



SLEDGE HOCKEY

ABOUT THE SPORT

Ice Sledge Hockey is the Paralympic version of Ice Hockey and, since its debut in the Paralympic program in the Lillehammer 1994 Paralympics, it is quickly becoming one of the biggest attractions for spectators at the Paralympic Winter Games. **It is fast-paced, highly physical game and played by athletes with a physical disability in the lower part of the body.** Ice Sledge Hockey is practiced by athletes in about 10 countries and is governed by the IPC through the International Paralympic Ice Hockey Committee. It follows the rules of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) with a few modifications. Instead of skates, players use two-blade sledges that allow the puck to pass beneath. They also have sticks with a spike-end for pushing and a blade-end for shooting.



HISTORY

A direct descendant of Ice Hockey, **Ice Sledge Hockey was invented at a rehabilitation centre in Stockholm, Sweden, during the early 1960s by a group of Swedes who, despite their physical disability, wanted to continue playing Hockey.** The men modified a metal frame sled, or sledge, with two regular-sized Ice Hockey skate blades that allowed the puck to pass underneath. Using round poles with bike handles for sticks, the men played without any goaltenders on a lake south of Stockholm.

The sport caught on and, by 1969, Stockholm had a five-team league that included players with a physical disability and able-bodied players. That same year, Stockholm hosted the first international Ice Sledge Hockey match between a local club team and one from Oslo, Norway. During the 1970s, teams from these two countries played once or twice a year. Several other countries began to establish teams, including Great Britain (1981), Canada (1982), USA (1990), Estonia and Japan (1993).

Two Swedish national teams played an exhibition match at the inaugural Örnsköldsvik 1976 Paralympic Winter Games in Sweden. **However, Ice Sledge Hockey did not become an official event until the Lillehammer 1994 Paralympic Winter Games.** Canada, Norway, Sweden, Great Britain, USA, Japan and Estonia have dominated international competitions, but the sport is growing with club teams now established in Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Czech Republic, Russia and Korea.

