

Inclusion in motion: an analysis of the adaptive program at the abbott world marathon majors (six star)

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Summary

This article aims to analyze the Adaptive Program implemented in the six largest marathons in the world — Tokyo, Boston, London, Berlin, Chicago and New York — that make up the Abbott World Marathon Major's (WMM) circuit. Based on a documentary analysis of the regulations, interviews with athletes and a review of the literature on sports inclusion, the research investigates the participation criteria, the infrastructure offered and the advances in accessibility for athletes with disabilities. The research identifies significant progress in the recognition and inclusion of these athletes in the scenario of major marathons, although challenges persist in the standardization of rules, logistical support and equity between events. The discussion is enriched by practical experiences lived by the author in four of the six races. It is concluded that the consolidation of a global culture of inclusion in marathons requires more harmonized, accessible and inclusive sports policies.

Keywords: adaptive marathon, sports inclusion, World Marathon Majors, accessibility, para-athletics

Abstract

This article aims to analyze the Adaptive Program implemented in the six largest marathons in the world — Tokyo, Boston, London, Berlin, Chicago and New York — that make up the Abbott World Marathon Major's (WMM) circuit. Based on documentary analysis of the regulations, interviews with athletes and a review of the literature on sports inclusion, the research investigates the participation criteria, the infrastructure offered and the advances in accessibility for athletes with disabilities. The research identifies significant progress in the recognition and inclusion of these athletes in the scenario of major marathons, although challenges persist in the standardization of rules, logistical support and equity between events. The discussion is enriched by practical experiences lived by the author in four of the six races. It is concluded that the consolidation of a global culture of inclusion in marathons requires more harmonized, accessible and inclusive sports policies.

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1. Introduction

The sports inclusion of people with disabilities has become an important agenda global in recent decades, reflecting significant changes in social, political perceptions

public and sports practices. Adapted sports not only promote health and well-being, but also plays a fundamental role in promoting equality, autonomy and social visibility of these people. In this context, the Abbott World Marathon Majors circuit (WMM) stands out as a highly relevant international platform, bringing together some of the most prestigious marathons in the world and progressively incorporating initiatives aimed at for the participation of athletes with disabilities.

The WMM circuit, which includes iconic races such as the Boston, New York, London marathons, Berlin, Chicago and Tokyo, have sought to implement adaptive policies and programs that enable the inclusive participation of para-athletes, recognizing their achievements and promoting equal opportunities. However, despite significant advances, there still persist structural and operational challenges that impact the equity and quality of participation of these athletes. Regulatory, logistical and cultural barriers reveal the need for standardization and improving inclusive practices to ensure that adapted sport is accessible, fair and valued at all stages of the circuit.

This work aims to analyze the main advances and limitations in the inclusion of athletes with disabilities on the Abbott World Marathon Majors circuit, addressing technical, social and and institutional factors that permeate this reality. The research emphasizes the importance of creating a truly inclusive sports environment, capable of overcoming historical inequalities and promote the recognition of the sporting merit of all competitors, regardless of their physical conditions.

To this end, existing programs and policies will be explored, as well as the disparities between regulations of the different marathons, the social and sporting impacts of inclusion and the perspectives for the consolidation of more homogeneous and accessible practices. The fundamental analysis if in recent studies, official reports and specialized literature that contribute to a comprehensive and critical understanding of the topic.

By highlighting the contributions and challenges faced by the WMM circuit, this research seeks to provide subsidies for the formulation of public policies, organizational strategies and initiatives that promote equity and sustainability of sports inclusion in large-scale events.

Thus, it is expected to contribute to the strengthening of adapted sport as a tool transformative of social inclusion, citizenship and appreciation of human diversity.

2. Methodology

The research adopted a qualitative, exploratory and descriptive approach, based on three complementary methodological axes: (2.1) documentary analysis, (2.2) semi-structured interviews and literature review, and (2.3) participant observation. This methodological triangulation aims to ensure depth, diversity of sources and cross-validation of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

2.1 Documentary Analysis of Marathons

Document analysis was adopted as the main method to understand, in depth, the normative and organizational framework that structures the participation of athletes with disabilities in six events that make up the Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) circuit. This procedure allowed mapping the degree of institutionalization of inclusion in the official marathon regulations from Tokyo, Boston, London, Berlin, Chicago and New York. According to Cellard (2008), official documents are primary sources that reflect the actions of institutions, and their study systematic allows identifying explicit and implicit guidelines that regulate conduct and practices social.

The documents analyzed were obtained from the official portals of the organizing entities and include the athlete guides, the terms of participation for athletes with disabilities, the manuals volunteering, medical protocols and accessibility policies published between 2022 and 2024. The temporal selection aimed to capture the adjustments implemented in the post-pandemic period, when there was greater social sensitivity and international pressure for more sporting events inclusive (Pereira & Bastos, 2023). The analysis was guided by an interpretative matrix based in the following axes: eligibility criteria for adaptive categories, formal recognition disabilities, support infrastructure, differentiation by type of disability (physical, visual, intellectual) and signaling about the use of assistive technologies (handbikes, prosthetics, guides, among others).

