

**THE MAKING OF SPORTS HEROES IN GOALBALL:
THE CASE OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENT-
ATHLETES IN KUALA LUMPUR**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Since 1947, goalball sport has been played for rehabilitative purposes among World War veterans and has gained its popularity especially among visually impaired communities around the world. The inception of this sport into the Paralympics has cemented the status of goalball as one of the elite and competitive sports for visually impaired athletes. For many years, studies on goalball were only focusing on the coaching and performing aspects of the sport. The socio-cultural dimensions of goalball sport are often neglected by academias, which prompted the need for sports sociologists and anthropologists to gain more information on the social and cultural aspects of goalball. This thesis aims to explore the engagement of student-athletes with visual impairments in goalball sport. It intends to examine the roles and outcomes of goalball participation among visually impaired student-athletes especially those who play competitively in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It describes how goalball not only serves as the platform for experiences and its benefits for student-athletes, but also to their coaches, peers and family members, especially when the student-athletes complete their secondary education. This study proposes that goalball participation among these students serves as a platform for self-reliance, which is essential for them once they leave school and in producing new sporting heroes among the players. Using a qualitative approach, the study investigates the attributes that the participants gain when they engage in goalball sport. This study recruited 20 participants [N=20] among high profile student-athletes with visual impairments from the categories of B1, B2 and B3 using a purposive sampling technique. The relevant data were obtained qualitatively through in-depth interviews and participant observation over 14 months. The findings reveal that the roles of coaches, family members, peers and senior athletes are substantial to spur goalball sports experiences amongst the players. It is also found that goalball sport is crucial for the survival of the participants as it contributes to (i) self-improvement, (ii) voluntary action, (iii) appreciation, awards and incentives, (iv) prioritising of priorities, (v) determination, (vi) opportunities and (vii) acceptance and sense of belonging, which are indispensable in the making of sporting heroes among them. Using three relevant frameworks of heroism, the power relations discourse and the role theory, this study highlights the specific roles played at all levels and by all actors – from student-athletes with visual impairments to their coaches. This study concludes that goalball provides a platform for student-athletes to create a sense of self-reliance when they complete their secondary education and enter the workforce in the future. Lastly, the thesis provides several recommendations for policymakers, schools, the private sector and the academia as part of an ongoing effort to add to the research discourse in the field of sports for disability, special educational needs and inclusive policy not only in Malaysia but also throughout the world.

