

マルクス・レームの義足が、東京に突きつけたもの

リオデジャネイロ・パラリンピックの男子走り幅跳び（切断などT44）で**マルクス・レーム**（ドイツ）が、8メートル21の大会新記録で連覇を達成した。リオ五輪の金メダル記録8メートル38には17センチ届かなかったが、義足のアスリートが健常者と互角に競える時代がきたことを印象づけた。

レームは14歳の時にウエークボード練習中の事故で右ひざ下を切断した。20歳で義足をつけて陸上に挑戦し、12年ロンドン・パラリンピックを7メートル35で制した。復活物語が騒がしくなるのはその後。彼は驚異的なスピードで記録を伸ばし、14年のドイツ選手権で健常者を抑えて8メートル24で優勝したのだ。そこから周囲の視線はレームではなく、カーボン繊維でできた義足に向けられるようになった。

昨年10月の世界選手権で8メートル40の世界記録をマークして、12年ロンドン五輪の優勝記録を9センチも上回った。彼の努力と競技力への称賛は、いつしか「テクニカル（道具）・ドーピング」という声に変わった。リオ五輪の参加標準記録8メートル15をクリアしていた彼は五輪出場を熱望した。だが、国際陸連は「義足が有利に働いていないことの証明」を条件につけた。結局、レームは五輪を断念した。

確かにカーボン繊維製の義足は反発力がある。跳躍に有利なのは選手たちも認めている。一方で助走の加速が健常者より劣るハンディもある。**レームは7メートル95センチがベスト記録だった13年から義足を変えていない**。昨年の世界選手権では同じ義足で跳躍した2位の選手に1メートル14センチの大差をつけている。もっと彼自身の努力や技術が注目されてもよかった。一連の騒動の根底に「障がい者が健常者より跳べるはずがない」という先入観を感じた。

もっとも平等の条件で競うのがスポーツの原則。パラリンピックでも障害の程度で細かくクラス分けされている。国際陸連が義足で跳ぶアスリートの五輪参加に慎重になるのも当然だろう。ただ、だからと言って排除ありきではなく、順位に関係ない「オープン参加」という形で出場させる選択肢もあったはずだ。パラリンピックの競技レベルの高さを世界にアピールする最高の機会になったと思う。

数年前まで義足の選手が五輪の記録をおびかすなど、想像もできなかった。テクノロジーは私たちの予想をはるかに超えたスピードで進歩し、スポーツ界にも浸透している。人間の能力と科学の力をどう折り合いをつけるのか。レームの騒動は私たちに実にやっかいな難題を突きつけた。五輪とパラリンピックの間の問題だけではない。例えば、**反発力のある人工靱帯（じんたい）**や、**可動域の広い人工関節**が開発されたら、どう判断するのか。そんな時代は遅からずやってくる。

リオで連覇を達成したレームは「**夢は五輪に出ること**」と**明言**した。今回の五輪出場は断念したが、「義足が有利に働いていないことの証明」の結論が先送りされただけだ。20年東京五輪でパラリンピアン出場の議論が再燃することは間違いない。難しい選択を迫られる。唯一確実なことは、パラリンピアンの記録が今よりずっと伸びているということだ。【五輪・パラリンピック準備委員 首藤正徳】

Markus Rehm determined to lift Paralympic sport to new heights: 'We have to show what we can achieve'

BY MEGAN STEWART 15/09/2016 19H20

German 'blade jumper' looks to go an even greater distance Saturday night at Olympic Stadium

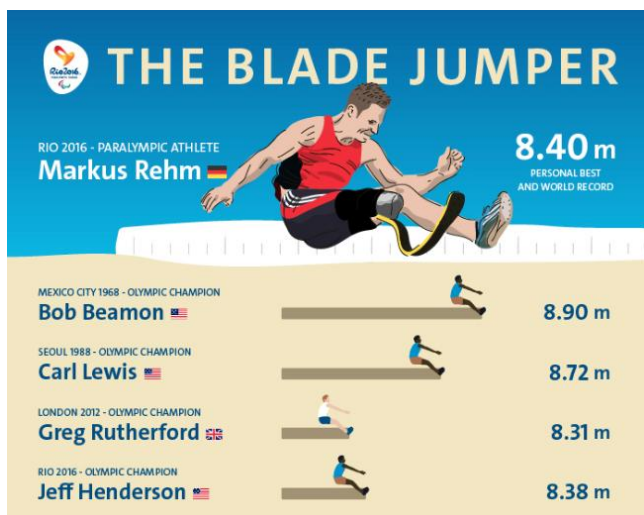


Rehm has jumped far enough to win gold at the last two Olympic Games (Photo: Rio 2016/Paulo Mumia)

The centimetres keep adding up for [Markus Rehm](#), the German long jumper who flies as far as the best in the world and begins the defence of his Paralympic title on the night of Saturday (17 September) at the Olympic Stadium in Rio de Janeiro.

