

David's Paris 2024 Olympic journal

Olympics

Tue. July 23, Day-3 O. Walters

Fri. July 26, Open. Ceremony Day 1

Sat. July 27, Day 2 Marie Antoinette

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Fri, Aug. 09 Day 15 Rest take two

Sat., Aug. 10 Day 16 Women W. Polo

Sun., Aug. 11 Day 17 The End

Mon. Aug. 12 Day 17 + 1 L. Zarins

Paralympics

Tue. Aug. 27 2024 Day -1 TDJ

Thurs. Aug. 29 2024 Day 2 Club Fr.

Sun. Sept. 1 2024 Day 4 Cécifoot

Sat. Sept. 7 2024 Day 11 Para Swim

Olympics vs Paralympics

ITV of hip-hop dancer Aston

ITV of French fan Candice Lemaire

Concluding remarks

Olympics

Tuesday July 23, Olympics Day -3 - A chance encounter with Oliver

It's 3pm and I am waiting to talk to a salesman at a Darty store (sort of like a Best Buy/computer store) at Nation. I am here to pick up a computer. He is talking to three people, two of which are doing the talking while one is hanging back. I notice that the one hanging back has an Olympic accreditation around his neck. I boldly ask him about his accreditation and his connection with the Olympics. He informs me that he works for Canadian Broadcasting. I request an interview on behalf of Aca-Media and he agrees.

A few minutes later at a Parisian café all four of us sit down and I learn that the journalist is called Oliver. The two other people are Patrick, an American and the cousin of Oliver's wife, and Frederic, a Frenchman and Patrick's husband. Now I understand why Oliver refers to them as his cousins (Oliver is Black, Patrick is Asian and Frederic is Caucasian).

I whip out my phone press record on the recording application and we start an improvised twenty-minute interview. I am surprised at how well it goes seeing as how all of this was totally unforeseen by me just a few minutes ago, it seems like a totally serendipitous event where the stars aligned to provide me with [this interview](#).

I took some pictures, exchanged e-mail addresses with Oliver, finished my Perrier, paid and then went home with my new computer.



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Friday July 26, Opening ceremony Day 1 - Walking and waiting in the rain.

It is 7 pm and I have no idea what I am going to do today. I do not have a ticket but I know the ceremony starts at 7:30 pm and that it will follow the Seine all the way to the Eiffel Tower. A bad cramp in my calf contracted yesterday has turned my normally spry gait into a permanent limp. I planned on scouting out an opening ceremony location early. Perhaps I could take my chances and try to get close to Trocadero. I am about to leave but have to change plans because there is an emergency. My wife needs me to search our apartment and find ASAP an administrative document. She needs me to do this because she is in Germany with our children. If my family were not away during the Olympics I would not be in the process of writing and agonizing over the fact that I did not pay 1600 euros for a ticket to the opening ceremony, but busy making dinner while trying to keep my children occupied, perhaps by turning on the TV so that they could watch... the Olympics. Finding the damn document takes a bit longer than planned and by the time I am out of the house it is 9pm and the Olympic ceremony has already started.

I decide that my best bet is to go to Châtelet because it is central and I can get there quickly. As I emerge from the metro [I realize that it is pouring rain](#), but there are still plenty of people walking on the streets. I walk down rue de Rivoli towards Pont Neuf. As I am walking, I spot a cameraman next to a Uniqlo store who is setting up his equipment. He agrees to an interview but tells me to come back in an hour. I continue now towards the Seine and am almost [at Pont Neuf](#). I am stopped by a fence where I notice several people with umbrellas who have gathered up close to the barrier to watch a large screen on the other side of the river.





This fenced off area stretches all along the Seine with riot police positioned behind check points so that they can let in locals who have the required QR code that allows them to enter this restricted area. A helicopter is patrolling overhead to provide additional security or perhaps it is there just to film the ceremony. I then double back towards the Uniqlo store and on my way stumble across a café full of tourists and [French people yelling, cheering and singing 'Freed from desire'](#) as they watch the ceremony on a large screen. I ask one English lady why the people are cheering, and she says it's because people think the ceremony is almost over.



