

ParaSport[®]

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2019



PARASPORT
ONTARIO

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Niagara ParaSport Festival

*A Sport for
everyBODY!*

.....

Adaptive Yoga

*Wellness for
All Abilities*

ParaCanoe

The Canadian Connection

.....

Team Tyler

Game Face On!





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WELCOME

By believing passionately in something that still does not exist, we create it. The nonexistent is whatever we have not sufficiently desired. – Nikos Kazantzakis

After more than 40 years of membership in the disability community, and 30 years of advocating on our behalf, I still experience “kid in the candy store” excitement when I happen upon a new perspective.

It was a beautifully snowy day in January. ParaSport Ontario® had brought together over 25 of Niagara’s community and sports leaders to share with us the peninsula’s parasport triumphs and tribulations. The day was all about helping us construct our Niagara ParaSport Festival... an initiative aimed at collaborating with the Niagara community to help make it a model community for inclusive physical activities for enthusiasts with a disability.

We learned that the region experiences many of the same obstacles as others across the province – lack of equipment, limited awareness of existing programming, transportation and connectivity issues between municipalities. But it is unique in many of its strengths... the largest multisport parasport club in the province in the Brock Niagara Penguins, the 2021 Canada Games on the horizon, pockets of excellence in a variety of parasport programs across the peninsula and a desire from education, healthcare, activity and municipal leaders to connect, share and grow together.

And then there it was... my candy store moment. “When design meets desire,” proposed a participant from Niagara Parks, “we will create the connections and the inclusion we are all looking for.”

The design was the easy part. Drawing from Niagara’s parasport leaders, ParaSport Ontario’s ambassadors and advisors, and from our partner organization’s expertise, we presented over 25 different parasports and activities, a dozen keynote talks and community connections unlike any other event.

But creating the desire in the community determined our success. Through personal invitations, new partnerships and promoting the two-day event to over 500,000 Niagara residents, we found that desire. We found it in yoga studios throughout the region... instructors who signed up for our adaptive yoga demonstration to learn how to become inclusive. We found it at golf clubs, where golf pros registered for our adaptive golf session. Same with fitness instructors from gyms and clubs across the peninsula. Recreation therapists came to learn more about sport and recreation opportunities for their clients. Hundreds of high school students arrived wanting to learn more. Half a dozen performing arts coaches invested a day in learning how to incorporate adaptive circus arts into their studio. And of course, individuals with disabilities, their families and friends came too. Design met desire.

Attain it. Sustain it.

Jeff Tiessen, *Executive Director*

PS: If you picked this issue up in a clinic or at an event, or wherever, and would like to get on our mailing list simply sign up as a Member of the ParaSport Ontario Family, and we’ll keep them coming to you, along with monthly e-newsletters and much more. And it’s FREE. Join us at www.parasportontario.ca.



ParaSport® MAGAZINE

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PARASPORT GAMES HEADED TO MISSISSAUGA!

The Ontario Parasport Games is coming to Mississauga in 2021. The news came in an announcement from MPP Deepak Anand of Mississauga-Milton during a Parasport Try-It Day held for high school students from eight local schools at Paramount Fine Foods in Mississauga.

“An inclusive community gives everyone an opportunity to shine,” said Mayor Bonnie Crombie of Mississauga. “The Ontario Parasport Games will help highlight Mississauga’s commitment to accessibility and inclusive programming for all. I look forward to welcoming these young

athletes from across our great province in 2021.”

Durham Region hosted the 2019 Parasport Games, which saw over 300 athletes competing in 11 adaptive sports. “Hosting the 2019 Ontario Parasport Games increased awareness of the challenges and more importantly, the capabilities of people with disabilities,” said Don Terry, Games Co-Chair. “We’re still finalizing our financials, but thanks to the generous support of our community we now have a Legacy Fund of about \$75,000 to help grow parasport participation and inclusion.”

The funds will be used in partnership with Durham-based, not-for-profit Their Opportunity to ensure that family financial challenges are not a barrier for parasport participation for youth with disabilities. Increasing opportunities for parasport activities in high schools and hosting parasport festivals where school teams will compete are also being planned. An Adaptive Sport Collective is also being launched in Durham Region to offer a collaborative approach to growing sport for all abilities and ensuring people with disabilities in the Durham Region have the best possible opportunities.



Left to right: Councillor Chris Fonseca, Ward 3; Ontario Parasport Games Host Councillors Pat Saito, Ward 9 and Matt Mahoney, Ward 8; Pachi; Mayor Bonnie Crombie; MPP Deepak Anand, Mississauga-Milton; Parasport Athlete Shawn Courchesne; Shari Lichterman, Director, Recreation; and 100 Mississauga high school students.



RACE WHEELS

Martha Sandoval-Gustafson is no stranger to the podium, starting her para athletic career in 1975 in Mexico, winning one gold and two silver medals in her first Games in field and slalom events. Now a Canadian citizen, she has won 21 Paralympic medals, 19 International and 17 Para Pan American medals.

Today, Sandoval-Gustafson is continuing to find ways to stay active for life and compete. She has created an exciting new way for wheelchair racers to get active and compete in a sport she calls Race Wheels. This racing style is still being developed and gaining interest from athletes looking to stay active and for something fun to try. The first push of the chair can be done with two hands and each push afterwards must be done with alternating hands. Racers must stay in their respective lanes at all times and wear all necessary protective equipment.

While the sport is still being developed and growing, the continued push to find new ways for people with disabilities and wheelchair users to stay active is something Sandoval-Gustafson is committed to improving.



ALL SPORTS ALL PEOPLE

All Sports All People (ASAP) is a not-for-profit organization serving communities across Simcoe County and York Region.

With the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, ASAP provides a variety of adaptive sports programs to individuals living with or without a disability.

ASAP continues to promote inclusion and advocate for the importance of sport by offering such recreational opportunities as sledge hockey, wheelchair basketball, handcycling, and many others!

All Sports All People has reached thousands of kids since it began providing sports programs in 2014 and it continues to reach more and more kids everyday through the power of sport.