It was found that, despite the institutional commitment to inclusion, there are significant disparities between events. While marathons like London and New York have more stringent regulations detailed and robust protocols for welcoming athletes with disabilities, events such as Tokyo and Berlin still lacks standardization in admission criteria and description of resources accessibility. This heterogeneity points to the absence of a unified global policy on

scope of the WMM, which creates uncertainty and challenges for athletes seeking to complete the circuit as parathletes (Mendes et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the analysis revealed that adaptive participation is often conditioned on existence of partnerships with local NGOs or external programs, such as Achilles International, being limited to those who already have previous institutional ties. This highlights the importance of social and organizational capital to enable the participation of these athletes, which, according to Bourdieu (1986) reinforces structural inequalities, even in spaces that claim to be universally accessible. In some marathons, there is no simultaneous translation for the deaf or audio descriptive resources for the visually impaired, which compromises the inclusive experience full and contradicts the principles of universal accessibility advocated by the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006).

Finally, the documentary analysis demonstrated important advances in recent years, such as the creation of specific categories for athletes with multiple disabilities, adapted signage in pathways and improvements in safety protocols and medical support. However, the data indicate that these advances are still punctual and uneven, requiring greater international coordination and normative integration so that inclusion is not limited to a symbolic gesture, but is consolidated as a systemic practice in high-performance sports (Silva & Duarte, 2020).

2.2 Semi-structured Interviews and Literature Review

In the second stage of the research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine athletes who participated in the Adaptive Program in at least one of the tests analyzed in the Abbott circuit World Marathon Majors. Among the participants were four Brazilians and five foreigners from different continents (North America, Europe and Asia), which provided geographic diversity and cultural to the research corpus. The interviews took place between August and December 2024 by videoconference, with an average duration of 40 to 60 minutes. The conduction followed the proposed model by Triviños (1987), who considers the semi-structured interview as a flexible instrument, capable of capturing subjective, symbolic and relational dimensions of social experiences, allowing the interviewee expresses perceptions and feelings with thematic freedom.

The reports were organized and treated using the systematized content analysis technique by Bardin (2016), distributed along three main axes: (a) structural and logistical accessibility; (b) perception of institutional welcome and respect; and (c) technical support during the event. The analysis revealed that, although there are significant advances in some marathons — such as the availability

of volunteer guides in London and the unique transport system in Chicago — still exist significant disparities between the tests. Tokyo, for example, was often cited as limited in terms of accessible communication and lack of interpreters, while New York was recognized for its efforts to integrate different adaptive categories into the same environment competitive. These findings reflect what Marques and Teixeira (2020) already highlighted as a structural problem in the management of mega-events: the lack of standardization of inclusive protocols between different geographic contexts.

In parallel, a systematic bibliographic review was conducted, focusing on three major thematic areas: sports inclusion in high performance (Gomes, 2019), rights of people with disability in sport (Ferreira & Silva, 2021) and international adaptation policies in marathons and major events (Oliveira et al., 2022). Searches were carried out in the Scopus databases, PubMed, SciELO and Google Scholar, prioritizing articles and publications from the last ten years with empirical approach or critical review. The literature analyzed allowed the contextualization of the empirical findings within a broader perspective of human rights, adapted sport and inclusive event management. A highlight of the review was the concept of “sport as right and not privilege”, widely defended by authors such as Santos (2020), which reinforces the central thesis of this study that the presence of athletes with disabilities in the majors should not be seen as a concession, but as a right that needs to be guaranteed under conditions of equity. The combination of empirical data from interviews and theoretical support from scientific literature allowed an in-depth understanding of the advances and limitations of the Adaptive Program on the WMM circuit. It became evident that, despite the local efforts of some organizations, there were still there is no clear and homogeneous global inclusion policy. As Silva (2023) points out, the risk of specific initiatives is the perpetuation of structural exclusion under the appearance of inclusion symbolic. Thus, the data from this stage reinforce the need for integrated actions between institutions responsible for majors, based on international accessibility guidelines and representativeness.

2.3 Participant Observation and Ethical Aspects

As the third methodological axis of the investigation, participant observation was incorporated, supported by the researcher's direct insertion into the empirical field as a Paralympic athlete, with active participation in four of the six races that make up the Abbott World Marathon circuit Majors. This approach provided an expanded understanding of the symbolic elements,

relational and operational aspects present in the experiences of athletes with disabilities, allowing the identification of nuances that often escape formal interviews or records documentary. The researcher's experience in the testing environment — including pre- and post-test moments competition — revealed aspects such as the lack of accessible signage at critical points, failures in the reception after the test, precariousness in rest areas and, at the same time, examples positive human support provided by volunteers in Boston and Berlin.

The observation was conducted based on the classic proposal by Minayo (2001), which defends the participant observation as an essential methodological strategy for capturing social practices in its daily dynamics, especially when the researcher inserts himself as part of the phenomenon observed. The advantage of this type of approach is precisely the ability to interpret the data in a situated way, not only as an external spectator, but as an active subject who experiences the same constraints and achievements that it intends to analyze. According to Becker (2008), this investigative stance enables “critical empathy”, in which personal involvement does not compromises scientific analysis, but rather enriches the interpretative density of the data.

The records of this experience were systematized through a field diary structured in emerging categories during participation: adapted infrastructure, team response organizers, interaction with conventional athletes and perception of dignity in treatment. This systematization directly dialogued with the data from the interviews and analysis documentary, creating a robust methodological triangulation that contributed to validating the research findings (Denzin, 2006). Furthermore, direct observation was essential to reveal the disparities between the institutional discourse of inclusion, present in websites and materials promotional campaigns for the majors, and the reality faced by adapted athletes behind the scenes at the events.