I finally arrive back at the Uniqlo store and spot the cameraman. There is now a female reporter with him. I learn that they work for the Mexican channel Imagen. The

woman tells me that they are about to broadcast live but that she can give me five minutes for an interview. Unlike the experience on Tuesday, this does not have the serendipitous feel to it. Although we are shielded from the rain by the Uniqlo awning it is dark and I must wait. I thought this would be a matter of a couple of minutes but the reporter must repeatedly do short bits and then wait in between takes. All in all, I waited for about 90 minutes before I could finally pull out my phone and start the interview. As I had nothing else to do I observed the behavior of passers-by and noticed how the live camera seems to make people, specifically young people crazy.



The idea of being on TV makes them go into full on performance mode, some even a bit overbearing to such a degree that I was about to intervene so that they would leave the reporter alone, but they finally left before any action on my part was necessary. As soon as I got [my interview](#), I rapidly exchanged some contact information and then took the metro back. In conclusion, the cameraman and reporter had to stand there for more than two hours and like me she did not get to watch the ceremony.

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Saturday July 27, Day 2 - My chat with Marie Antoinette



It's 2pm and I have no clear plans of where to go today. I had sent out a few feelers to contacts without much luck. I decide to check my Facebook page and notice that one of my FB friends was apparently in the opening ceremony. I cannot believe it.

After picking up my jaw from off the ground, I contact my friend to arrange a meeting. A few hours later, I am at a café at Montparnasse sitting down for an [interview with Mathilde Blondeau](#), the beheaded Marie Antoinette who sang from the Conciergerie during the opening ceremony.

There was something about this day that felt magical.



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Sunday July 28, Day 3 - David and Gilles sur Seine

I am watching the Olympic ceremony that I had recorded and then a replay of a show called "Quels Jeux" which is basically a cross between a talk show and an Olympic recap. The main attraction is the French Rugby sevens team that has just won the gold medal by routing Fiji, 28-7. Incredible result taking into account that Fiji was the two-time Olympic champion. The public at "Club France" is ecstatic and electric and during several moments the players are carried by the crowd the same way Musicians are carried during concerts.

At about 11 pm I go out for a walk from my neighborhood on the far east of Paris towards the center and specifically the Seine where I would perhaps find some journalists. I notice that the forbidden fenced off areas around the Seine are no longer forbidden to the public.



As I come up to the Pont Saint Michel, I see a man setting up a tripod and I know that I have hit pay dirt. Two Mexican journalists (Mexico again) are filming the atmosphere outside of the Olympics. They are super nice, letting French people take selfies with them. They grant me [my interview](#), but mostly David the cameraman does all the talking as Gilles the reporter, does not speak English as well as David.



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Monday July 29, Day 4 - Bercy Blues

I am at the Luxembourg Gardens watching some people playing chess. One of the reasons I am here is because I thought I might meet some journalists but perhaps the timing is not right as there are none. It turns out that the act of approaching and talking with total strangers is much easier in this setting than it will be for me later.

Indeed, a few hours later I am in the Bercy neighborhood where there is an Olympic venue (Bercy Arena). I see some people sitting on a terrace with accreditations on their necks. They politely answer my questions (they are Italian and work in catering) but there are signs that I am not being perceived in the same way as I had been in the last few days. First one of the people at their table offers to give me his metro ticket. I laughed out loud saying "Oh, you think I am a beggar." They seem reluctant to discuss anything with me and I start to realize that I am bothering them. At this point the waiter for the café abruptly comes out wanting to know if I am going to order anything. I said that I will but I need to wait a few minutes (meaning after I finish talking with the Italians). But at that point he makes up his mind that I am a troublemaker. I offer to buy a drink and he says they are no longer serving, an obvious lie since he asked me earlier if I was going to order something. In any case, I reply that I am going and he goes away. I see two other people with accreditations and try with them, finding out that they are in broadcasting but they are also reluctant and the waiter comes back again even angrier so I leave before things get ugly. Strike one.

I walk over to the next bar where there are two people from team USA. I request an interview and they say they are tired. I ask one of them if I could do one at another time and they say sure, just come back to the same place tomorrow. I think he is just being polite, as he had said earlier that it had been a long day. Strike two.

I then go to a third café (I am in big bad wolf mode but don't realize it) the Bercy Café that is just in front of the metro entrance. I spot some people from Switzerland outside, but I don't want to repeat the same errors, [a change of strategy is definitely needed](#). So, I sit down at a table inside and [order a drink](#). Next to my table an American and a Belgium man are having a conversation in English. I wait for an opening to introduce myself but it never comes. It is now 12h45 am and the last metro will be leaving soon. Moreover, my cell phone, which I use as my recording device, [only has 13 percent left on its battery](#). So I leave and hurry to catch the last metro. Strike three.