خلاصة البحث

منذ عام 1947م، تم اختراع لعبة كرة الهدف للمكفوفين بغرض إعادة التأهيل بين قدامى المحاربين في الحرب العالمية واشتهرت هذه اللعبة الشعبية بين مجتمعات المكفوفين في جميع أنحاء العالم. منذ بداية كرة الهدف في الألعاب الأولمبياد الخاصة للمعوقين لأول مرة، تعزز مكانة هذه اللعبة كواحدة من الرياضات النخبة والتنافسية للرياضيين المكفوفين. لسنوات عديدة، تركز الدراسات حول كرة الهدف فقط على جوانب التدريب والأداء في الرياضة. كثيرا ما يتم إهمال الأبعاد الاجتماعية والثقافية لكرة الهدف من قبل الأوساط الأكاديمية، مما أدى إلى احتياج علماء الاجتماع الرياضي وعلماء الأنثروبولوجيا للحصول على مزيد من المعلومات حول الجوانب الاجتماعية والثقافية لكرة الهدف. تهدف هذه الرسالة إلى استكشاف مشاركة الرياضيين المكفوفين من الطلاب في رياضة كرة الهدف. ولهذا، تم بحث أدوار ونتائج مشاركة الرياضيين المكفوفين من الطلاب لكرة الهدف الذين يلعبون بشكل تنافسي في كوالالمبور، ماليزيا. ويبين أيضا كيف تعمل كرة الهدف كمنصة للتجارب وفوائدها للرياضيين من الطلاب والمدرسين والأقران وأفراد الأسرة، خاصة عندما يكمل الرياضيون من الطلاب تعليمهم للمرحلة الثانوية. تقترح هذه الدراسة أن المشاركة بين هؤلاء الطلاب بمثابة منصة للاعتماد على النفس في هذه اللعبة أمر ضروري بالنسبة لهم عند تخليهم عالم المدرسة، وأيضا في إنتاج أبطال الرياضيين الجدد بين اللاعبين. باستخدام المنهج النوعي، تبحث الدراسة عن السمات التي يكتسبها المشاركون عند مشاركتهم في لعبة كرة الهدف. وجمعت هذه الدراسة 20 مشاركا [20 = N] من الرياضيين الطلاب الذين يتصدون لضعف البصر من فئات 1B و 2B و 3B باستخدام تقنية أخذ العينات الهادفة. تم الحصول على البيانات بطريقة نوعية من خلال المقابلات المتعمقة وملاحظات المشاركين لمدة 14 شهرا. تكشف النتائج على أهمية دور المدرسين وأفراد الأسرة والأقران والرياضيين الكبار لتحفيز الخبرات الرياضية في كرة الهدف بين اللاعبين. وتكشف أيضا على أن رياضة كرة الهدف ضرورية لحياة المشاركين لأنها تساهم في (1) الثقة العالية بالنفس (2) العمل التطوعي (3) التقدير والجوائز والحوافز (4) تقديم الأولويات (5) العزم المصمم (6) الفرص (7) وسلامة الصدر والشعور بالانتماء التي لا غنى عنها لتكوين أبطال رياضيين بينهم. باستخدام ثلاثة أطر البطولة ذات الصلة، وخطاب علاقات القوة، ونظريات الدور، تبين هذه الدراسة على الأدوار المعينة التي يلعبها جميع الممثلين على جميع المستويات - من الرياضيين المكفوفين من الطلاب إلى مدربيهم. وهذه الدراسة تستنتج أن كرة الهدف توفر منصة للرياضيين من الطلاب لإيجاد الشعور بالاعتماد على النفس عندما يكملون تعليمهم من المرحلة الثانوية، ويدخلون إلى القوى العاملة في المستقبل. وأخيرا، تقدم هذه الدراسة العديد من