For more information visit
www.allsportsallpeople.com



THE ACCESS EXPO

The inaugural Access Expo at Variety Village in Scarborough, Ont., picked up where the former People in Motion Show left off. It connected people of all abilities and their families and friends with organizations and healthcare professionals to products and services for any individual interested in accessibility, inclusion, mobility, sport, fitness and healthy living.

The Access Expo showcased the latest innovations in technology, products and services for people of all ages and abilities while expanding the reach of the show to include seniors, their families, and caregivers as well. In addition to exhibits, participants enjoyed access to job fairs, parasport demonstrations, keynote speakers, community award presentations and new opportunities for networking, engagement and learning.

The Access Expo also saw a number of community members being recognized for their commitment to creating opportunities for inclusion and accessibility within the disability community.



Left to right: President & CEO of Variety Ontario, Karen Stintz, The Honourable David C. Onley, John Willson, Bernard Gluckstein, Q.C., MPP Doly Begum, Scarborough Southwest, ParaSport® Ontario Executive Director, Jeff Tiessen

Awards were presented to the following:

Lifetime Achievement for Innovation in Accessibility

PRESENTED TO

David C. Onley, CM OOnt

For dedication to creating accessible opportunities for people of all abilities.

ParaSport® Ontario Community Impact Award

PRESENTED TO

Gluckstein Personal Injury Lawyers

For compassion and support for caregivers.

Innovation in Adaptive Sport/Parasport

PRESENTED TO

Zack Coplestone

For increasing sport and recreation initiatives for kids of all abilities.

Innovation for Accessibility in Sport

PRESENTED TO

Arron Barberian and Linda Rodeck

For advancing accessible environments through leadership.



Canadian Disability Hall of Fame 2019 INDUCTEE BRADLEY BOWDEN

Ontarian Bradley Bowden is one of the few Paralympic athletes to win Paralympic gold in both the Summer and Winter Games. A force for Team Canada in para ice hockey, he has competed in four Winter Paralympic Games, capturing gold in Torino 2006, coming fourth in Vancouver 2010, and winning bronze in Sochi 2014 and silver in PyeongChang 2018. He was also on the Men's National wheelchair basketball team at the Athens 2004 Paralympic Games, where Canada



won gold. When off the ice, Bowden, who lives with sacral agenesis, gives back to the community through his work with All Sports All People, a non-profit organization that creates inclusive sports programs in and around Simcoe County.

Need a PUSH?

Trackz Mobility has launched a support campaign to provide assistance to those who want to purchase an off-road wheelchair to get active outside again. Individuals can sign up online to receive personalized support that they can share with their network and friends to reach their goal and get off-road!

Donors can show their support online as well by offering assistance to those seeking a chair to help gain more outdoor independence.

Trackz Mobility designs, manufactures and sells products for all kinds of terrain. Last year the HP1 model was launched as an adjustable off-road wheelchair. Lightweight,



ultra-resistant with an aluminum frame, it comes with a lifetime guarantee.

To learn more about their products and services, visit trackzmobility.com.



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We at ParaSport Ontario know that it's not always easy finding the sport that is right for you or finding a club close to you.

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for a club or program
near you.**

A LITTLE SLEDGE GOES A LONG WAY



When John McNamara first awoke after his injury in critical care, he wrote to his long-time friend David Weinstein, 'I'm lucky to be alive.' It would be a long road of recovery, but John wasn't alone in it. He had a strong support system built over the years of friends he had made playing hockey. John sent his teammates a picture of him giving two thumbs up as he was being released from critical care. As John could no longer skate, his team joined together to find other ways to keep him included in the sport they all shared and loved.

David found out his friend of many years still wanted to play

hockey, so he found a way to make it happen. After contacting ParaSport® Ontario, it was quickly decided that a custom sledge would be built to help keep John upright on the ice and able to play once again. His old teammates quickly supported this event, finding an arena to donate time and the people to make it happen.

Equipment was brought in from ParaSport® Ontario to facilitate the sledge hockey game to help support John to be able to get on the ice once again. The day was all smiles and friends took to the ice once more to help be part of a truly special day for all.

ATHLETE AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR

To be an Athlete Ambassador for ParaSport® Ontario means a lot of things to a lot of people. You represent not only your chosen sport(s), but the spirit of 'ParaSport' in general. When we say there's a sport for everyBODY, we mean it! Our ambassadors know and support our mission across the province. From attending events, tradeshows and sport sessions, they find and connect with people looking to get started on their own ParaSport journey.

Tiffany Gaudette has helped connect thousands of Ontarians with disabilities to activities or programs of their choosing through her work as Director of Multi-Sports with Cruisers Sports in Mississauga and as an ambassador with ParaSport Ontario.

Tiffany has been a dedicated member of the ParaSport Ontario Ambassador Team and we are pleased to recognize her contributions to our organization.

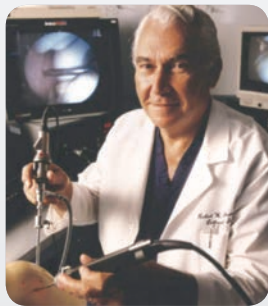




JOE MILLAGE PRESENTED WITH AWARD OF DISTINCTION

Joe Millage has been instrumental in supporting ParaSport® Ontario for years, serving as the Chair of the board from 2014 until 2019; he has provided sought-after leadership and advice to a number of causes and initiatives for the organization. Joe first began his work with people with disabilities in 1981 as Managing Director at Variety Village (1981-2003) and oversaw numerous roles and responsibilities, including commitment to inclusive programs for people of all abilities.

This year, not only has Joe volunteered countless hours to supporting the Para Pro-Am Golf Tournament, he also supported and led the charge towards making Niagara a more



Dr. Robert W. Jackson

inclusive community with the Niagara ParaSport® Festival, with support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Joe continues to push the boundaries on inclusion and accessibility, developing programs that work for everyBODY and help support the mission of ParaSport Ontario.

The Dr. Robert W. Jackson Award of Distinction is given with much thought and consideration. The late Dr. Jackson is known as the father of Paralympics in Canada. It was the 1960s and most people in Canada knew very little about people with disabilities, but Dr. Jackson set out to change that. As a renowned orthopedic surgeon, he knew what was possible when Canadians dared to dream.