Regarding ethical aspects, the research strictly followed the precepts established by Resolution No. 510/2016 of the National Health Council, which regulates research in Health Sciences Humanities and Social Sciences in Brazil. All interview participants were informed about the objectives and developments of the study and signed the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF). The project was submitted and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Minas Gerais (FACUMINAS), under protocol number 0425/2024. Furthermore, during the drafting of the field diaries, the identities of third parties involved were preserved, respecting the anonymity of volunteers, organizers and other athletes mentioned, as recommended by ethics scientific in field research (Gonçalves, 2020).

3. Abbott World Marathon Majors: Context and Significance

This chapter is dedicated to contextualizing the Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) circuit, highlighting its historical, structural and social relevance in the world athletics scenario. The analysis highlights the role of the adaptive program within this structure, highlighting how the main Global marathons have been incorporating inclusion policies and practices for athletes with disabilities. By understanding the organization, symbolism and institutional recognitions of WMM, it becomes possible to measure the scope and challenges of the inclusion process that this study investigates. Thus, an in-depth reflection begins on the meaning of WMM as an agent of transformation and inclusion in mass sport.

3.1 History and Structure of the WMM Circuit

The Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) was created in 2006 with the aim of bringing together the major global marathons — Tokyo, Boston, London, Berlin, Chicago and New York — in a competitive circuit that recognizes and promotes sporting excellence among both runners professionals and amateurs (Abbott, 2024). The initiative was born from the need to create a unified event that could consolidate the importance of the most prestigious marathons in the world, strengthening the visibility of these events and attracting a larger audience, sponsors and media international (Smith & Johnson, 2018).

In addition to promoting sports, WMM seeks to expand technical exchange between organizers of events, favoring the improvement of infrastructure, security and services offered to the participants. This cooperation also contributes to the standardization of practices and the creation of a global calendar that respects regional calendars, facilitating planning athletes and logistical organization (WMM Official Report, 2023). In this way, the circuit positions itself as a platform that not only values sports performance, but also promotes the sustainable and inclusive development of world athletics.

The importance of WMM goes beyond competition, as the organization has incorporated progressively principles of diversity and inclusion in its structure, with specific policies for athletes with disabilities and other special categories (Brown & Lee, 2021). The creation of the The 2016 Six Star Finisher Medal, for example, not only celebrates the achievement of completing the six marathons, but also reinforces the value of the spirit of overcoming and inclusion,

considering para-athletes on equal terms with conventional athletes (WMM, 2024).

In this way, WMM presents itself as one of the most prestigious and influential sporting events of world athletics, representing a global reference that combines technical excellence, visibility international and social commitment.

3.2 The Adaptive Program and the Six Star Finisher Medal

In 2016, the Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) broke new ground by introducing the Six Star Medal Finisher, a special recognition given to athletes who complete the six events of the circuit in different locations and weather conditions, demonstrating resistance, consistency and versatility (WMM, 2024). This medal not only symbolizes a significant athletic achievement, but also represents a prestigious milestone within the universe of global marathons, standing out considered one of the most coveted goals for professional and amateur runners.

Recognizing the importance of diversity and inclusion, WMM has extended this award to also cover athletes with disabilities, through the Adaptive Program, which ensures the participation of these people on equal terms. This institutional initiative reflects a explicit commitment to promoting equity and the spirit of overcoming, core values to athletics and sports in general (Souza & Pereira, 2020). The inclusion of para-athletes in the awards Six Star reinforces the message that the challenges faced by these competitors — often times more complex and specific — are recognized and valued on the global stage.

According to Marques and Oliveira (2022), the WMM Adaptive Program represents an advance significant in the consolidation of more egalitarian sports policies, contributing to the legitimization of parasports in elite events. Furthermore, this initiative encourages the development of adequate infrastructure, specific regulations and logistical support targeted, essential elements to ensure the effective and safe participation of athletes with disability. Thus, the Six Star Finisher Medal, by including para-athletes, not only celebrates the individual overcoming, but also drives social and institutional transformations that expand access and visibility of adapted sports in the international context.

3.3 Social and Sporting Importance of Inclusion in WMM

Sports inclusion in the Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) circuit goes far beyond simple participation of athletes with disabilities, configuring itself as an important movement social that values diversity and promotes equity in mass sport. The presence and visibility of para-athletes in large-scale events contributes decisively to the



deconstruction of stigmas and prejudices associated with physical or sensory limitations, at the same time while raising public awareness about accessibility and rights issues

humans in sport (Gomes, 2019).

By integrating the world's largest marathons into its Adaptive Program, WMM reaffirms the principle that the practice of sports is a universal right and a powerful tool for social inclusion and individual transformation. This initiative not only democratizes access to athletics, but also encourages the creation of more inclusive, safe and welcoming environments, that respect the specificities of each competitor (Ferreira & Silva, 2021). From this perspective, the sport ceases to be just a competitive activity and assumes a crucial role in strengthening self-esteem, autonomy and social integration of people with disabilities. Furthermore, inclusion in the WMM is in line with international human rights guidelines. humans and public policies that recommend the elimination of architectural barriers, communicational and attitudinal aspects in sporting events. As highlighted by the World of Health (WHO, 2020), equitable access to sport contributes to the promotion of physical health and mental, in addition to reinforcing the full citizenship of individuals. Thus, the expansion and strengthening of the Adaptive Program in WMM marathons represent a significant advance for the building a fairer, more accessible and plural global sports culture.

4. Inclusion in Sport and Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The inclusion of people with disabilities in the major international marathons of the Abbott circuit World Marathon Majors (WMM) reflects the gradual and uneven advancement of accessibility policies and equality in global sport. These competitions represent a privileged space to analyze how different cultural, organizational and legal contexts influence the implementation of adaptive programs that ensure the right to sport for all. According to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), sport should be accessible, inclusive and respect the specific needs of athletes with disabilities, promoting their full and effective participation (Ferreira & Silva, 2021). The following are the characteristics specific aspects and challenges of each of the six WMM marathons in relation to sports inclusion.

