

News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Bridgestone Leverages Advanced Tire and Rubber Materials to Support Athlete Equipment at Paris 2024 Paralympic Games

- **As a Worldwide Paralympic Partner, Bridgestone is collaborating with athletes to enhance rubber equipment pieces in various adaptive sports.**
- **Survey data¹ shows it is difficult for 61 percent of respondents to find or source the adaptive sports equipment and accessories they need.**
- **Support for adaptive sports demonstrates the company's belief in equitable access to sports and equipment for people of all abilities.**

Brussels (August 20, 2024) – Bridgestone Corporation (Bridgestone) is extending its support for the Olympic and Paralympic Games Paris 2024 through a series of innovation projects in collaboration with adaptive athletes.

Bridgestone became a Worldwide Paralympic Partner since 2018 and has focused both globally and locally on making sports and society more inclusive. This includes working with adaptive athletes and community non-profit partners to help create more equitable access to adaptive sports activities.

Bridgestone is now expanding those efforts by leveraging its rubber, materials, and design expertise to help enhance rubber components for certain adaptive sports equipment. The list of rubber-related pieces that will be used by select athletes in Paris includes gloves for multiple sports, hand rims for wheelchair racing, tires for wheelchair tennis, and more.

This work helps highlight the challenges faced by many adaptive athletes when it comes to accessing equipment. In a recent survey¹ commissioned by Bridgestone Americas, 61 percent of respondents stated it is difficult for them to find or source the adaptive sports equipment and accessories they need.

“Bridgestone believes in the power of sport to have a positive and lasting impact, especially for younger athletes and those with disabilities. Unfortunately, we know not everyone has the same level of access to participate,” said Sara Correa, Chief Marketing Officer for Bridgestone in the Americas, Europe, Middle East and Africa. “We are

determined to help remove barriers and create more equitable access to sports because we know the benefits of participation translate far beyond the field of play. No matter a person's background or ability, what really matters is contributing to our communities by giving everyone a chance to participate and perform at their best."

Nearly 60 percent of respondents in the survey stated they have modified or customized adaptive sports equipment or accessories themselves. Additionally, 46 percent stated they have had to modify generic sports equipment to meet their specific adaptive needs, and 16 percent of respondents have even created new equipment themselves that did not exist in the market.

"The right equipment can be life-changing for athletes," said Susannah Scaroni, a Team Bridgestone athlete ambassador and Team USA wheelchair racer who won gold in the 5000m event at Tokyo 2020. "When I first received a racing chair designed with me in mind, it gave me greater confidence and trust in my equipment. That allowed my focus to shift more toward my training and performance. I know so many others who did not have that experience, which can impact their path in the sport and motivation to participate."

In consideration of these needs, Bridgestone worked with a variety of Team Bridgestone athlete ambassadors to identify where its unique tire and rubber expertise could help enhance aspects of adaptive sports equipment. Critical performance aspects of tires, such as grip and durability, were identified as significant needs for athletes in sports like Para athletics, wheelchair tennis, wheelchair rugby, and more.

Bridgestone collaborated with Paralympic athletes in the United States and Japan to develop, test, and evolve various rubber equipment pieces using the same rubber found in its latest generation ENLITEN tires. Engineers at Bridgestone's technology centers in the Americas (Akron, Ohio) and Japan (Kodaira City, Tokyo) have created rubber pads for wheelchair racing gloves, wheelchair rugby gloves, rubber hand rims for wheelchairs, rubber soles for prosthetic running blades, and wheelchair tennis tires.

"Collaborating with the engineering team at Bridgestone has been an amazing experience," said Chuck Aoki, the co-captain of Team USA Wheelchair Rugby who has worked with the company on a pair of custom rubber gloves. "Most people don't realize that even at the Paralympic Games level, adaptive athletes are often creating and customizing their own equipment because what they need is not always available. Working with a partner like Bridgestone has been a rewarding experience, and it has continued to motivate me to find ways to introduce adaptive sports to new people."

Several Team Bridgestone athlete ambassadors will be competing with some of Bridgestone's rubber equipment at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. This list includes Aaron Pike (Para Athletics), Chuck Aoki (Wheelchair Rugby); Daniel Romanchuk (Para

Athletics), Manami Tanaka (Wheelchair Tennis), Susannah Scaroni (Para Athletics), and Yukako Hata (Para Triathlon).

In all, Bridgestone is currently supporting 20 current and retired Paralympians as Team Bridgestone athlete ambassadors. This includes 17 who will be competing at Paris 2024. The decorated group has collected 10 total medals over the past three Paralympic Games.

As a Worldwide Olympic and Paralympic Partner, Bridgestone is committed to helping support and enhance the experience for athletes, staff, fans, and visitors in Paris for the Olympic and Paralympic Games Paris 2024. You can learn more about the company's contributions to Paris 2024 [here](#).

Additional information about Bridgestone's Worldwide Olympic and Paralympic Partnerships can be found online at [Bridgestone.com/Olympics](https://www.bridgestone.com/Olympics).

¹ *Survey Methodology: This research was designed to collect information on how adaptive athletes have modified their equipment. It was fielded in partnership with the Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF) with the goal of helping Bridgestone understand the prevalence and pain points associated with equipment modification. The survey was conducted online via SurveyMonkey between January 14-April 15, 2024. The survey was conducted among a national sample of athletes, parents, or coaches who have used adaptive sports equipment, who opted in to share responses in return for a modest financial incentive (a \$5.00 USD gift card). A total of 249 valid responses were collected, resulting in a margin of error of +/- 6 percentage points.*

About Bridgestone Corporation:

Bridgestone is a global leader in tires and rubber building on its expertise to provide solutions for safe and sustainable mobility. Headquartered in Tokyo, the company employs approximately 130,000 people globally and conducts business in more than 150 countries and territories worldwide. Bridgestone offers a diverse product portfolio of premium tires and advanced solutions backed by innovative technologies, improving the way people around the world move, live, work and play.

About Bridgestone Corporation's Worldwide Olympic and Paralympic Partnerships:

Bridgestone proudly became a Worldwide Olympic Partner in 2014 and a Worldwide Paralympic Partner in 2018. Bridgestone is dedicated to delivering products, services and solutions that improve the way people move, live, work and play, and its commitment to the Olympic Movement and Paralympic Movement continues a history of sport and innovation dating back more than 100 years. As a worldwide partner, Bridgestone has marketing rights that include its full range of tires, tire services and selected automotive vehicle services, self-propelled bicycles, seismic isolations bearings, and a variety of building and industrial products.

About Team Bridgestone:

All Bridgestone activities related to its Worldwide Olympic and Paralympic Partnerships are designed to empower people of all backgrounds and abilities to persevere through adversity and perform at their best, no matter what. In support of these efforts, the company is currently partnering with more than 40 inspiring Olympians, Paralympians, and hopefuls from ten countries and over 20 sports to serve as Team Bridgestone brand ambassadors on the Road to Paris 2024.

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