**What’s Fair in Sports?**

**HOMEWORK: Read and annotate the article. Next, write a multi-paragraph essay (Five paragraphs: Intro, three body paragraphs for the three reasons, conclusion) arguing whether the rules for Paralympic equipment should be changed or stay the same.**

**RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil** . Like the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games feature a gathering of athletes who have spent years training in their sports. Unlike Olympic athletes, however, Paralympic athletes all have a disability. Some use equipment, such as wheelchairs, to compete. But not all equipment is the same. Some people say this isn't fair.

There's a range of athletic equipment on the market for people with disabilities. Advancements in technology have improved such equipment. There are prosthetic running blades. They allow amputees to run faster. There are streamlined racing wheelchairs. They're designed to cut through the air.

But these developments are changing Paralympic sports. Better technology can create a gap between athletes. Some say that athletes using assistive technology end up benefiting.

Take prosthetic running blades, for example. In the Paralympics, single amputees often race against double amputees. But technology for prosthetics has improved. Now, double amputees have an advantage over single amputees, said U.S. sprinter David Prince.

Prince cited a race that took place at the 2016 Paralympics. Greek runner Michail Seitis is a single amputee. He set a world record for his division in the men's 400-meter final. Yet he only came in at sixth place out of eight runners. The five who finished ahead of him were double amputees.

Prince, who lost his right leg in a motorcycle accident, finds the developments in technology somewhat concerning. He worries that some athletes, such as single amputees, will be left behind.

"Last year and this year were really hard for me to stay [driven to] continue training," Prince said. "I go into the race knowing that [double amputees] run faster times…. I know I'll get beat."

Other concerns have been raised about the technologies as well. Some fear that their use is unfair to athletes from less wealthy countries. The equipment can be very expensive. Others say that advanced technology, rather than athletic ability, may become the driving force behind an athlete's performance.

Still, double amputees are staying within the rules. The Paralympics handbook states that the technology must be available on the public market. It also cannot provide "unrealistic" improvement of an athlete's ability or improve "performance beyond the natural physical capacity of the athlete."

Craig Spence is a spokesperson for the Paralympics. He said that athletes at the 2016 Paralympic Games showed an increased level of athletic performance. However, he did not think it was all due to new technologies. Training for athletes with disabilities is also improving.

"I've noticed that our athletes are getting faster, stronger, and more [skillful] in every single sport," Spence said. "You've got to look at the facts that our visually impaired athletes are getting faster as well. [The same is true for] athletes with coordination impairments. And they don't use any piece of technology."

Still, Prince thinks that more needs to be done to keep competitions fair. He has discussed his concerns with Paralympic leaders. For Prince, the main question is whether double amputees and single amputees should compete against each other at all.

Prince says he is concerned that far fewer single amputees will compete in events in the next four years. That would be a shame, he says. It would also go against the spirit of the Paralympics.

"If things progress and we're kept together, [there aren't] going to be any unilateral amputees running because we won't have a chance," he said. "In order for the sport to stay [fair], something has to be done."

*The Associated Press contributed to this story.*

**Dictionary**

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| **amputee** *(noun)*    one who has had a limb removed from the body |
| **capacity** *(noun)*    how much can be done |
| **cite** *(verb)*    to mention as an example in support of what is being argued |
| **prosthetic** *(adjective)*    relating to a device that takes the place of a missing body part or aids a damaged body part |
| **technology** *(noun)*    the use of science to make new things |