So, no interviews, no photos, just a few recordings of me commenting on my experience and mishaps of the day. Perhaps I will go back to the same café tomorrow, a bit earlier and see if I have more luck.

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Tuesday July 30, Day 5 - France: the world champion of poor housing

Paris is experiencing a heat wave as temperatures have been in the 90s. Even though it is 11pm the temperature is still 88 outside.

I walk to la Bastille and take some pictures of the Olympic rings.





A sign behind them draws my attention. It says in French “La France Championne du mal logement!” (translation - France is the world champion of poor housing).



The activists here are quite happy to speak to me. [I interview Fanny](#), the person in charge of “Droit au logement” an association that defends the rights of the homeless.



 **Droit Au Logement** 

Droit Au logement Paris et environs - 29 Av Ledru-Rollin 75012 Paris •
01 42 78 22 00 dalidf@droitaulogement.org • //www.droitaulogement.org

26 juillet 2024

**Déplacé à République pour cause de JO,
le camp des DALOs repart à Bastille dimanche soir**

"Nous sommes sans-logis, ou entassé.e.s dans des hébergements, chez des tiers, locataires de taudis, ou en instance d'expulsion sans relogement, à cause de la spéculation et du logement cher, comme des millions de personnes. Nous sommes prioritaires DALO souvent depuis des années. Selon la Loi, nous devrions être relogé.e.s en urgence, dans les 6 mois. Nous avons un emploi fatigant et mal-payé... Pour le respect de notre droit, nous avons installé un camp permanent à Bastille le 2 juin. Pour cause de JOP, nous sommes venus à République et nous retournons à Bastille à partir de dimanche. Nous sommes déterminées à obtenir un relogement comme déjà des milliers de ménages du DAL.

Les JOP, accélérateur de la crise du logement :

Les sans-abris, les habitants de bidonvilles et les squatters d'immeubles vacants sont expulsés et chassés sans pitié, déplacé en région... Pourtant jamais Paris et la région parisienne n'ont compté autant de logements vacants (128 000 à Paris en 2023 et 416 000 en ile de France) et de bureaux inoccupés (4,4 millions de m² = 90 000 logements), et la loi de réquisition reste inappliquée ... sauf pour expulser des étudiants modestes du CROUS. L'expulsion de locataires en difficulté s'est poursuivie, sur fond de congés ventes ou congés reprise frauduleux, pour louer sur Airbnb & Co.

Mais l'essentiel des expulsions sont provoquées par la hausse des loyers, des charges, et l'inflation, autrement dit le logement cher et la hausse du coût de la vie.

Résultat, record de demandes HLM en IdF (près de 800 000 en 2023) et des prioritaires DALOs non relogés (79 550 fin 2023), la préparation des JO a donné lieu à une accélération des politiques d'épuration sociale : Le chantier du grand Paris, financé par la spéculation immobilière autour des nouvelles gares, les démolitions de logements sociaux dans les secteurs stratégiques des JO comme sur l'île St Denis, la multiplication des locations types Airbnb et des locations meublées, au détriment des logements à l'année, la multiplication en toute impunité de la fraude aux rapports locatifs ...

Samedi 26/7 à 15h : Soutien aux locataires du 34 Av Dr Arnold Netter

Vivant dans des taudis, et menacés d'expulsion par leur marchand de sommeil, Paris 12e

- **Revendication :**
- Relogement des familles DALO en lutte de Bastille et des locataires du 34 Arnold Netter !
- Réquisition des immeubles vides pour les mineurs isolés à la rue en lutte, pour les familles avec enfants et pour toutes les personnes à la rue !
- Respect et application des lois qui protègent les sans-abris : DALOs, locataires, sans-abris !
- Baisse des loyers et taxation des profits immobiliers et Droit au logement dans la constitution !
- Abrogation de la Loi Kasbarian-Bergé, retrait du projet Kasbarian 2, interdiction des locations Airbnb & Co en zone tendue !
- Réalisation massive de HLM avec des financements publics, arrêt des démolitions et des ventes !