ROBERT NIGOL appointed Chair of ParaSport® Ontario

We would like to congratulate and welcome Robert 'Bob' Nigol as Chair of ParaSport® Ontario as of June 18th, 2019. Robert has served as a board member for ParaSport Ontario for over a year and brings a wealth of experience to the board. He is a Managing Partner with EPS Settlements Group of Canada and Chair of Spinal Cord Injury of Ontario as well.

Robert began his term as Chair by presenting a specialized wheelchair to Karen Natho of the Brock Niagara Penguins.





109,987
Website Visitors



503,520

Social Media Impressions

1,200,000 views of
Para Pro Am Golf Tournament
Segment on CTV and CITY News



31,200
e-News Contacts

Over **50** Paragolfers and Youth Golfers attend the inaugural Para Pro-Am Golf Tournament



36 Adapted Sport Partners



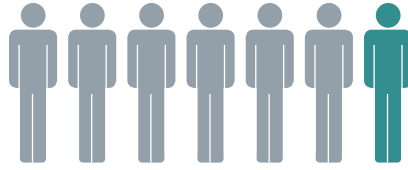
52 CORPORATE PARTNERS



1,850,000

Ontarians with a Disability

(15%; 1 in 7 people)



750

 Years of Advisory Team Experience

10,600

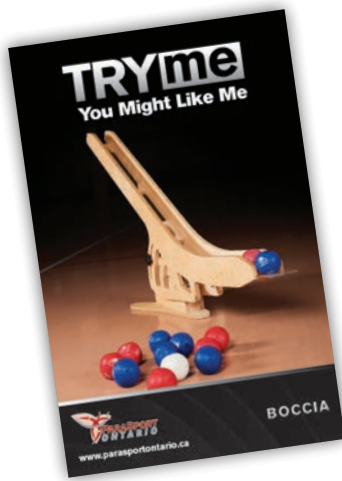
 Membership

219

 ParaSport CLUB PARTNERS

785

Pieces of Equipment in **TRY Me** and Equipment Loan Inventory



15,244

 TRY Me Participants

63

 TRY Me EVENTS

42

 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

112,000

 Magazine Readership

(Print, Digital & Pass-along)

6,280

 Volunteer Hours



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Niagara Sport TIVAL



Returns.

With the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, ParaSport® Ontario gathered over 25 of the Niagara Peninsula's sport and community leaders earlier this year to work together to create a model community for adapted sport and recreation opportunities for the region's population of people with disabilities.



Left to right: Jeff Tiessen, Talli Osborne, Robert Hampson and his mom Cheryl Hampson, and guide dog Spokane.

This pilot project was the first-of-its-kind, a pioneering initiative that will change the active living landscape in Niagara for over 20 percent of the region's residents. Long-time Niagara resident Jeff Tiessen, Executive Director of ParaSport® Ontario, three-time Paralympian and distinguished publisher, led the charge with his 40 years of experience in parasport. "It was fitting to choose the community in which I live, work and play as the community of choice for this project," Tiessen explained.

"We partnered with Ontario's largest multi-parasport club in the Brock Niagara Penguins, as well as Niagara College, Niagara Parks, municipal Parks and Recreation departments, Permobil and Pride Mobility, among others, in developing and

hosting the Niagara ParaSport® Festival," said Tiessen.

With Champion Sponsor Meridian leading the way, and with the support of a donation of over 26,000 square feet of venue space from the Scotiabank Convention Centre in Niagara Falls, the Festival played host to an unprecedented 25 TRY Me adapted sport and recreation activities in one room. With special guest speakers, ParaSport Challenges and a Resource Fair, over 700 attendees participated, listened and learned how they can play, what's possible and where, and who can help.

Many of the adaptive sport demonstrations were the product of partnerships and collaborations with sport or activity-specific provincial and regional programs and were

facilitated by active living and sport experts, and included wheelchair basketball and tennis, circus arts, sledge hockey, adapted yoga, sitting volleyball, therapeutic riding, para-kayaking and rowing, goalball, Volt hockey, adapted golf, hiking and more.

"Importantly, this was not a 'one and done' scenario," emphasized Tiessen. "ParaSport Ontario will remain committed to the region for the next two years, with dedicated staffing, provision of adapted equipment and leadership to help municipalities, programs, studios, facilities, golf courses and schools develop teams, leagues and other inclusive opportunities. That has already begun to take shape with partners like Meridian, Niagara College and Rotary clubs in the region," he enthused. "The Niagara ParaSport Festival was designed to provide the stage and the connectivity to help the Niagara Peninsula become the most inclusive region in Ontario when it comes to adapted sports, recreation and physical activity for people with disabilities – a model community."

About ParaSport® Ontario

ParaSport® Ontario is a non-profit organization providing support to all members of the disability community – regardless of age or stage in life – to find, connect with, and participate in competitive and recreational sport programs and activities of their choice to enhance physical function and quality of life. "There is a sport for everyBODY!"

"The event was important on many levels. As someone who cares about Equity and Inclusion, it felt great to be included in the ParaSport Niagara Festival. Thank you for following the seed of your vision to fruition. I was moved by the whole line-up of activities, sports, exhibitors, sponsors and speakers you brought together."

– Elisha MacMillan, Rhythm and Dance

"What an amazing day making new connections and new friends and learning about new programs. @parasportontario Niagara Parasport Festival was a total success."

– shweelz2016



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STRONGER Together

Paratriathlon is growing in popularity across the province. Meet the modern training groups leading the way!

By Erin O'Sullivan

The forces behind Fitness Dynamics are helping shape the way athletes with disabilities train, socialize and compete in paratriathlon. Fitness Dynamics is a highly-specialized group of endurance-based coaches who have competed or trained in any, or all, of the paratriathlon disciplines (swimming, biking and running) and are using that expertise to guide future paratriathlon athletes to success. This program is currently based in the Ottawa area with coaching options available in Toronto as well.

