

### **What is your role?**

I'm the Chief Classifier for CPISA (Cerebral Palsy International Sport and Recreation Association) in Boccia, and Assistant Classifier for 7-a-side CP Football.

### **What does a Classifier do?**

It's my job to classify athletes who have not yet been classified or who are to be reviewed. The class allocated to the athlete will ensure competition is fair, and is based on the findings obtained during a physical and skill-based assessment. The physical impairment and resulting functioning skills are the criteria for class selection. A Rehab Doctor, physiotherapist and sports technical person specific to the athlete's sport do the classification for athletes with CP.

### **Describe the classification process**

In the past, classifiers looked at an individual's disability and gave them one class for all sports. The rules have since changed, and now classification is sport-specific. One athlete might have one class for one sport and another class for another sport. Classifiers now mostly classify the athletes competing in one sport only and become quite technical and specific to the sport. CP is tricky to classify because it's quite a complex condition.

### **Why did you become involved in disabled sports?**

I had been an elite athlete, and then became a physiotherapist, specialising in sport. In 1990, I came to Australia from the Netherlands and worked as a physiotherapist at The Spastic Centre. Through contact with a PE teacher of some of the school children, I became involved in establishing sporting opportunities for people with CP.

### **Why do you enjoy your job?**

It's so much more fun than treating able-bodied athletes who don't listen to your advice!

### **Which Paralympics have been your favourite?**

Beijing will be my fifth Paralympics, and all have been great, but the vibe at Sydney was just fantastic. It was also the first time Australia had a CP 7-a-side football team competing, which was very exciting because I'd been involved with the team since they began.

### **What are the ups and downs of the job?**

As a classifier in Boccia and Football (the only teams that have just CP athletes), I've worked with almost all of the Australian CP athletes during their careers. Many of the babies I saw when I was at The Spastic Centre are now competing, so it's great to have played a small part in their achievements. The only down is the hours. When you're at the games, you're working long days. Many people forget it's all voluntary work.

### **What are the benefits of sport for people with a disability?**

Same as anybody – you get fit, and it can be fun and social. It's also a great way for people with a physical disability to show they're intellectually capable. At an international level, Boccia is very strategic, so it's a great mental workout.

### **Do you think attitudes towards athletes with a disability are changing?**

Sydney 2000 was a turning point because many people were watching athletes with a disability compete at a high level for the first time. It was also the first Paralympics where the team wore the same uniforms the Olympic team. It was a pivotal moment – there was a sense of equality.