4.1 Boston Marathon

The Boston Marathon stands out as a pioneer in inclusion, maintaining adaptive programs since the 1970s, long before the formalization of these concepts at an international level.

Its categories include athletes with visual, physical and intellectual disabilities, highlighting a historical commitment to functional diversity (Gomes, 2019). Strategic partnerships with specialized organizations such as Achilles International and Spaulding Adaptive Sports, enhance technical support and reception for para-athletes, ensuring better conditions for your participation. The innovative and inclusive nature of the Boston Marathon positions it as a model for other global sporting events (Abbott, 2024).

4.2 New York Marathon

The New York City Marathon features a robust and highly inclusive structure, with a significant diversity of adaptive categories such as handcycles, duo teams and competitors visually impaired. The Rising New York Road Runners program encourages the participation of young athletes with disabilities, encouraging sports training from an early age (Souza & Pereira, 2020). In addition, equal prize money and bonuses for record-breaking athletes reinforce the recognition of the effort and talent of para-athletes, promoting equity and appreciation of their achievements. These measures consolidate the NY Marathon as a reference in policies inclusive in athletics.

4.3 London Marathon

Since 2022, the London Marathon has expanded its inclusion to athletes who use wheelchairs, assisted wheels and exoskeletons, signaling technological innovation and progressive inclusion (Abbott, 2024). The event maintains strict criteria for elite athletes in the T52 to T54 classes, ensuring high competitive level and technical organization. Support for guides and companions, with medals and own timing, reveals special care with the complete experience of para-athletes, considering their specific needs and promoting effective inclusion within the competition. This **policy integrates advances for physical and symbolic accessibility in sport.**

4.4 Berlin Marathon

The Berlin Marathon has a specific category for wheelchairs, although its structure for para-athletes is considered less developed compared to the other events on the circuit (Gomes, 2019). The registration process takes place via SCC Events, a platform that organizes several sporting events in Germany, but which still lack greater dissemination and integration for athletes with disabilities. Despite having one of the best infrastructures for athletes

conventional, the Berlin Marathon presents opportunities to enhance its inclusive policy, expanding technical and logistical support for the adaptive public.

4.5 Chicago Marathon

The Chicago Marathon stands out for its structured AWD (Athletes With Disabilities) program, which establishes clear technical criteria for the classification of athletes in the categories T11 to T64 (Ferreira & Silva, 2021). The entry process is transparent, allowing for guaranteed or raffles, which reinforces fairness in the selection of participants. The event offers specific support for doubles, handcycles and push-rim wheelchairs, ensuring suitable conditions for different types of adaptive athletes. This technical and inclusive organization positions Chicago as a significant example in the American scene.

4.6 Tokyo Marathon

The Tokyo Marathon presents a more restricted panorama in terms of inclusion, marked by linguistic and bureaucratic barriers and less integration with international organizations adaptive (Souza & Pereira, 2020). Despite having a category for wheelchairs elite, with strict criteria, limited support for other categories and little publicity hinder access and broad participation of para-athletes. These factors highlight the need improvements and adaptation to international best practices to expand inclusion and diversity at the event.

5. Analysis of Adaptive Marathon Programs

The inclusion of marathons in the Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) circuit reflects impacts significant that transcend simple access to competition. The analysis of the programs adaptive reveals transformations in three main dimensions: the representation of athletes with disabilities, the sports culture fostered by continuous training and the consolidation of formal recognition of these competitors through specific awards.

5.1 Representation and Deconstruction of Stigmas

The visibility of adapted athletes in major international marathons is a crucial factor for the deconstruction of historical stigmas associated with disabilities, which often carry negative and limiting connotations (Gomes, 2019). The participation and protagonism of these para-athletes in high-prestige events such as the Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) circuit, play a transformative role in the social perception of capacity, competence and

autonomy of people with disabilities. Ferreira & Silva (2021) highlight that, when occupying traditional sports spaces, these athletes challenge stereotypes and expand the concept of normality, placing functional diversity as a legitimate and valued manifestation of human experience.

This representation not only promotes changes in the general public's view, but also acts as a pedagogical and symbolic instrument that decisively influences policies public, private initiatives and the structuring of programs aimed at sports accessibility. The constant and visible presence of para-athletes contributes to increasing social awareness, stimulating debates on inclusion, equal rights and the need for more inclusive environments accessible (Souza & Pereira, 2020). In this sense, the media and social networks play a strategic role in amplifying these narratives, highlighting stories of overcoming, training and results, the which, in turn, encourages the population to identify with and engage with the cause of inclusion sports.

The protagonism of adapted athletes gains even more strength when linked to achievements symbolic, such as obtaining the Six Star Finisher Medal — an award that celebrates effort and persistence of athletes who complete the six marathons of the circuit, regardless of the adverse conditions or physical limitations. This award not only recognizes sporting merit, but also legitimizes the fight for equity within the high-performance sports scene, valuing stories of overcoming and resilience (Souza & Pereira, 2020). As highlighted authors such as Silva and Gomes (2023), this visibility creates a multiplier effect, encouraging mass participation of people with disabilities in sport, expanding access and strengthening inclusion in other areas of society.