Michel Elibani, the Ottawa-based founder of Fitness Dynamics, believes in working with athletes overcome obstacles and lays out a plan to do just that by asking a few key questions: “How do we put them on the right path? Can they train within our group? What can we do to get them to the next spot?”

There are many aspects to paratriathlon training that can seem overwhelming for a beginner. One of the strongest benefits to the program is the leadership within the community being the voice and guide of the program. New para athletes are partnered with a volunteer who trains alongside them and teaches safe training practices, how to use the adaptive equipment and, most importantly, helps motivate and encourage newcomers to keep returning to the program.

Volunteers even assist with transportation to and from the training facility to help minimize the costs of training. No athlete is turned away for financial reasons which helps build a loyal team that together creates a sustainable training structure. Participants want to come back!

One key aspect to the success of the program is the strong commu-



nity network and para leadership within. Fitness Dynamics works with partner organizations and shares training tools to help build everyone up. Where there are training gaps or barriers to address, there is someone willing to find a solution.

Sasha Boulton is a paratriathlon athlete and triathlon coach who lives in Toronto. She works closely with para athletes throughout the program and continues to push herself

as an athlete and trainer on the best practices for enhancing the experience for these groups.

Boulton leads popular weekly Skype sessions where participants join together in the early hours of the day to train from different locations across Ontario and support each other on the journey. Numbers for these training sessions have tripled within the last year, with more para athletes becoming interested in the program and finding the community aspect very appealing.

“If you’ve come and you’ve never done triathlon, we welcome you. There’s no attitude; everyone is coming to train,” says Elibani.

The program is fully integrated, meaning everyone trains together with individual needs being addressed and adapted to suit each athlete.

Mentorship helps the program stay strong and grow; athletes meet, train with, and learn from others who share similar stories and experiences. There are always opportunities to hear from those who have faced similar challenges.

If interested in learning more about the Fitness Dynamics program, visit www.fitnessdynamics.ca for more information.



360° LOOK AT Inclusion

By Joe Millage

360insights is the fastest-growing company in the Durham Region of Ontario. It is also an apt phrase for the view that ParaSport® Ontario (PO) is bringing to active living and sport. The company has an impressive value proposition:

DON'T FIND A FAULT, FIND A REMEDY. Meaning – Focus on creating solutions to problems.

BE REAL AND HAVE FUN. Meaning – Act with integrity while encouraging happiness.

LIVE IN THE POSSIBLE. Meaning – Live and work free of limitation.

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY, IT'S WHAT YOU DO. Meaning – Strive for excellence and deliver on your commitments.

The similarities with PO are obvious, so when asked to help create a March Break camp experience for their employees' children, we jumped at the opportunity.



ParaGolf Ontario is here to provide opportunities and assistance to all physically different and amputee golfers across Ontario. JOIN US FOR THE 2020 SEASON.



For more information, contact Jerry Brandt, minibs2010@hotmail.com or phone 416-553-3676





360INSIGHTS'S GOAL IS TO CREATE A GREAT PLACE FOR ITS EMPLOYEES, so to offer a March Break camp that would take a little pressure off staff who are looking for options for their children during the school vacation period, the group turned to PO to enhance opportunities for everyBODY. A camp like this enabled us to test the inclusiveness and integration possibilities of accessible sport and recreation to a broader audience.

The term "reverse integration" has existed for a long time, but this

would go far beyond that. PO established a curriculum that would bring excellence from the disability community to the mainstream and make it exciting to enrich welcoming attitudes. If successful, PO would look at rolling out 360 degree activity options to communities throughout Ontario.

PO introduced different ways to play. In most cases this meant taking activities that were understood (basketball, volleyball, tag and more) and adding a variable that would get participants to think and act "outside the box". For the participants, one of the more unique components was to become more considerate of others, like playing basketball in a sport wheelchair, or volleyball while seated. These opportunities inherently provided leadership moments for the children, who were able to demonstrate qualities in taking responsibility for their actions and for the

success of others even as young as six. It was equally rewarding to see a group of teenage counsellors in training embrace, accept and succeed in leadership roles that were new to them.

The curriculum was diverse and included lessons and games on various adaptive sports including sitting volleyball, instructed by Canadian National Team Member Jamoi Anderson. Kids were awed and inspired to try Circus Arts, performed and instructed by Erin Ball, internationally known for her skills on silks, trapeze, hoops and juggling and still performing for audiences after losing both of her legs in an accident five years ago.

Drum and dance was led by celebrated international teacher Elisha McMillan. Boccia games were facilitated by provincial coach, referee and David C. Onley Award for Leadership in Accessibility recipient Alex German.

There were goalball and blind curling lessons by Robert Hampson, a staff-member at Variety Ontario and athlete who is blind.

Adaptive yoga and meditation techniques were taught by Robynn Nierop of Imagine Yoga and Wellness.

Kids were treated to adaptive and educational golf techniques from Todd Keirstead, a leader across North America in adaptive golf.

There were daily activities in wheelchair basketball, fitness and roller-sled hockey led by Master Coach Joe Millage and supported by PO staff members Erin O'Sullivan, Richard Collins and Bethany Morkunas.

With many more adaptive sports options to explore, 360insights set the bar high and ParaSport Ontario responded with a resoundingly successful experience that is ready for rollout in communities across the province.



Left to right: Jeff Tiessen, Joe Millage, Councillor in Training, Alex German, Erin Ball, Camper.

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Paracanoes and the CANADIAN Connection

By Adrienne Skinner



Did you know that Canada is consistently a strong force in the sport of sprint canoe kayak racing? Over many decades, Canada has developed a reputation for producing world champions like Larry Cain, Adam VanKoeverden, Sue Holloway, John Wood, Mark Oldershaw and many others. Not surprisingly, our country also led the way in bringing the sport of paracanoe to the Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 for the first time. Canada also hosted the first international paracanoe conference in Montreal in 2008, which attracted representatives from nine countries. From that point, there was a push to meet the requirements to have paracanoe added to the Paralympics.

