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Executive Board

Press Release

14 April 2008

German female team are Europe's champions

**Germany beats Netherlands 64-31 at Champions
Weekend**

Germany's female wheelchair basketball team confirmed its special standing last Sunday (13/4/2008), adding a magnificent finale to the Champions Weekend for Paralympics Sponsor Otto Bock: a 64-31 victory over Holland, European second-place champions (20-8/36-16/50-24). The teams played an exciting, fast-paced game and provided outstanding publicity for the Paralympics, both for spectators as well as Germany's ZDF TV station.

Seven-hundred and fifty fans watched the game live at Göttingen's Lokhalle arena, where Göttingen's BG 74 team would play against the Frankfurt Skyliners in the subsequent national league match. Thanks to support from the BG 74 national league team and Lokhalle management, the international match had a professional framework as well as an emotional background: Maren Butterbrodt and Simone Kues would be playing in their former home town for the first time in years.



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It was clear how much this motivated Maren Butterbrodt right from the start of the match. In the first quarter she contributed twelve points to her team's 20-8 lead. "It was a lot of fun, and the fans gave us great support," said the celebrated top-scorer, who brought in 21 points even though she was only on the field for 20 of the game's 40 minutes. Germany's coach Holger Glinicki could afford the luxury of switching players as he saw fit, while also relieving experienced performers like Butterbrodt, Nora Schratz and Simone Kues, who the coach considers to be at the very top of her handicap class worldwide. Silke Bleifuss and Annette Kahl kept up the pace, as shown by their passing skills in the opponent's court at the fifteen minute mark (26-12). The German team stayed in control of the game despite tough resistance from the Dutch team.

"The top teams are overseas. That's why we definitely need the tournaments in the US and Canada", said Nora Schatz, explaining the extensive training programme of the coming months leading up to the Paralympics in Beijing. The players may give up all their annual holiday in order to prepare for the events. "We want to be a big success," says the Frankfurt native. It takes real preparation to go up against teams like the USA, Australia, Canada, and Japan and win medals.

Each year, the German Association of Disability Sports sponsors an Internet poll to select the "Otto Bock Team of the Year". The female basketball team won this title in 2007 for the second year in a row. All those who received the award from Chancellor Merkel in Berlin in 2007 were invited by Otto Bock to Champions Weekend in Duderstadt, and this included the Dutch national team. The weekend features a gala dinner, tour of the medieval Duderstadt, which is home to Otto Bock's world headquarters, a visit to the Heinz Sielmann Foundation. The event was topped off by an international match that motivated many spectators to visit Otto Bock's exhibition area to try out wheelchair basketball for themselves.



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“Combining wheelchair basketball for handicapped and non-handicapped in one event is something that we should consider doing again in the future”, said Ulli Frank, a manager of the BG 74 national team, commenting on the all-round success of the basketball Sunday in Göttingen.

Germany: Maren Butterbrodt (Team BEB Niedersachsen/21), Annette Kahl (Hamburger SV/12), Marina Mohnen (RSC Köln/12), Silke Bleifuß (RSC Frankfurt/11), Birgit Meitner (SV Augsburg/4), Simone Kues (Team BEB Niedersachsen, RBV Lüneburg/2), Nora Schratz (RSC Frankfurt/2), Britta Kautz (ASV Bonn), Verena Klein (Team BEB Niedersachsen, RBV Lüneburg), Nicole Seifert (Hamburger SV).

Netherlands: Petra Garnier (10), Inge Huitzing (8), Elsbeth van Oostrom (7), Cher Korver (6), Barbara van Bergen, Ptries Boekhoorn, Sandra Braam, Lucie Houwen, Roos Oosterbaan, Fleur Pieterse, Carina Versloot, Jitske Visser.

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