, the deaf are excluded from many important spheres of society, because life and culture are based on hearing and phonetic transcription. The deaf are the only disabled group with their own language and culture. Despite their healthy body, they do not have the same chance during competition as the hearing people. Deafness affects the learning process of forms of movement. Because of the acoustic impressions, you also receive ancillary information such as the quality of the terrain or the players's proximity, the incitement of the public, the arbiter's whistle, the environmental noises.

So in 1924, under the impetus of the French Eugène Rubens-Alcais, himself deaf, the International Committee of Silent Sports organizes in Paris "silent games" ("The silent Games"). These games, inspired by the Olympic Games model, will be held every four years (with the exception of wartime periods) and will be increasingly successful. These games are still organized today by the CISS (now the International Committee of Deaf Sports) under the name "Deaflympics".

In 1949, on the model of the Olympic Winter Games, winter games were created. This evolution has also forced the definition of a deafness criterion to allow a fair practice of these sports, and these games are now reserved for athletes with hearing loss of at least 55 decibels.

The French Abbot Sicard sustained that "you barrier among the deaf and hearing person that an alone man has had the courage and the talent to demolish, won't existe anymore".

The practice of an adapted physical activity provides numerous benefits of physical order:

- Improvement of the balance
- Increase and potenziation of the autonomy

- Development of the physical and muscular abilities
- Improvement of the physical condition and the hygiene of life - of psychological order:
  - fostering physical and mental well-being
  - fostering one's own development
  - acceptance of one's own handicap
- Reduction of stress, anxiety and anguish
- Improvement of one's own esteem - social order:
  - Construction or reconstruction of one's own social circle
  - Fight against social isolation
- Better integration into a group and society
- Development of a better quality of life
- Rediscover a vision of efficiency in the eyes of family members and of society as a whole

Sport in the person with hearing impairment appears as a great and irreplaceable opportunity. Educators, psychologists, trade associations, doctors unanimously agree in the usefulness of sport for physical growth, relational, cultural sports (amateur and professional) with problems of deafness. The Autonomy, the self-determination, the acquisition of new proprioceptive information, the sharing, the widening of personal horizons are some of the pieces of this ideal mosaic. There are certainly real and practical problems in the integration of sportsmen, especially professionals, with hearing problems and able-bodied athletes. There is a risk that the races only for the deaf can in some way be parallel to the others. It is a risk that one must run.

The German writer Helen Keller sustained that "The deafness estranges the men from the men; the blindness estranges the men from the things". The path is still long but the silence must not win.