Although it was 11 years ago, I remember it clearly. I had volunteered to help launch PaddleAll, the national adaptive program in western Ontario, and that's how I found myself at that first paracanoe conference. I was also the only athlete there with a disability. When it was clear that we needed a para-athlete to represent Canada at the upcoming European Cup, the entire room of delegates looked toward me. Yikes! I had done some racing, but came

to the sport as an adult and was not what you would call "high-performance."

Years before, I had come upon the Mississauga Canoe Club in Port Credit when I was looking for a spot to slip my kayak into the cool waters of the Credit River. Any sport that had to do with water called my name. Water for me, an above-knee amputee, provided a sense of freedom and I signed up on the spot. Over the next 20 years the club became a second home to me. In paddle sports, athletes of different ages often mix and the older, more experienced paddlers become mentors to the younger kids. It creates a great family atmosphere where you forge life-long friendships.

The two-person Canadian team consisting of myself and a recreational paddler named Jim Mahaffy, went on to compete in Milan at

the European Cup in that spring of 2008. Subsequently, paracanoe was a demonstration event at the World Championships for the first time, in Halifax in 2009. From there, competitors like Christine Selinger from Regina catapulted Canada to the forefront of paracanoe on the international stage. She won several medals, including two World Championship golds. Erica Scarff of Mississauga represented Canada in Rio and is still on the national team.

Paracanoe is great for anyone who has limited lower body mobility. Next to swimming, paddle sports are the most popular water sport for those with a mobility issue. All equipment is provided and a comprehensive safety orientation is part of the program. When I started kayaking there wasn't any adaptive programming and I had to figure things out on my own. I tried to hold the rudder between my toes:

"Whether you want to race, or just get out on the water, paracanoe is the best way to see another side of life."



not a good long-term solution. Today, coaches are able to help adapt equipment to suit the paddler's individual needs. I now use a steering mechanism which loops around my foot to control the rudder. A game changer!

Paracanoe sprint races involve two types of boats, kayak and va'a. The kayak is propelled by a double-blade paddle, while the va'a is an outrigger canoe with an ama (second pontoon) as a support float and is used with a single-blade paddle. Both kayak and va'a have three different classes of events for men and women, depending upon the classification of an ath-

lete's disability. At the international level all paracanoe races are individual events and competed at a distance of 200m. Just as all ages are included at the regatta, so are all abilities. The paracanoe races are run along with the other events at all local, divisional and national regattas.

It's official! The sport continues to gain momentum. Para-va'a has now been added to the Tokyo Paralympics in 2020 and it has been confirmed that paracanoe will be contested in Paris in 2024. The paracanoe World Conference was held in Stockholm, Sweden in 2018, with the objective of

widening the scope of the sport.

The sport itself is different because you get to go out on the waterways. Racing doesn't play a big part of my paddling life any longer. In recent years, I've tried both stand-up paddling and white water canoeing. There is nothing better than getting out on the river either at the end of the day, or during a sunny weekend. Clubs across Ontario offer programs for people of all ages and abilities. Whether you want to race, or just get out on the water, paracanoe is the best way to see another side of life.



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BRING ON THE BAY

When Sandra Roberts of Ottawa began her quest to become a triathlete in 2016, she had to overcome a strong fear of swimming in open water. On her first attempt to swim in Meech Lake she never made it past the changing hut after looking at the black water in the lake. She found it so terrifying that she turned around and drove back home.

A few weeks later she heard about the Swim Angel Program offered by the Bring on the Bay (BOTB) 3K open water swim event in the Ottawa River and decided to register. She credits the program with providing her with the confidence she needed to swim in open water surrounded by hundreds of other swimmers.

"Now the open water swim is my favourite," she says. "And I attribute this completely to the positive experience I had in my first race in open water."

The Swim Angel program, created by Jeff Mackwood in 2015, has become an integral part of the BOTB event. The inspiration for the

program came a year earlier when a friend of Mackwood's told him that she wanted to participate in the race but could not do so safely because she has epilepsy.

"I offered to angel her, which means that I would swim alongside her throughout the race," he said. "After helping her achieve her goal of finishing the swim, I approached the BOTB organizers and suggested the creation of a formal Swim Angel program."

With their approval, Mackwood launched the program in time for the 2015 event.

Bring on the Bay starts at the Nepean Sailing Club and finishes at the Britannia Yacht Club. It is one of only a few major open water swim events with a Swim Angel program.

According to Mackwood, a swim angel is an experienced distance swimmer who provides an extra measure of confidence and safety for swimmers who are physically able to complete the race but could (or would) not do it (safely) without having an angel present. If required during the race,

the angel provides reassurance and encouragement to their swimmer in order to help them avoid panic and be able to finish the race.

If the swimmer needs to be pulled from the race, they will provide immediate assistance until a nearby kayak/boat arrives.

In the program's inaugural year, angels were provided for one swimmer with cerebral palsy, two blind/visually impaired swimmers, and three swimmers with anxiety or fear of open water. Since then, the program has continued to grow.

When swimmers register, they can request a swim angel. They are required to give a brief reason as to why they need an angel. Program organizers discuss personal requirements with them to get a fuller understanding, and then match them with the volunteer angels most suited to their needs.

Prior to race day, the angels receive dryland training to discuss the program and what to expect on race day. On the evening before the race, the angels meet their swimmer

Open Water Swim Event Offers Unique and Inclusive Service

By Tim Scapillato

matches during an orientation session. Then they take to the water for safety training led by Chris Wagg, vice president of public education with the Lifesaving Society.

These sessions are important for instilling confidence in swimmers with disabilities and those with apprehension of open water. Shelley Ann Morris, a visually impaired triathlete who has completed BOTB four times with the help of angel George Hajecek, notes that the event is “extremely safe, with pre-race training for angels and swimmers alike. Many boats are stationed along the course to create a safe route and to assist those who may not complete the swim.” She adds that without the help of her angel, “I’d still be on dry land.”

Now in its 13th year, BOTB has grown from a handful of swimmers the first year to 950 swimmers in 2019, making it one of Canada’s largest open water swim events.