Furthermore, the representation of adapted athletes serves as a reference for young people with disability, offering positive role models and expanding their perspectives of possibilities, which contributes to the development of self-esteem, mental health and socialization (Ferreira & Silva, 2021). Therefore, the exposure of these para-athletes in global events transcends the sports field, configuring itself as an essential vector for cultural and social transformation, towards a more inclusive, diverse and fair society.

5.2 Inclusive Sports Culture: Training and Integration

The development of an inclusive sports culture represents one of the fundamental pillars for the effective participation of people with disabilities in high-level competitions, such as

marathons of the Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) circuit. This culture is consolidated through educational and training programs that work not only on physical preparation, but also in the integral development of athletes, covering technical, psychological and social aspects. A emblematic example is the **Rising New York Road Runners (NYRR) program**, which invests consistently in the training and integration of young athletes with disabilities, offering specialized training and ongoing support from the youth categories to high performance (Souza & Pereira, 2020).

As highlighted by Silva & Gomes (2023), the early insertion of these athletes into the sports environment enables the construction of a strong sense of belonging, a fundamental element for the development of an inclusive sporting identity. This identity transcends the limitations physical and social prejudices, strengthening individuals' self-confidence and resilience. The systematic monitoring through multidisciplinary teams, which include trainers, physiotherapists, sports psychologists and social workers, contributes to a more prepared complete, which respects the specificities of each disability and promotes the health and well-being of athletes.

Inclusive culture is also manifested in the strategic partnerships that WMM marathons establish with organizations specialized in adaptive sports, such as **Achilles International** and **Spaulding Adaptive Sports**, which facilitate access and provide technical support, logistical and emotional during events (Abbott, 2024). Such partnerships ensure the presence of guides for the visually impaired, support for wheelchair users, as well as specific guidelines for use of handcycles and other adaptive equipment. This collaborative structure highlights the commitment of the tests to effective inclusion, contributing to the democratization of sport. Furthermore, this inclusive sports culture has a direct impact on increasing engagement community and social awareness. According to Ferreira & Silva (2021), the involvement of families, schools and communities in the sports training of young people with disabilities creates a favorable environment for the development of social and emotional skills, at the same time time that promotes awareness about the rights and potential of people with disability. Inclusive education in sport contributes to building a more inclusive society empathetic and egalitarian, breaking down barriers of exclusion.

Therefore, inclusive sports culture, by combining technical training, multidisciplinary support and strategic partnerships, not only prepares athletes for international competitions, but also

contributes to social transformation, positioning sport as an instrument of inclusion, health and citizenship.

5.3 Formal Recognition and Sporting Merit

The institutionalization of recognition of para-athletes within the Abbott World Marathon circuit Majors (WMM), especially through the creation and awarding of the **Six Star Finisher Medal**, represents a historic milestone in the promotion of sporting merit and parity of prestige between athletes with and without disabilities. This initiative represents a significant advance in the appreciation functional diversity in high-performance sports, consolidating the presence of para-athletes in competitions of global relevance.

According to Souza and Pereira (2020), the granting of prizes equivalent to those of athletes conventional reinforces the fundamental principle of **equal opportunities** and respect for differences, creating a legitimate, inclusive and recognized competitive environment internationally. Such recognition formalizes the effort, dedication and overcoming of para-athletes, who often face additional physical, social and structural barriers. This not only legitimizes their sporting achievements, but also contributes to the construction of a narrative that values competence and talent regardless of the limitations imposed by deficiencies.

In addition to the symbolic impact, institutional appreciation through the Six Star Finisher Medal and other specific awards have a relevant practical effect. According to Ferreira & Silva (2021), the formal recognition increases the visibility of para-athletes, attracting greater media interest, sponsors and the general public, which enhances the development of public policies and private institutions focused on encouraging and supporting adapted sports. This financial and social stimulus is crucial for the continuity and improvement of sports practice, especially in modalities that require investment in equipment and specialized training.

Additionally, the delivery of these awards acts as a motivational and strengthening factor. competitors' self-esteem, promoting benefits for physical and mental health, in addition to promote social inclusion. As highlighted by Gomes (2019), sports recognition formal has a transformative effect on the lives of athletes, who come to be perceived as capable protagonists, contributing to the deconstruction of prejudices and the promotion of a more diverse and fair sports culture.



Finally, the sporting merit recognized at the WMM reaffirms the importance of sport as tool for empowerment and social transformation. The equalization of award conditions and respect for the efforts of para-athletes reflect an institutional commitment to promoting equity, dignity and the universal right to sport, consolidating the WMM circuit as a global reference in inclusion and sporting excellence.

6. Discrepancies between the Six Star Marathon Notices

Although the Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) circuit has made significant progress in terms of inclusion and recognition of adapted athletes, there are still important differences between the notices of the six marathons that make up the circuit. These differences directly impact the experience of para-athletes and the uniformity of the adaptive program, generating challenges for the consolidation of a truly inclusive sports culture and equitable.

6.1 Lack of Standardization in Regulations and Classification Criteria

One of the main obstacles to effective inclusion in the Abbott World Marathon Majors circuit lies in the lack of consistent standardization of regulations and classification criteria intended for athletes with disabilities between the different events. Each marathon has autonomy to define its adaptive categories, technical criteria and validation protocols, which results in a significant diversity that, although respecting local particularities, compromises the uniformity and comparability of results on a global scale.

According to Souza and Pereira (2020), while some marathons such as Chicago and New York present detailed categories based on specific functional classifications—which range from visual impairments to amputations and paralysis — other tests adopt criteria more generic or simplified, with less technical rigor in the evaluation of athletes. This discrepancy makes it difficult to compare the competitions, as it prevents direct comparison of the performance among athletes competing in different regulatory environments.

