

Making “Wheelchairs for Victory”

With the approach of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, sports for people with disabilities are gaining a higher profile. Wheelchairs are essential equipment for athletes in Paralympic events such as tennis and racing, and they can have a major effect on outcomes. Japanese wheelchair manufacturer OX Engineering has been supporting para-athletes for more than 20 years with wheelchairs designed for use in competition.

OX started producing and selling wheelchairs in 1992. The company’s founder, who initially operated a motorcycle dealership, was himself a motorcycle racer skilled at modifying regular bikes for use in competition. He launched this wheelchair business after an accident in a test run left him disabled. The current president of OX is his son, Katsuyuki Ishii, who explains: “My father was a technician who loved challenges, and for many years he made motorcycles with design and performance tailored to customers’ demands. When developing wheelchairs, he sought to make the best, something that he would want to use himself. He worked hard to achieve a sporty appearance, light weight, toughness, and a good sense of fit for the individual. This approach underlies OX’s manufacturing.”

OX first supported para-athletes at the 1996 Atlanta Paralympics. The company continued working together with para-athletes in making steady improvements, and eventually its products began to be called “wheelchairs for victory.” Ishii says, “The demands of top athletes are very difficult to meet, requiring adjustments in units of millimeters and grams, and frankly the work is time-consuming and costly. But we feel their passion for competition and are strongly determined to provide equipment that will let them tap their abilities with enthusiasm. We want to make it so that those with disabilities can enjoy sports the same as other people. That’s the mind-set we take in developing sports wheelchairs.” These efforts have borne fruit, and OX-supported athletes from Japan and other countries have won a total of 122 medals—34 gold, 44 silver, and 44 bronze—in the eight summer and winter Paralympics since Atlanta.

The declining population and aging of competitors are issues today in the world of para sports. OX has developed sports wheelchairs for children as one part of its efforts to cultivate the younger generation of para-athletes. “We hope as many children as possible will come into contact with wheelchair sports and learn to enjoy competition, leading to the emergence of new para-athletes to represent Japan in the future,” declares Ishii. “Heading toward the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, we are eager to do everything we can to support these athletes.”



Katsuyuki Ishii

Born in 1980 in Chiba Prefecture. His hobby is bicycling. Joined OX Engineering in April 2002, serving in posts including head of wheelchair sales in company-operated stores in Japan. Became a director of OX Engineering in 2012 and succeeded his father, the company founder, as president in January 2013.



Supporting para-athletes worldwide with sports wheelchairs

https://youtu.be/L6_Mwbp7UZA

Rolling to Victory with Japanese Engineering Excellence



Swiss wheelchair racer Marcel Hug, an Olympic gold medal and world title-winning para-athlete, visited Japan this February to take part in Tokyo Marathon 2017.

I entered the world of wheelchair racing at the age of 10. This is my first visit to Tokyo, to compete in the marathon. I have for many years relied on the engineering excellence of Japan's OX sports wheelchairs to carry me to the finish line.

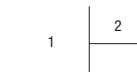
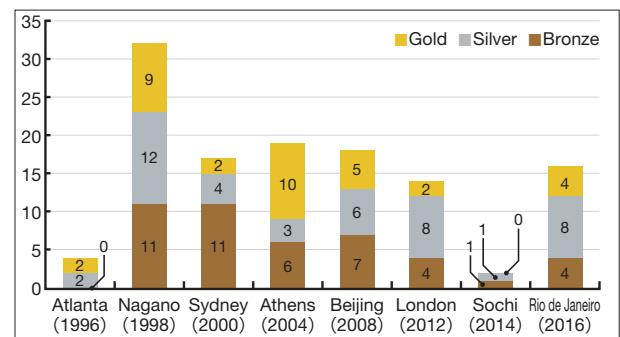
These products are of very good quality. They keep developing their race chairs. Every year they bring out something new. Some brands have had the same style for years, the same design, but not theirs. They always have something new, such as new materials, and they're always trying to make their race chairs lighter, but still stable.

Racing means a lot to me. It's my passion. Very early, I had some big goals, big dreams of winning a gold medal at the Paralympics. I like wheelchair racing—actually, I love it—for its speed. It's dynamic. It's powerful. And I really like the tactical part of the sport. You have to think about how you race.

It's so great to see the Olympic and Paralympic Games already being publicized even though there are still three and a half years to go. You see the signs all around Tokyo. I was happy to see the posters displaying the logo of both the Paralympics and Olympics. I think that's very special—it's not featuring the Olympic Games with just a little bit about the Paralympic Games. The two are treated equally. That's very positive.



Olympic medals of para-athletes supported by OX Engineering



1. The WeeGO sports wheelchair is made in two sizes, combining stylishness with the ruggedness to withstand harsh competitive use. Wheelchair tennis gold medalist Shingo Kunieda serves as an advisor for development.
2. OX Engineering has worked with top para-athletes from Japan and other countries, including Kunieda and Swiss wheelchair racer Marcel Hug. Since the 1996 Atlanta Paralympics it has provided wheelchairs to para-athletes at both the summer and winter Paralympic Games.