With the addition of the Swim Angel program in 2015, it is also one of the most inclusive swim events in the country. It is a fitting addition,

as all proceeds from the event are donated to Easter Seals Ontario to benefit children with physical disabilities in the Ottawa area. Swim angels make it possible for anyone who wants to participate to do so safely and confidently.

Roberts remembers how it felt to be part of BOTB for the first time, accompanied by her angel, Audrey Prayal-Brown. “Holy moly! It was amazing! There were loads of support boats to watch over us – some were dressed as pirates! The yachts were lined up to the right of us with people cheering us on. I felt very confident all the way across with Audrey by my side.” The following year, she completed the swim on her own.

Hajecek will be back this year for the fifth time as a swim angel. “Swimming in open water can be a

frightening and challenging experience for anyone,” he explains. “The uncertainty of the water depth, fear around contact with weeds, waves, and current are all reasons that could hold people back from trying. The Swim Angel program is there to support anyone who wants to swim BOTB and wants the support of another swimmer by their side. I would encourage anyone who wants to try open water swimming to come out. The experience will be life-changing.”

Anyone who needs a swim angel can indicate their requirement by selecting the checkbox on the BOTB registration page. Those wishing to volunteer as a swim angel should send an email to BOTBangels@gmail.com for more information.





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- Provincial/Eastern Canadian Goalball Championship
- Equipment Loaning Program
- OBSA Sports Days
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Imagine Yoga for EveryBODY



Wellness for All Abilities

Imagine Yoga and Wellness Inc., was started in 2018 by Robynn Nierop and Julie Burrows who have a combined 25 years of experience working with individuals of all abilities. Their business is based on the desire to provide options to encourage everybody to get more active and lead a healthier lifestyle in a fun and social way.

In an exclusive interview for ParaSport® magazine with ParaSport® Ontario's Executive Director Jeff Tiessen, here's what Robynn and Julie had to share.



and wellness. And so began Imagine Yoga & Wellness in keeping with the objectives of Imagine Respite Services and incorporating health and wellness.

JT: In the transition from socialization to healthy living, was there a defining moment that triggered you both to take the next step?

Robynn: We saw the ability and the empowerment and the want to have a better quality of life. It's been fascinating to see how it has evolved. We had our initial group of those with special needs and disabilities which now includes children and older adults. The special populations don't always have access. The most common question we get is "Where's your studio?" We don't have a studio. The idea is that we go to them to make it that much more accessible. Overall wellness encompasses the mind, body, and spirit. I think we can all agree that there is a shift in the demand, and necessity, for health and wellness and we like to work with the populations that may not have as much access to it.

JT: Does Imagine exclusively serve those with disabilities?

Julie: No. It was where we started since we already had Imagine Respite Services, but Imagine Yoga and Wellness also serves a broader scope of special populations. We want to provide health and wellness to whom-ever needs or wants it, with the idea that you don't have to come to us to get it; we'll come to you. So that's how

JT: Julie, I understand that you began working with the special needs community when you were 18.

Julie: Yes, I started working at Community Living Toronto with a group at a golf course whose job was filling divots. So, all day long we filled divots. From there I supervised and supported another group that cleaned buildings. I got so much from that experience. I knew these guys for nine years and became one of the people they went to with concerns, relationship problems... the relationship we built was amazing.

JT: With a diversity of personalities, and demands, what did you take from that?

Julie: I learned how to work with people of all abilities. I met parents who needed respite support and that's when I decided to open Imag-

ine Respite Services to serve adults of all abilities, providing day programming, outings, activities, and at-home respite where I really started to learn about parents' different expectations.

JT: What about physical activity? Where did that rank on the priority scale for parents?

Julie: When I first started Imagine, our number one goal was socialization, not health, not physicality. I really just wanted to get these guys socializing and making new friends. Then Robynn joined Imagine and began to get some of our guys more active in the community... we'd go bowling or for walks, more physical things than they were used to. Robynn's goals were to put a healthy spin on Imagine Respite and from there we adopted yoga and health



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Systematic Reviews

- Two systematic reviews found evidence to support Farabloc as an effective treatment for management of PLP (Halbert et al., 2002; Stanndard, Kalso, & Ballantyne, 2010).
- The 2002 review on the optimal management of acute and chronic PLP, documented that Farabloc research was only one of three studies to score the maximum of five points for a quality assessment. For late PLP (greater than 2-week post operatively), this review agreed that there is evidence suggesting that Farabloc is an effective treatment.

(The Clinical Journal of Pain, 18:84-92 © 2002 Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Inc., Philadelphia. "Evidence for the Optimal Management of Acute and Chronic Phantom Pain: A Systemic Review").



- The findings were affirmed in the second review, listing Farabloc as an intervention supported by evidence for the management of PLP (Stanndard et al., 2010).

(Nikolajsen, L. (2010) Phantom Limb Pain,

in Evidence-Based Chronic Pain Management (eds C.F. Stanndard, E. Kalso and J. Ballantyne), John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., West Sussex, UK).



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we transitioned from special needs to any special population and beyond.

JT: Do you accommodate different special populations differently or are your services generally the same for all?

Robynn: It varies. It's different when I am facilitating a class for individuals with special needs than it is for one for older adults, but the main goal is to make every classroom feel welcoming so no one is left behind. Everyone can practice within their means on any given day. When it comes to making it accessible, I may have someone in a chair and someone on a mat in the same class. It makes it more inclusive when you have varying degrees of physical and cognitive abilities practicing together. Yoga offers many modifications and the use of props are encouraged.

I adapt my yoga practice every day depending on where I'm at that day. How much you want to adapt it depends on the individual and their comfort level that day. Yoga itself is very adaptable. Show up as you are,

and we take you as you are. It will be whatever you make it out to be but we'll make sure you feel included and that you should be there.

JT: What's one of your biggest challenges in your business of yoga and wellness?

Julie: I think it's often parents, and sometimes teachers, of youth with special needs who don't see the benefit or don't believe that their child will benefit from it. It's getting this population as a whole to understand that they can do it regardless of ability.

JT: What are those benefits? What is that experience for someone? What are they coming away with?

