



## Yesterday's **Highlight**

# A fire hot race to the top of the world

On the eighth day of the competition, the weather was clear but with the strong wind. There were many spectacular races in which the top position changes constantly, and the spectators who came to the stadium were very impressed.



### ■ **Men's 1500m T20**

The Men's 1500m T20, an intellectual disability class was held and 9 athletes participated. Michael Brannigan of the United States won the championship with a new record (CR) of 3:51.71. Brannigan is the top athlete in this class, having won two consecutive Paralympic titles in Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2021, and set a world record of 3:45.50 in 2017. He won a silver medal at last year's Paris Championships, but he just returned as a world champion at this year's championships.

Pavel Sarkeev, a neutral Paralympian just pulled out right after the start signal. Brannigan keeps up with Sarkeev, who is ahead of him, keeping the third position throughout. Sarkeev and Brannigan's positions will be almost the same even if the second player is replaced along the way. The race moved on the last lap. When Brannigan spurts, he catches Sarkeev and quickly pulls away to the top. He almost finished alone, letting the remaining other athletes behind.



Brannigan, who won the championship, said, "So great, so happy!". "I ran with confidence today. I'm proud of myself. The next goal is the Paris Paralympics. With a new world record of 3 minutes and 40 seconds, they aim to win three consecutive titles in Rio, Tokyo and Paris." he said.

The race for second place is a fierce battle. In the final lap, Japan's Yuji Togawa moved up to second place.

Togawa had been running in the fifth and/or sixth positions from the start. "From the start, other players came forward, so I wanted to improve my strength without forcing myself to come forward. Considering the athletes' best time of the season, the pace hasn't improved so much, so I was thinking of switching at the end."

He will close the gap between himself and the competitors who run in front of him according to his race plan. It wasn't until one lap left and a straight line on the back straight that we put the game on the line. All at once he stepped forward and followed the back of Brannigan as he ran in the distance. Just before the goal, however, he was overtaken by Portugal's Sandro Baessa, who came up behind him and finished in third place.

"I was a little careless. It was a waste." he said.



After winning his first medal at the world championships, he said, "If I don't finish in the top two in this championships, I won't be able to qualify for the Paris Paralympics, so it's really frustrating there. Still, it was a good result for the Paralympics Games, because I could feel that I'm able to compete firmly against the world athletes."

Daiki Akai and Yuki Iwata also competed in this championships. Akai and Iwata fell around 400m and 1000m, respectively, after coming into contact with the leading players. He got up and continued the race, but finished sixth and ninth, respectively.



## ■ **Men's javelin throw F46**

12 athletes participated in the men's javelin throw F46 (class with upper limb disability). Paralympic medalists and top finishers from the last Paris Championships, almost all top athletes are participating in this event tonight. Despite of the strong wind at that time, the top of the world with their powerful throw and spectacular performance that you never know who will win until the end. The winner was Guillermo Varona Gonzalez of Cuba, who threw a championships record 65.16m in his sixth throw. He won the world championship for the first time by making a big leap from sixth place last time.

Dinesh Priyantha Herath Mudiyansele (Sri Lanka), who threw 62.04m, led to the top after the first throw. He is a gold medalist at the Tokyo Paralympic Games and placed third place at the last Paris Championships. Herath Mudiyansele threw a 64.59m in the second attempt to widen his lead.

The winner Varona Gonzales, placed second overall with a 61.63m on the first throw and continued to throw consistently, increasing his record to 63.32m on the fifth attempt. He hit a big throw of 65.16m in the final 6 throws to take the lead. The final thrower was Herath Mudiyansele, who had held the top place until then, he finished with 58.65m mark and could not take the first position again.



Varona Gonzales said he was aiming to win a medal, and to be qualified for the next Paris Paralympic Games. "I'm happy to see the result in my second world championship. It was a big boost to Paris." he said. "I think the fact that he threw without paying much attention to his rival led to the victory. For the last and last throwing, I just could achieve the exceptional result due to God's power and to family in my mind." he said.

Three participants from strong Indian's team, Ajeet Singh, who is in first place with Rinku, who was in second place at the last Paris Championships, rose to the top with 62.77m and 62.11m on the fourth throw, and remained in third and fourth place. On the other hand, Sundar Singh Gurjar, who holds the world record (68.60m), failed first three tentative and finished in eighth place, with 59.03m in the second attempt.



According to the Japanese team's record at the end of the throwing, Akihiro Yamazaki finished seventh in the 57.48m, and Shunya Takahashi finished eighth in the 56.23m, advancing to the fourth and subsequent throws. On the sixth and final throw, Takahashi, who had thrown first, extended his mark to 59.81m, but Yamazaki turned the game around with a big throw of 61.02m.

Yamazaki, who finished in sixth place, said, "It was a little frustrating because I was in good condition and set a goal of 65m, above my personal best (61.24m). The technical aspects could not be changed." It was difficult to deal with the strong tailwind, so he said, "I want to make the most of it next time."

Takahashi, who came in seventh, said, "It was a difficult match because of the strong wind, but the sixth pitch was supported by the clapping of the spectators, and I was able to run the run-away as quick as I could, and I improved my record." For Takahashi, who is small in stature, his ability to throw a speedy run-up is his strength. "We will continue to work on improving the speed of run-up," he said.

At the end of the third attempt, Shiramasa Takuya was ninth in the 54.22m, but he could not advance to the second half of this event.