Furthermore, the lack of standardization directly impacts the transparency of selection processes and award ceremony, generating potential doubts among athletes, coaches and the general public about the legitimacy and fairness of adapted competitions. Gomes (2019) highlights that this lack of uniformity can lead to perceptions of inequality and exclusion, negatively affecting

image of the adaptive program and compromising its credibility within the sports scene International.

This regulatory variability also represents a challenge for the consolidation of the Six Medal Star Finisher as a universal symbol of sporting merit, since differences in criteria make it difficult to equally validate the achievements of para-athletes in all events of the circuit. According to Ferreira & Silva (2021), standardization of criteria is essential for ensure that all adapted athletes are evaluated with the same technical parameters and receive equivalent recognition, strengthening the inclusive and competitive character of the WMM. Finally, the lack of a more cohesive regulatory alignment further limits the development of integrated public and private policies to support adapted sports, as it makes the creation of comparative metrics and more comprehensive performance and participation indicators. This highlights the urgency of implementing global and coordinated guidelines that can ensure the equal conditions and the appreciation of the effort and talent of athletes with disabilities in all the circuit marathons.

6.2 Language and Logistic Barriers

Another significant challenge that compromises the full inclusion of athletes with disabilities on the circuit Abbott World Marathon Majors are the language and logistical barriers especially evident in the Tokyo and Berlin marathons. As Ferreira & Silva (2021) point out, the absence of universal translation and the limited accessibility of official documents in multiple languages generate substantial difficulties for international athletes, who depend on clear, accurate information and accessible to complete your registration, understand the specific regulations and prepare adequately for the competitions.

These language barriers become even more critical when they involve athletes with disabilities that require special accommodations — for example, athletes with hearing impairments, visual or cognitive — for whom understanding the rules and procedures is vital to ensuring safety and sports performance. The lack of accessible materials and features, such as in plain language, translation into sign language or Braille documents, limits the autonomy of these competitors and compromises the principle of equal opportunities.

From a logistical point of view, the complexity of the registration processes represents another factor of exclusion. In events such as the Tokyo Marathon, reports indicate that excessive bureaucracy and the lack of intuitive digital platforms make it difficult to register athletes with disabilities,

especially for those who do not speak the local language or who need technical support specialized. Ferreira & Silva (2021) emphasize that the lack of real-time service and personalized support increases the risk of process errors, delays and even abandonment of participation.

In the case of the Berlin Marathon, although there is a registration process via SCC Events, the lack of an integrated and multilingual system, combined with limitations in technical support during the event, creates an unwelcoming environment for adaptive athletes, who may feel helpless in the face of emergency situations or communication difficulties (Gomes, 2019). This lack of inclusive infrastructure can generate frustration and demotivation, compromising the potential impact positive social impact of these competitions.

In short, language and logistical barriers highlight the urgent need for investment in accessible technology and communication, such as multilingual digital platforms and systems real-time support to ensure that athletes with disabilities can compete on an equal footing of conditions. Universal access to information and improvement of processes administrative are fundamental steps to promote full and sustainable inclusion in main marathons in the world (Souza & Pereira, 2020).

6.3 Limitations on Validation of Times and Awards

The absence of unified criteria for validating adapted times and granting awards represent one of the main obstacles to the consolidation of effective inclusion in Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) circuit. Gomes (2019) highlights that, despite the progress significant provided by the creation of the Six Star Finisher Medal, which recognizes performance of para-athletes by symbolically equating their merit to that of conventional athletes, persist important differences between the different tests in relation to the methods of measuring the adapted performance.

These differences are manifested, for example, in the variation of recognized categories, in the form of computing compensated times for athletes with different types of disabilities and in the absence of standardization in the attribution of points and prizes. Such inconsistencies compromise the transparency and credibility of the adaptive program, generating doubts about the equivalence of results achieved by para-athletes in different events. As a result, some athletes face difficulties in having their time recognized fairly, which can impact

not only their motivation, but also access to sponsorships and sporting visibility (Ferreira & Silva, 2021).

In addition, the limited number of places available for adapted athletes in many marathons limits the participation and growth of the segment. While some evidence shows clear processes to ensure entry for competitors with disabilities, others adopt criteria more restrictive or draws that make it difficult for these athletes to participate systematically. The disparity in technical support — which includes everything from specialized assistance during the test to medical care and accessible infrastructure — also varies significantly between events, reflecting structural limitations that still need to be overcome to ensure a truly inclusive environment (Souza & Pereira, 2020).

Perspectives and Recommendations

To address these limitations, experts and stakeholders have advocated the creation of a WMM Global Inclusion Commission, dedicated to harmonizing regulations, standardizing criteria for classification and validation of times, as well as establishing clear standards for the awarding equivalent prizes among all marathons on the circuit (Abbott, 2024). This commission would also have the responsibility of promoting universal translation and accessibility of adaptive documents, ensuring that athletes of all nationalities can understand and fully participate in the processes.

Furthermore, it is essential to invest in inclusive technological platforms that allow simplified registration, real-time support and effective communication between organizers and athletes adapted, reducing bureaucratic and logistical barriers. The adoption of these measures would contribute to that the WMM circuit offers a fairer, more transparent and representative competitive environment, aligned with the best international practices of human rights and sports inclusion (Gomes, 2019; Ferreira & Silva, 2021).

These initiatives would not only strengthen the recognition of the sporting merit of para-athletes, but would also encourage the continuity of sports practice and the sustainable development of adapted sport on a global level, consolidating the WMM circuit as a reference in inclusion and sporting excellence.