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APPROVAL PAGE

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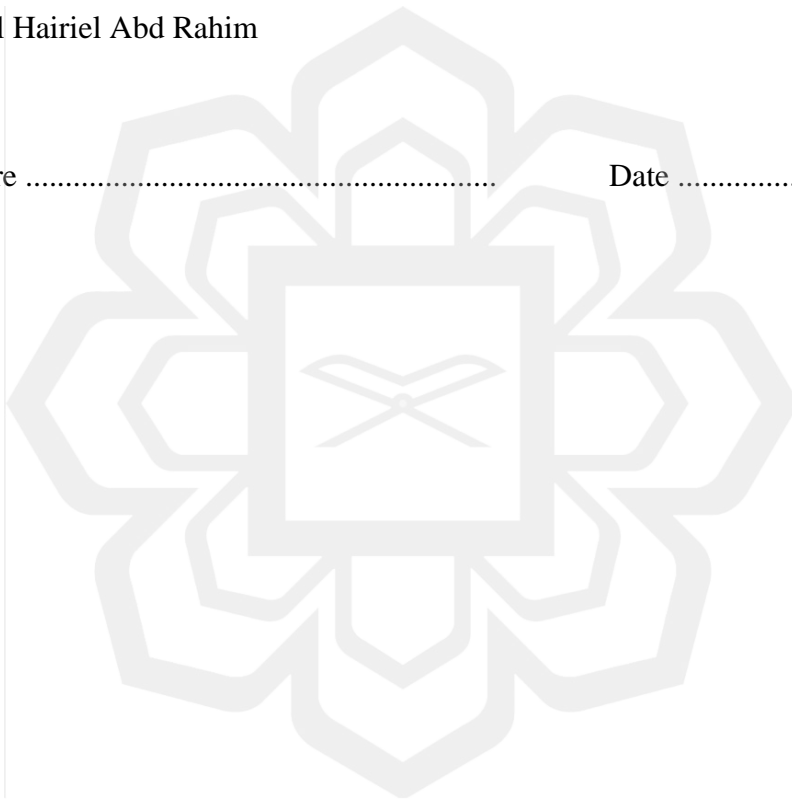
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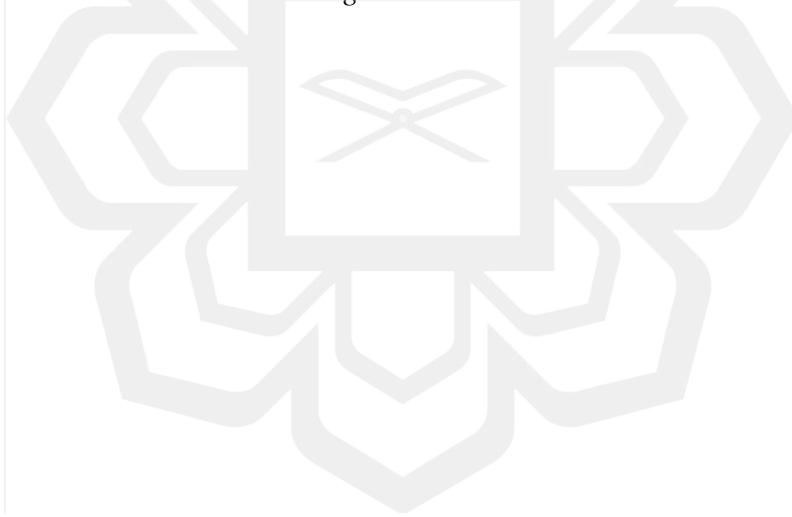
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Remembering my late Abah (Almarhum Abd Rahim Md Noor), Bro. (Almarhum Baidruel Hazlieshah Abd Rahim), Sister in Law (Almarhumah Salina Abdul Ghani), Tok Ayah (Almarhum Salleh Haji Bakar), Tok Timah (Almarhumah Fatimah Ahmad), Tok Som (Almarhumah Che Sam Arshad), Uncle Adnan (Almarhum Adnan Abdul Aziz) and Mak Ngah (Almarhumah Arpah Mat Noh) May Allah bless your souls and award the highest Jannah. Al-Fatihah.



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4.8 My participants mingled around with their fellow student-athletes during competition.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------------|--|
| BMI | Body Mass Index |
| EPRD | Educational Policy and Research Development |
| FESPIC | Far East and South Pacific |
| GAM | Goalball Association of Malaysia |
| IBSA | International Blind Sport Association |
| ICC | International Co-ordination Committee of World Sports Organisations for the Disabled |
| IPC | International Paralympic Committee |
| IPG | Institut Pendidikan Guru |
| IRK | Islamic Revealed Knowledge |
| JPN | Jabatan Pelajaran Negeri |
| JPWP | Jabatan Pelajaran Wilayah Persekutuan |
| KLSES – VI | Kuala Lumpur Special Education School – Visual Impairments |
| KUSZA | Kolej Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin |
| LLB | Latin 'Legum Baccalaureus |
| MAB | Malaysia Association of Blind |
| MATRADE | Malaysia External Trade Development |
| MBSA | Malaysia Blind Sport Association |
| MEB | Malaysia Education Blueprint |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| MOYS | Ministry of Youth and Sport |
| MRR2 | Middle Ring Road 2 (Kuala Lumpur) |
| MVPA | Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity |
| NEP | National Education Philosophy |
| NSC | National Sports Centre |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PBF | Percent Body Fat |
| PdPc | Pengajaran dan Pemudahcaraan |
| PERSOB | Persatuan Sukan Orang Buta |
| PPI | Program Pendidikan Inklusif |
| PPKI | Program Pendidikan Kelas Inklusif |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SEA | Southeast Asia |
| SED | Special Education Department |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UPNM | Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia |

GLOSSARY OF TRANSLATED WORDS

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Abah</i> | Father |
| <i>Abang</i> | Elder brother |
| <i>Adik</i> | Younger brother |
| <i>Adoi!/Aduh!</i> | Expression of pain (Ouch!) |
| <i>Ālḥamdulillah</i> | Praise be to God |
| <i>Anak murid</i> | Pupil/student |
| <i>Āssalāmu'alaikum</i> | Peace be upon you |
| <i>Baju Kurung</i> | Malay traditional attire |
| <i>Cemburu</i> | Jealous |
| <i>Cikgu</i> | Teacher |
| <i>Deepavali</i> | Festival of light |
| <i>Du'ā</i> | Pray |
| <i>Guru</i> | Teacher |
| <i>Hangpa</i> | You all |
| <i>Imām</i> | Leader |
| <i>Inṣha Āllah</i> | God wills |
| <i>Kakak</i> | Elder sister |
| <i>Kampung</i> | Village |
| <i>Kasut</i> | Shoe |
| <i>Maḡrib</i> | Sunset prayer |
| <i>Mahallah</i> | Residential college |
| <i>Minah rabun</i> | A girl with blurred eyes |
| <i>Musolla</i> | Prayer room |
| <i>Otai</i> | Local terms for seniors or experts |
| <i>Pekasam</i> | Pickled fish |
| <i>Pengemis di tepi jalan</i> | Beggar by the roadside |
| <i>Permainan</i> | Games |
| <i>Piala Dato' Bandar</i> | Mayor Cup |
| <i>Rendang Tok</i> | Malay traditional food |
| <i>Sakit</i> | Pain/Sick |
| <i>Sari</i> | Indian traditional attire |
| <i>Sepak Takraw</i> | Game play with rattan ball |
| <i>Sukan</i> | Sport |
| <i>Surah</i> | Chapter in the Qur'an |
| <i>Surau</i> | Islamic religious space |
| <i>Tazkirah</i> | Memorandum/admonition |
| <i>Tua</i> | Old |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Over many years, the background of sport for visual impairment has been overshadowed by studies of other types of impairments, such as deafness and learning disabilities. In my opinion, the various fields of interest among researchers have pulled them away from understanding the nature of students' participation in goalball activities. To understand this, I narrate chronologically the development and trend in the studies relating to them.

Goalball sport is a modern para-sport that caters to the sporting needs of members of a community with visual impairments. It is usually played as an indoor sport and has its own venue (as seen in Figure 1.1). There are limited resources regarding the history and background of goalball. Only a few historical write-ups serve as credible sources for my reference. In these documentations, I found that goalball started after World War II (Kearney & Copeland, 1979). There were many amputees, deadened, and visually disabled people among veterans as a result of this war (Kearney & Copeland, 1979). This sport (or game) was played in a designated arena, with a special ball (with a bell inside) and a more extended goal. Sadly, these people had lost hope to proceed with their life. These veterans were impaired, although they used to live as non-disabled people. The government of most nations at that specific time was confronted with the issue of restoration, particularly among the blind. The only available recovery programme for the visibly impeded veterans at that time was goalball – through the ideas of Hans Lorezen (West

Germany) and Sepp Reindle (Austria) (Kearney & Copeland, 1979; Çolak et al., 2004).

This game originally served as the opportunity among visually impaired veterans to concentrate, develop and continue their life (Kearney & Copeland, 1979). However, as time passed, the Germans, Dutch and Belgians claimed themselves the original creator of the goalball game (initially from the word ‘Torball’). This is due to development in the game and potential (authoritatively) to be included in Torontolympiad in 1976 (known as Paralympics nowadays). Since that point, the sport of goalball has developed and is linked to the community of visually impaired around the world (Pedersen & Greer, 2008). The sport has continued to grow as the visually disabled community across the globe considers goalball as a fast-paced, challenging, strategic and locks in competitive wear played by the community around the world. For the record, it has pulled in more than 100 players around the world to compete in the London 2012 Paralympics (Laughlin & Happel, 2016). In lieu of the historical development of sport, my study unearthed and organised the missing files of goalball sport development in Malaysia which has not been properly and systematically presented and documented by existing scholars in the local setting.