[Updated on May 25th]

The change in classification was announced on the morning of May 25, and Sri Lanka's Herath Mudiyansele, who finished in second place was disqualified and each athlete after third place moved up one place.

### ■ **Universal 4 x 100m relay**

It is a 4 x 100m relay with 2 men and 2 women each. The first runner is visually impaired, the second runner has amputation/functional impairment, the third runner has cerebral palsy, and the fourth runner, which serves as an anchor, is held by a wheelchair athlete. As the name suggests, it is a universal relay race. Athletes connect by touch, not by passing batons. The main attraction is how efficiently you can accelerate and touch work in a designated zone.

Six countries, Japan, China, Colombia, Indonesia, the United Kingdom and the United States, will participate in this special event. The qualifiers were divided into two groups, and the first place in each group and the top two teams by time advanced to the final, which was held in the evening session.



The four countries that passed the qualifying round and advanced to the final were China, which ranked first in Group 1, Indonesia, which ranked first in Group 2, and Japan and the United Kingdom.

Japan won the gold medal in this event at the Paris Championships last year. This year's competition consisted of four members who won the gold medal. The first runner is Uran Sawada, a T12 female; the second runner is Sae Tsuji, a T47 female; the third runner is Takeru Matsumoto, a T36 man; and the anchor is Tomoki Ikoma, a T54 man. In the first round, they gave the first place to China, but they set a new Japanese record of 47.60 seconds to finish in second position. China, the top qualifier, set a new championships record of 45.66 seconds. Both the first and second place finishers were in a dead heat of 47 seconds. It was a high level battle from the preliminary round.

The final race was held as a last event of day. Although the order of the runners depending on their disabilities is fixed, how the members are combined, such as the combination of men and women, strategically is different for each team. This is the only universal relay where female and male athletes run side by side.

China jumped out at the start of the final event. Zhou Guohua the first leg is female, Hao Wang in the second leg is male, Wen Xiaoyan in the third leg is female again, and Hu Yang in the anchor wheelchair is male. Since forming the team, the team has continued to grow by breaking records every race. They crossed the finish line at an overwhelming speed, setting a new championships record of 45.54 seconds to win the championship.

"Just 0.02 seconds shy of the U.S. world record. In preparation for the Paris Paralympics, we want to strengthen teamwork and aim for the Paralympic gold medal." they said.



England's second-placed anchor is Hannah Cockroft, who has won two T34 women's 100m and 800m titles. "I really love Universal Relay. I participated in the Paris Championships last year, but I was really scared. Most teams have male wheelchair players as anchors. So they're very fast and they chase you from behind so quickly, that scared me." she said with a smile. "But I want to believe in the team, I want to believe in myself, I want to enjoy different challenges from individual events, and I want to be prepared for the next competition."

Japan, which set a new Japanese record in the first round and finished third in the final 0.1 seconds ahead of England, was disqualified after third runner Matsumoto made a mistake by stepping in the in-lane at a corner. It is regrettable that he practiced touch work in the training camp. "In preparation for the Paris Paralympics, I would like to correct the issues and regain the crown." all members said.

# GO KOBE 2024!

## Experience, understanding, and acting.

Asics, the one of the sponsors of the competition, of the head office is in Kobe, is offering various activities to make the competition exciting. At the venue, they exhibit a sports experience booth, "ASICS PARA-Booth" in front of the medal plaza outside of the stadium.



"ON THE STAGE", you can try riding on a wheelchair racer, is very popular as it has long que everyday. Riding a fixed racer and you can compete with the top athletes while watching a 3DCG video reproduced an actual race. You can also hear the loud cheers of stadium from surrounded speakers, feel the wind from a device in front of you, and see the views of the athletes.



According to Yu Yoshii, from the Marketing Department in charge of this booth, there are many people, men and women of all ages, experience this activity and we can hear from them, "so fast!" and "this is so much fun!", also para athletes from overseas are coming too and some of them said, "I always wanted to try the racer". Yoshii told us, "we want everyone to feel how the athletes are amazing by actual experience.

They also have a digital photo event that you can take a photo with a cheering message board for the athletes and download it. Many messages are already written by many people. And this event is alive with the athletes who already finished their events to take commemorative photographs.





## Present of sunflower seed

Organization committee had collected supporting companies many children in Hyogo to come to the competition, called “ONE Class Supporting System”. Asics presents sunflower seed to the children and students of Hyogo coming to the stadium to support this project. The number goes to 30,000 bags.

As a “Legacy Connected by Flowers,” this present is with the hope that when the flowers bloom in the summer, they will remember this competition again. Sunflower is chosen because it’s a favorite flower of Kihachiro Onizuka, the founder of Asics, as he was drawing by himself.



## Project for All

Asics also planned a project for all employees, “Project for All”. This project makes each employee to engage in the competition in any way to enhance empathy for the people with disabilities though para sports. 2,200 employees had come to the stadium and 300 employees are supporting the competition as a volunteer.

It is precious opportunity to see and feel the efforts of para athletes and they update the thoughts and photos of the experiences on the companies’ SNS to share with everyone.



Shinobu Otani, a director of the Digital Business Promotion Department / Para Sports Planning Department, said “I hope the employees who participated in this project to raise their inclusive society and increase engagement with the company too. I feel a certain response in these projects and want to continue this in advan