7. Social and Sports Impacts

The Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) circuit represents a major step forward in promoting the sports inclusion of athletes with disabilities, but still faces challenges in guaranteeing access full and equitable to all participants. The institutionalization of standardized policies and accessible is essential to transform adaptive participation into a universal right, and not in a privileged exception. This chapter addresses the main social, sporting and future challenges for the consolidation of this inclusion.

7.1 Social Inclusion and Breaking Barriers

The participation of para-athletes in the Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) circuit plays an important role profound and multifaceted impact on social inclusion, contributing significantly to the deconstruction of stigmas and prejudices historically associated with people with disabilities.

As highlighted by Gomes (2019), the protagonism of these athletes in major events international visibility not only increases public perception of their physical capabilities and cognitive, but also redefines the social concept of disability, emphasizing competence, autonomy and resilience.

This process of resignification has an important pedagogical effect, as the narratives of overcoming and success of para-athletes challenge limiting beliefs and promote a more inclusive and humane approach to functional diversity. Ferreira & Silva (2021) emphasize that this visibility is essential to strengthening demands for equal rights and full citizenship, acting as a catalyst for the formulation and implementation of public policies and private companies that promote accessibility in sports venues and in society in general.

In addition to the institutional scope, the constant presence of para-athletes in global marathons influences directly affect the attitudes and perceptions of the population in different cultural contexts, creating a more welcoming and receptive environment to diversity. This cultural change is a vital component so that adapted sport is no longer perceived as an exception or a modality marginal, consolidating itself as a legitimate, valued and integrated sporting practice in official sports calendars (Souza & Pereira, 2020).

Furthermore, the social inclusion promoted by the WMM circuit has a cascade effect that goes beyond sport, impacting areas such as education, the job market and people's mental health.

people with disabilities. By expanding opportunities for visibility and participation, these competitions contribute to building a more equitable society, in which diversity functional is recognized as a value and not as an obstacle (Ferreira & Silva, 2021). Thus, adaptive participation not only transforms individual lives, but also contributes to broader social transformation, fostering respect, solidarity and social justice.

7.2 Sports Development and Competitiveness

In the sporting context, the inclusion of athletes with disabilities promoted by the marathons of Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) circuit plays a key role in advancing technical and competitive aspects of adapted sports. As Souza and Pereira (2020) highlight, the growing participation of para-athletes in high-level events drives the development of technologies innovative assistive devices, improvement of specific equipment — such as wheelchairs competition, handcycles and advanced prosthetics — in addition to the adoption of specialized training that consider the particularities of each disability.

This technical evolution is accompanied by methodological progress in the functional classification of athletes, an essential element to ensure equity and justice in competitions. Standardization of the classification criteria, although still under development, contributes to the validation of the results and for the recognition of the sporting excellence of para-athletes, as highlighted by Ferreira & Silva (2021). In this way, the classification system allows athletes with different types and degrees of disability can compete in fair categories, encouraging competitiveness healthy and continuous improvement of performance.

Furthermore, the WMM circuit promotes the professionalization of adapted sports by offering specific categories and awards equivalent to those of conventional athletes, such as the Medal Six Star Finisher, which reinforces sporting merit and the legitimacy of achievements (Souza & Pereira, 2020). This equalization in the valuation of performance encourages athletes to remain in the sport, encourages the emergence of new talents and expands opportunities for sponsorship and support financial, essential for the sustainability of the para-athletes' career.

This competitive and inclusive environment creates a virtuous cycle that drives innovation and growth of adapted sports, attracting greater media visibility and public interest, which, in turn, contributes to the strengthening of support networks, infrastructure and public policies aimed at sports accessibility (Gomes, 2019). Therefore, inclusion in WMM marathons does not not only promotes equity in sport, but also contributes to technological, social and

economic sector, elevating adapted sport to new levels of excellence and international recognition.

7.3 Challenges and Pathways to Sustainability of Inclusion

Despite the significant advances promoted by the Abbott World Marathon Majors circuit (WMM), several structural challenges still hinder the full implementation of the inclusion of athletes with disabilities. Geographical barriers are one of the main obstacles, since athletes coming from regions with less sports development, limited infrastructure and scarce government support face difficulties in accessing high-level international events. According to Abbott (2024), this territorial inequality limits the potential for participation and the reach of adapted sport, restricting it to a relatively small group concentrated in regions more developed.

In addition, economic factors act as substantial barriers. The high cost of acquisition specialized equipment, transportation, lodging and proper training puts many athletes in vulnerable situations, limiting the continuity and development of their careers sports (Ferreira & Silva, 2021). The absence of solid financing mechanisms and sponsorship, as well as effective public policies for adapted sports, contributes to perpetuate these inequalities and hinder full inclusion in the WMM circuit.

Another critical aspect is related to the lack of regulatory standardization and logistical limitations already addressed in previous chapters, which directly impact the competitors' experience adapted. The lack of technical support during competitions, the lack of adequate translation of materials and the disparity in conditions offered between different marathons generate a environment that is still not very homogeneous and, in some cases, exclusionary for para-athletes (Gomes, 2019).

To ensure the sustainability of inclusion, it is essential to implement policies integrated that promote equity at all levels. This includes strategic alliances between sports organizations, governments, private institutions and civil society, with the aim of expand resources, infrastructure and technical training. Continuous investments in technologies assistive, digital accessibility and inclusive platforms for enrollment and real-time support are equally essential to modernize and democratize access to adapted sports (Abbott, 2024).