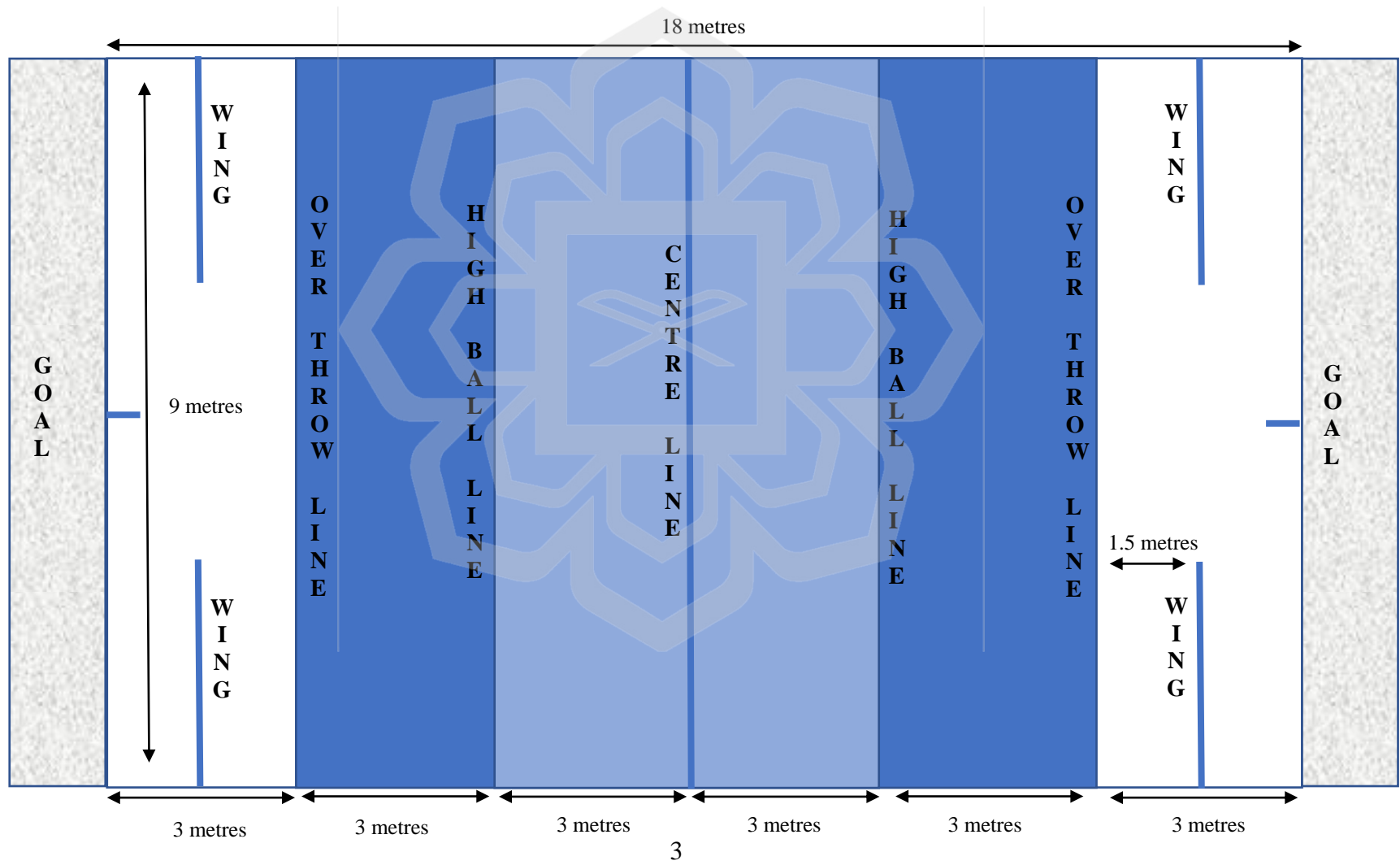


Figure 1.1 Sketch of goalball arena

The goalball sport made its debut at the 1976 Paralympics held in Toronto, Canada. Since then, it has never missed the games and has attracted many teams around the globe. For the first two editions of the Paralympic games, only men's teams were involved. The women teams made their maiden appearance in the third Paralympics hosted by Seoul, South Korea in 1988. As shown in Table 1.1, the teams of the United States of America, Finland and Denmark had marked their domination in the goalball sport by winning most of the gold medals offered throughout the 40 years of Paralympics history. The table also indicates the equal representation of winners from different continents. It displays the universal value of goalball sport and how competitive it could be in the context of Paralympics games.

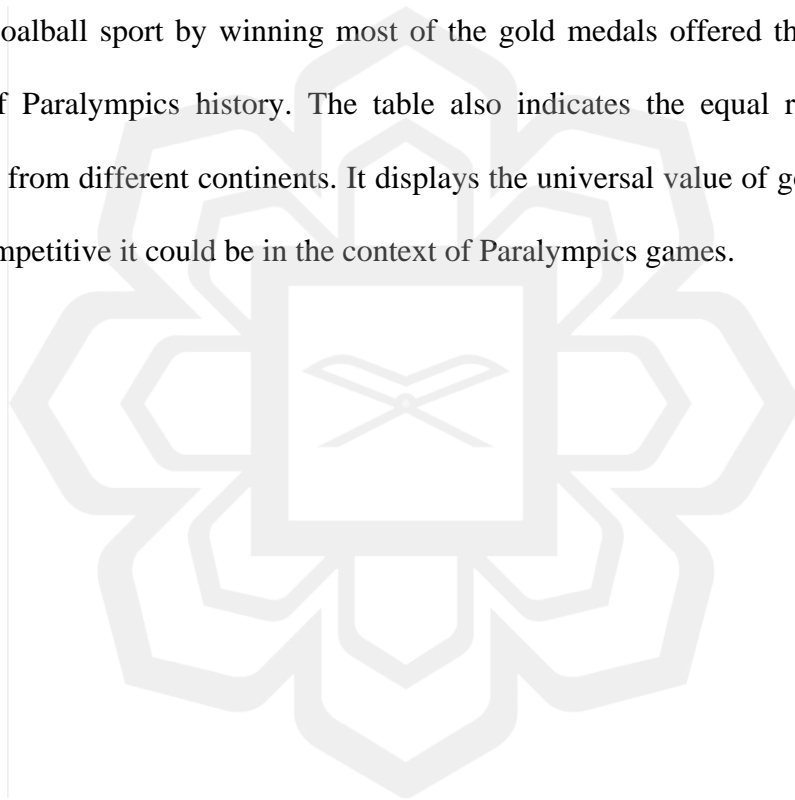


Table 1.1 Paralympics Goalball Sports Medallists (1976-2016)

| Countries | Achievement | | | Total |
|----------------------|-------------|--------|--------|-------|
| | Gold | Silver | Bronze | |
| Austria | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| West Germany/Germany | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| USA | 3 | 5 | 3 | 11 |
| Yugoslavia | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Italy | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Finland | 3 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| Denmark | 3 | 1 | 3 | 7 |
| China | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| Lithuania | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Turkey | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Canada | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Japan | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Egypt | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Sweden | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Brazil | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Spain | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Netherlands | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total Medal | 20 | 20 | 20 | 60 |

Source: Data from International Paralympics Committee website at <https://www.paralympic.org>

Malaysia has a different historical narrative in relation to goalball sport. I found that the information about goalball in Malaysia has not been systematically documented though the sport has been played by the local visually impaired community for more than three decades. The information regarding the history and background of the sport is scattered all over the place as no initiative has been taken to properly narrated and documented its development. I went to meet the persons behind all of this and found it exciting to hear how far goalball has grown as a para-sport in Malaysia.