

Wheelchair Rugby

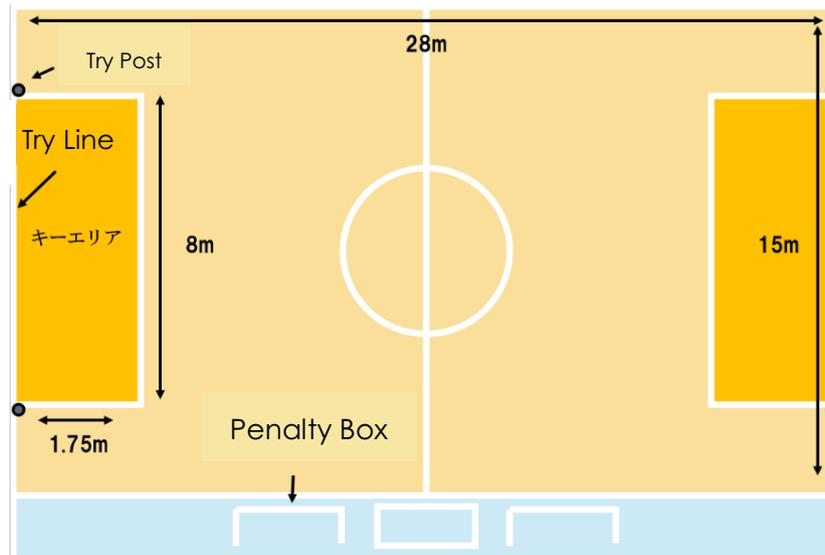
Hello everyone! My name is Stephen Cannell, Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) in Toyohashi. Today I would like to introduce one of the most intense Paralympic sports, wheelchair rugby.



Wheelchair rugby was invented in the 70s in Canada, with the intention of creating a sport that allows people with many different types of disabilities to compete in the same sport. Athletes with disabilities in both their upper and lower body are eligible to compete. Wheelchair rugby quickly gained popularity as a para sport, and officially became part of the Paralympics in Sydney in 2000. Now it is one of the most popular Paralympic sports.

Men and women compete together, and a team is made up of 12 athletes. 4 athletes from each team are on the court at a time. Athletes are assigned a number of points based on the severity of their disability. For example, an athlete who cannot control their wheelchair using their hands, and is unable to balance their upper body would be assigned a low number. The most severe disabilities would receive 0.5 points, and the least severe a maximum of 3.5 points. The 4 athletes on the court must not exceed a total of 8 points. This is a similar system to that used in wheelchair basketball.

Each match consists of 4 8-minute periods, with 2-minute breaks in between, and a 5-minute halftime.



As in standard rugby, the goal is to carry the ball across the try line. Once two of the carrier's wheels cross the line, 1 point is awarded. Unlike standard rugby, however, forward passing is allowed.

If the offensive team does not score in 40 seconds, it becomes the opponent's ball. If the ball is not passed or dribbled within 10 seconds, if the carrier does not cross the center line within 12 seconds of obtaining the ball, and if the carrier remains in the key area for more than 10 seconds, it results in a penalty.

8 countries will compete in Tokyo: Japan, Australia, Denmark, England, America, New Zealand, Canada, and France. Japan took bronze in Rio in 2016, and Gold at the 2018 World Championships, so there is no doubt that Japan is in the running to take it all in Tokyo. 2-time gold medalist America took silver in Rio. Rio 2016 Paralympics champions Australia is always a strong contender, but were defeated by Japan at the World Championships. Wheelchair rugby at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics will no doubt be exciting, so tune in and cheer on your favorite athletes!