Five years ago he won his first world championship with a leap of 7.09 metres. Two years later, he improved that mark by nearly 90 centimetres. "I was jumping consistently – 7.80m, 7.87m, in Grosseto 7.96m," [he said](#) in 2014. "I knew I could do 8.00m, but in the end I did 8.24m."

Then, in 2015, came the performance that would catapult him firmly onto the global stage. Rehm jumped 8.40m, the fifth furthest distance in the world that year, including able-bodied and para athletes like himself. It was farther than the Olympic gold medallist jumped at London 2012. It would prove further than the Olympic champion at Rio 2016, too.



"It changed a lot in my life," he said of that superlative, gotta-look-twice jump. "I was looking forward to making something big and showing all the people in the whole world that Paralympic athletes can achieve so much."

Rehm competes in the T44 class, with competition due to start at 6.30pm (Rio time) on Saturday at the Olympic Stadium.

[Learn more about Paralympic classification](#)

The London 2012 Paralympic Games were when spectators started to sit up and pay attention. "People didn't take our sport very seriously and now they do have to take it seriously because we are great athletes. We can achieve really good results, which are close or even better than Olympic athletes. We want to show that we do serious sports. We have to show what we can achieve."



Markus Rehm, left, won gold with Germany's 4x100m T42-47 relay

on 12 September (Photo: Getty Images/Friedemann Vogel)

Rehm, 28, talks to everyone in the athletes' village. There is no life story he doesn't want to hear, no calamity or heartbreak that fails to move him, no successes that don't impress him.

"All the athletes have huge stories behind them. They are full of emotion and power. They tell you they lost a leg, had a crazy accident, had an organ transplant, fought difficult illness – you think, what a character they have. It motivates me. I am always interested."

To sports fans who want to hear those stories, too, Rehm offers this advice. "Be relaxed. Just be open."

And behave as the kids do. "They say, 'Whoa, what a cool leg. Why do you need this leg?'"

“We want to be recognised,” said Rehm, who is employed by Germany’s military as a medical specialist in the area of prosthetics and orthotics. “Hopefully with this Paralympic movement we can help more people get access to better parts and better prosthesis. This is a great target for our sport to achieve.”

Rehm was 14 when his leg was shredded by the outboard motor of a speedboat. He had been wakeboarding and later won a silver medal against able-bodied athletes in the junior national wakeboarding championships.

He is Germany’s national champion in the long jump and is making a bid to compete at the Olympic Games. To be eligible, he must prove his blade does not give him an advantage over the bone and sinew of his competition. He’s been studying the science for months.

“I always said I want a fair competition,” he said. “I don’t want to have any advantage out of a prosthesis, I just want to do what I love and train really hard for outstanding performances. I don’t want to say sorry for it.”

In the lead-up to Rio 2016, Rehm took a break from his research to focus on training but will resume the work afterwards and is attempting to compete at the 2017 world championship in London.

“I win my medals at the Paralympic Games. I am a para athlete and that is not going to change at any time and I’m really proud of it,” he said. “But I would like a bigger platform to show to a bigger crowd that it is really worth it to watch our sport and it is really interesting what we are doing. It is the main reason I want to compete in able-bodied competition.”

In more than one way, his is a case worth studying. For the past eight years, the blade jumper has trained under the guidance of a javelin thrower.

“She knows me by heart,” Rehm said of his club coach, Steffi Nerius, an Olympic silver medallist and world champion in her sport. “Everyone said it was never working out that a javelin thrower can train a long jumper. And that is exactly what we’ve done.”



Rehm started training with Steffi Nerius in 2008 (Photo: Getty Images/Dan Mullan)

That's indeed what they achieved – to the initial discontent of the establishment.

“It was so fun when we started to jump farther than some able-bodied athletes. So many professional long jump coaches, they were quite... let's say they were quite pissed,” said Rehm, his dimples deepening with a big smile.

Since Nerius didn't have a fixed approach in training jumps, together the athlete and coach figured out what worked for them.

“She never said, 'You have to do it like this, that is the way it should be.' Instead, she said, 'Can you do it like this?' We found a good way together and we have grown together.”

When Rehm hit the board for that record-setting jump in Doha at the end of last year at the world championships, he felt as if he took flight. Now, on the eve of his moment at Rio 2016, he feels as good as ever and believes he is on the cusp of taking off again. He always takes a break from jumping in the 10 days before competition but what he has now is a village and hundreds of people's stories to hear.

“Here in the Paralympic Village, for me it is emotional. I love to see all the people together, to have dinner with them, spend time together. This is the last motivation I need to jump really far again,” he said. “Let me go out there and show what I can do,”