Robynn: They're coming away with a deeper sense of relaxation. They're still getting a workout but it's much more relaxing. A lot of people aren't consciously breathing, so by utilizing breath and using it as a resource, it is hard to describe how far that takes people. It's about the way we move the body, holding poses, being present, and connecting with

our bodies. Many people are just disconnected for various reasons. Yoga allows you to rebuild that connection. A lot of people walk away from yoga having had an experience. We tell everyone that acceptance from outside helps allow their acceptance from inside themselves and to explore their bodies in ways they might not have through sport and other activities.

JT: Are youth able to embrace this philosophy as well?

Robynn: We offer yoga to children as young as two and a half years old! For the younger ones, we bring in puppets, animal poses, yoga-related story books and appropriate breathing techniques to make it more playful and relatable. They still get the benefits and the awareness. We are able to tell the story in a way that the audience can understand. With kids and some individuals with special needs, I try to be very mindful of language, making sure we use words that allow them to express themselves, and feel safe.

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One great example of the outcome we wish to see involved a mother and son doing yoga together. Mom had concerns that her son was very “busy” and can be overwhelming because he’s so busy. She was looking for something calm. So I suggested yoga. At the end of the session she messaged us saying that she has never had her son so relaxed as she did after their yoga session and afterwards he had this new calmness to him.

JT: Would you call yoga an activity?

Robynn: I always call it a practice.

JT: For those parents who may be resistant or hesitant, what do you say to them?

Robynn: It’s the connection, with themselves and their body. It’s a healthy form of movement. It’s the potential for self-regulation and empowerment. Through the practice of yoga it invites everyone’s body to be accessible to them. Even those with

very limited, or even no movement, can do yoga by focusing on breathing. It can help you to relax and feel calm, to build connections and friendships, to increase confidence and to support the relationship you have with yourself.

JT: As advice to yoga colleagues, how do they get started, particularly if they don’t know anyone with a disability?

Robynn: You must start with an inclusive mindset. The accessible training that I did was life changing for me. It starts with being creative and understanding the need for it. Our goal is to have instructors all across the province making yoga accessible for all. I would like more yoga instructors to learn to be inclusive so all individuals feel accepted. There are many people with differences that need courage to enter a yoga room because they don’t feel welcome. We never want to do that.

JT: There is a segment of our community that believes it should be an instructor with a disability leading a class for persons with a disability because “the able-bodied community has never walked in our shoes.” How do you respond?

Robynn: To me it’s deeper than that. It comes from a place of sharing experiences. It’s about making yoga available. I don’t need to have to look, or be, a certain way to connect with someone in my class. We can connect even though we’re not the same. That’s inclusivity. It goes much further beyond what you see physically; we are all connected.

Regardless of ability or perceived disability, we are all in the yoga class together. We don’t presume to understand someone else’s journey in life. We’re seeking to create an experience.

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Track3 DiscAbility hits the slopes!

The thrill of a long drive, the excitement of making the putt, the jokes, laughs and cheers of accomplishment for a great shot – these are the hallmarks of golf... DISC golf that is. Played on parkland courses around the world, Canada has just begun to grasp the latest craze for this incredibly enjoyable outdoor sport and social activity. Think... applying golf rules of counting shots with Frisbee-like discs aiming for a basket. The game is extremely affordable and can be enjoyed virtually anywhere. Best of all, inclusivity is second nature.

“When you can set up a basket and nine holes on beautiful off-season ski hill terrain, that people of all abilities can play on, you are onto a great inclusive programming opportunity,” says Naomi Schafler, Executive Director of Ontario Track 3 Ski Association. “DiscAbility has emerged as our signature event focus as we start to explore adaptive sport program opportunities and league play.”

And adaptive sports are in high demand. Sport organizations are responding in ways that enable freedom and barrier free participation. “We want DiscAbility to broaden our positive

impact of accessible sport programs for people with physical and/or cognitive disability in a sector that is grossly underserved,” adds Schafler.

Fully customizable course layouts, set up by Darrell Bankes of Innova Disc Golf, enable Track3 to offer events that appeal to all ages and all abilities. “The sport itself promotes physical skills development, gets folks outdoors, and encourages team-style social opportunities” says Bankes. “Innova is thrilled to partner with Track3 to promote disc golf to an even larger audience who can play at a level that is meaningful and engaging for everyone.”





For the past few years, Track3 has tried a number of layouts and locations. "My favourite has been playing with my family down Wortley's Wiggle, a black diamond run, on Caledon Ski Club's beautiful hills," says Jason, a parent of a Track3 athlete. "A ride back up on the chair lift and seeing the fall colours from that perspective while playing a sport that my entire family could enjoy was awesome."

One of the most successful events has become an annual fundraiser held at Beaver Valley Ski Resort in Markdale, Ont. The event has been welcomed as a way to enjoy this terrain off-season in a manner that values the environment and has

virtually no permanent footprint. "It is spectacular scenery up here and really fun to play a game that everyone can enjoy," says George, a former Track3 athlete and current volunteer instructor.

When Track3 first learned about disc golf, the accessibility of the sport scored high on its list for impact. And with every great shot, building this sport in an adaptive direction has doubled the score on inclusivity. Find a few friends of all abilities, head out to some parkland and let those discs fly!



DiscAbility opportunities are opening up every year with new events lined up for the summer and fall. A full list of upcoming events is available at track3.org.

Western University Sledge Hockey Tournament

Students Score for Inclusive Play

By Erin O'Sullivan





The power of hockey is well known in Canada. Many cold winter days are filled with the exciting sport, and it's all about getting into your gear, putting on a jersey for a team you've come to admire, proudly wearing your name on the back, huddling around to discuss plays and lowering into your sledge to finally hit the ice.

At least, that's a familiar feeling to many athletes who play and compete in the growing sport of sledge hockey.

Sledge hockey continues to grow in popularity across Ontario and it isn't surprising why. The action-packed game is filled with exciting plays, teamwork and strategy. Players quickly move around the ice on the sledge and turn at angles that would make amateurs easily tip out of their buckets.