The consolidation of a Global WMM Inclusion Commission, proposed by experts in the field, represents a fundamental step towards facing these challenges in a coordinated and effective manner. This commission would be responsible for harmonizing regulations, monitoring the implementation of best practices, ensure transparency and promote social and sporting inclusion in a way comprehensive and sustainable (Ferreira & Silva, 2021; Gomes, 2019). Thus, the WMM circuit could evolve towards a global model of excellence and equity, ensuring that adaptive participation stop being an exception and become an accessible and valued right for all athletes, regardless of their origin or condition.

8. Final Considerations

This study highlighted the advances and challenges faced in the inclusion of athletes with disabilities on the Abbott World Marathon Majors (WMM) circuit, one of the most prestigious sporting events global. Detailed analysis of adaptive programs has shown that despite progress significant achievements — such as strengthening representation, promoting a inclusive sports culture and the formal recognition of sporting merit — still persist important inequalities and structural barriers that limit the effective equitable participation of parathletes.

The visibility of adapted athletes in circuit marathons has a transformative role, contributing to the deconstruction of historical stigmas associated with disabilities, reinforcing the public perception of the capacity, autonomy and competence of these individuals. This representation increases the social impact of sport, influencing not only public opinion, but also promoting public and private policies of inclusion and accessibility. The training early and systematic, through programs such as those of NYRR, is essential for the development of an inclusive sporting identity that transcends physical barriers and social and strengthens the sense of belonging of adapted athletes.

However, this work also identified substantial structural challenges that impede the full realization of inclusion in the WMM circuit. The lack of standardization in regulations and classification criteria, combined with linguistic and logistical barriers, directly impacts the fairness and transparency of competitions. Furthermore, the absence of unified criteria for validation of times and awards creates disparities that can demotivate athletes and reduce credibility of the programs. The limitation on the number of vacancies and technical support further reinforces

more these inequalities, particularly for competitors from less favored regions, widening social and economic gaps in access to high-performance sport. To address these challenges, the urgent need to create a Global Commission is highlighted WMM Inclusion, which can coordinate efforts to harmonize standards, promote translation universal access to documents and invest in inclusive technology platforms. The adoption of these measures would contribute to ensuring a fairer, more accessible and welcoming sporting environment, aligned with international principles of human rights and social inclusion. The sustainability of inclusion therefore requires a continued commitment from responsible organizations, governments, sponsors and civil society for the implementation of integrated policies, capacity building specialized and adequate infrastructure. Furthermore, it is essential to recognize that inclusion in adapted sports transcends the field competitive — it represents a powerful tool for social transformation, capable of generating positive impact on self-esteem, health, autonomy and quality of life of people with disabilities. By promoting equity in access and the appreciation of sporting merit, the WMM circuit contributes to build a more diverse, inclusive and fair society. Thus, the path towards the full inclusion of para-athletes in the Abbott World Marathon marathons Majors is complex and challenging, but no less promising. The advances achieved so far moment indicate that, with coherent policies, adequate investments and an integrative vision, adapted sport can be consolidated as an effectively exercised right, and not an exception to be celebrated. Investing in sports inclusion is investing in human potential, in overcoming limitations imposed by prejudice and the infinite possibilities of social transformation and guys. Ultimately, promoting equal opportunities in sport for people with disability reaffirms the universal values of human dignity, respect for diversity and solidarity, inspiring present and future generations to see sport not only as competition, but as a space for union, hope and achievement.

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9. Comparative Technical: Boston vs. Others Majors

According to Maffetone et al. (2017), in a study published in the scientific journal *PLOS ONE*, the Boston Marathon has, on average, slower finishing times than other World Marathon Majors (WMM) circuit events, such as Berlin, London and Chicago. The research analyzed the ten best male and female times between 2005 and 2014, revealing that factors as temperature, humidity and altimetric profile significantly influence the results. Despite its reputation for being a fast race, Boston has a high variation in times between the years, mainly due to its unique characteristics: steeply inclined route, absence of turns (unidirectional course) and high dependence on weather conditions, such as wind favorable.

The study also highlights that London and Berlin have the best times and records world, indicating that their structures and environments are more favorable to breaking records. For on the other hand, the performance in Boston is statistically more inconsistent, reinforcing the importance of variables external node result end.

Source: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0184024>

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10. Historical Origin and Standardization of the Marathon

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According to Matthiesen, Barbosa and Moreira (2012), the history of the modern marathon dates back to the Olympics 1896 Olympics in Athens, when the event was designed to honor the legend of the soldier Pheidippides, who is said to have run from the plain of Marathon to the Greek capital. However, the distance official distance of 42.195 km was established only at the London Olympic Games in 1908, so that the race ended in front of the queen's palace, with the distance being adopted officially by the IAAF (now World Athletics) the leave of 1921.

The so-called 'Scheiss Norm', mentioned by the authors, highlights the importance of working on the historical knowledge in Physical Education classes, enabling students to understand critique of the origin and evolution of sports practices. By contextualizing the marathon, the professor



can awaken the student's interest in sport and its sociocultural relevance.

This contextualization is fundamental not only for teaching, but also for valuing of modern events, such as the World Marathon Majors, which represent an evolution significant from the tradition historical started in the Greece Old.

Source: Matthiesen, SQ, Barbosa, AF, & Moreira, LD (2012). Olympic Games and the teaching of marathon: the 'Scheiss norm' and the 42.195 km course. *Brazilian Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 26(3), 463–471. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1807-55092012000300010>

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