Alex Seligman-Swartz is familiar with the importance and impact that sport can have on people with disabilities. Seligman-Swartz has volunteered with ParaSport® Ontario many times before and knows just how important it is for athletes with disabilities to have the same access and inclusion in sport. He led a charge for more inclusive sports this year among his fraternity brothers to create and launch the inaugural Western Sledge Hockey Tournament.

"The team that brought this together worked with one common goal in mind, creating awareness for ParaSport Ontario and the disability community," says Seligman-Swartz. "Everyone on the team is ready and eager to grow this event to other schools and make the event in London even bigger."

Co-organizers and planning members of the event included Simon McEvoy, Jacob Kay, Max Levy, Jeremy Shiff, Jonah Walters, Jack Basian, Chase Winston, Jack Jelinek, Will Jelinek and Conor McNamnee.

The Sigma Chi Fraternity – Epsilon Omnicron Chapter, LUG Hockey, Canadian Paralympic gold medalist goalie Paul Rosen and members of the Western University and London community came together to support this event and truly understood the meaning behind it all.

It wasn't just a hockey game. It was an opportunity to give back and show that the power of sport can be made stronger when everyBODY is included.

The event raised over \$1,500 for both ParaSport Ontario and the Huntsman Cancer Institute. Over 60 participants were involved across four teams, with special guest skater Mackenzie Spong, a first-year Kinesiology student at Western University and one of the youngest players on the Canadian Women's National Sledge Hockey Team joining in on the event.

"We could see that this event has a ton of potential to grow. We hope to double our participation number next year and raise \$5,000 to support ParaSport Ontario and grow this event across other schools in Ontario," says Seligman-Swartz.

"From a very young age my grandfather [Bernard Gluckstein] always tried to teach me the importance of helping people and giving back to the community. I have learned so much from him over the years and I want to carry on his legacy by giving back as much as I can. ParaSport Ontario is such a great organization and I am proud to spread their mission to everyone in the community," adds Seligman-Swartz.

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A man in a wheelchair is sitting on an outdoor basketball court. He is wearing a black tank top and dark pants, and he is holding a basketball in his right hand. The background shows a basketball hoop and bleachers. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

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READY TO PLAY Game face on?

TYLER MARION IS DRIVEN TO PLAY



By Gordon Ruder

On most days of the week you can find five-year-old Tyler Marion doing what he loves most – playing some kind of sport. He is passionate about hockey, basketball, baseball, downhill skiing, and water skiing. When Tyler talks about the next game he’s going to play, you can hear the joy in his voice as he visualizes the swish of the basketball through the hoop, the slap of the puck into the net, or the satisfying crack of the bat hitting the ball. Yet when he was one year old, it was a much different story – that was when Tyler’s paediatrician told his family that he had cerebral palsy (CP) and might never be able to walk, let alone play sports.

Check! Leg braces on? Check!

EVERY SPORT HE ENCOUNTERS

Thrilled that his son has exceeded the expectations that some professionals placed on him at a young age, Larry Marion says that Tyler doesn't know the meaning of the word "can't."

CP is the most common cause of physical disability in children, affecting one out of every 500 babies born in Canada. Tyler has spastic diplegic CP, which causes stiff muscles and spasticity in the lower limbs.

In addition to typical sports equipment, Tyler has a pair of custom-made ankle foot orthoses (AFOs) that were created and designed by a team of

certified orthotists and orthotic technicians at Boundless Biomechanical Bracing. Tyler's AFOs provided the foundation that made it possible for him to start walking and gave him the confidence to try it. Now they protect and support the growing joints, bones, and muscles in his lower limbs.

While many young children are self-conscious about wearing braces, properly fitted ones can help them feel more stable on the playing field, court, or rink. Their braces become just another piece of equipment – that's how Tyler sees them. So, when

he gets ready to play hockey, he asks for his braces as enthusiastically as he asks for his gloves or stick. Having the right gear is important.

Tyler's eagerness to wear his braces makes him a good role model for advocacy and awareness – and this is always necessary. People can understand and accept that eyeglasses allow you to see better and braces on your teeth make them straight. Still, there are people who tend to think something is wrong with a person when they see them with a leg, back, or arm brace.





“At the first sign that the other kids are out on the street,” says Tyler’s mom Christine Marion, “Tyler and his brother are running to get their gear and get outside to play. He’s incredibly driven to play every sport he encounters.”

There is no cure for CP, and Tyler’s family understands this. They also know that a brace can’t stop the spasticity in Tyler’s leg. Boundless orthotists often use this analogy: getting a leg brace is like getting a pair of eyeglasses for nearsightedness. While the eyeglasses won’t cure the underlying problem, they will improve a person’s eyesight

when they’re wearing them. The same principle applies to braces.

That said, Tyler’s interests, goals, and support needs may change as he grows older and he may require different orthotic devices. Whatever his needs, he can depend on support from “Team Tyler.” This includes his biggest fans – his family – along with his clinical orthotists, doctors, physiotherapists, teachers, and the other healthcare providers who are helping him maximize his potential and make the most of every opportunity.

While Larry is understandably proud of his son’s athletic abilities, he also views sports as an important part in developing the necessary grit to manage life’s trials and tribulations, regardless of one’s physical abilities. He says that “playing sports is such a great teacher for life – it teaches you how to win, how to lose, how to be a team player, and how to get up when you fall down.”

And with his indomitable attitude, Tyler is already showing others how that’s done.

“Playing sports is such a great teacher for life – it teaches you how to win, how to lose, how to be a team player, and how to get up when you fall down.”

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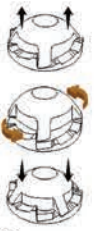


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Photo by Michael Schneider. Golfer pictured is Edward Urquhart.

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joint fusion
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arthritic joint surface
or loss of cartilage
significant ligament
damage or instability
nerve damage

OTHER

lower limb fractures resulting in joint
stiffness or muscle weakness
leg length difference
cerebral palsy
muscular dystrophy
amputees

SPINE

spinal cord injury
spina bifida
paraplegia
polio



Photo provided by Tennis Australia

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Ontario Cerebral Palsy Sports Association

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Boccia Bratz

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