Un toit c'est un Droit, un toit c'est la Loi !!

Mal-logés, locataires, sans logis : permanences 14/17h Lundi - Mercredi - Samedi (sauf 1^{er} samedi du mois)
Volontaires : pour que chacun.e soit logé.e dignement et aider les luttes : militant@droitaulogement.org

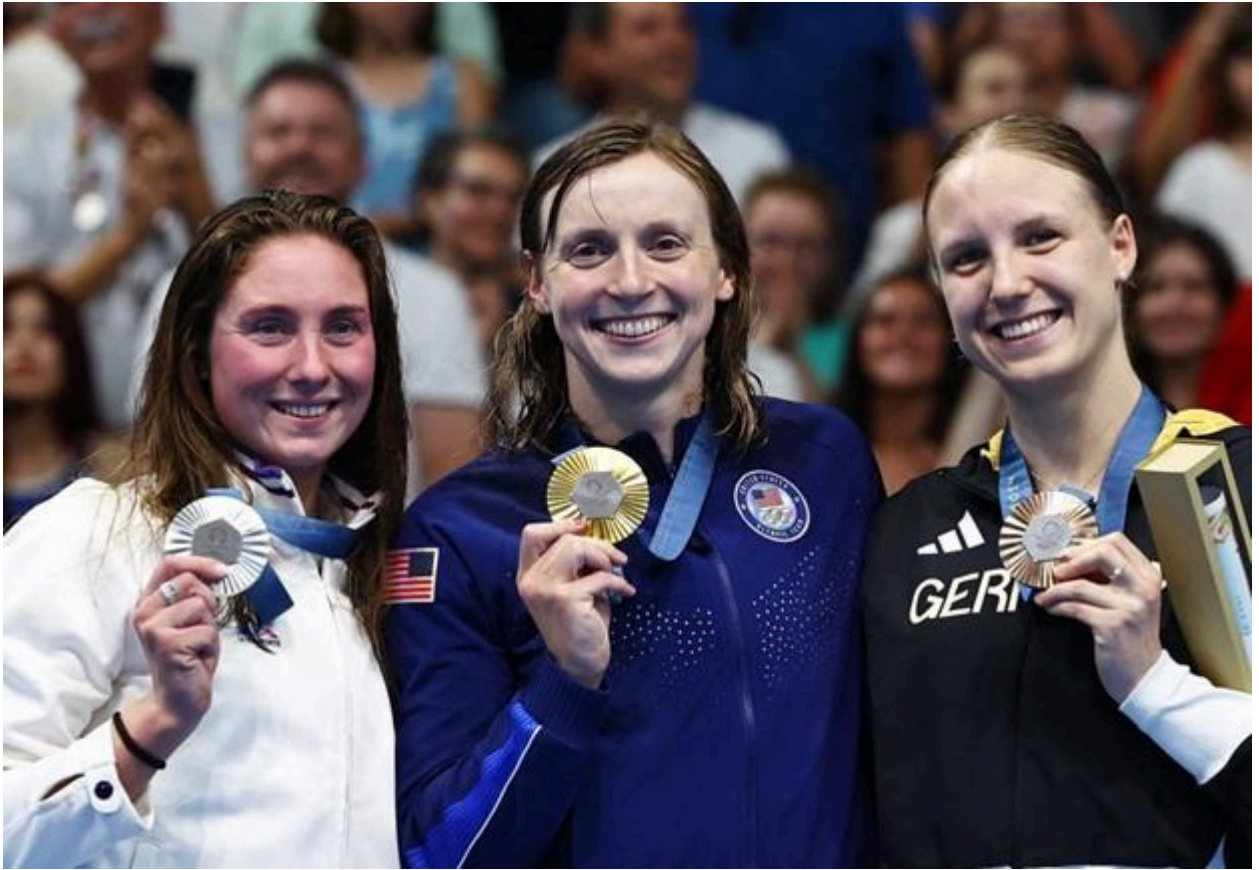
DAL - Droit Au Logement - 29 Av Ledru-Rollin Paris 12^e - dalidf@droitaulogement.org - [//www.droitaulogement.org](http://www.droitaulogement.org)

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Wednesday, July 31 Day 6 - A day of rest

I ask my dance teacher for the contact information of a dancer that he knows who was in the ceremony. I then send the dancer a message. We will see if he gets back to me. I also know another person who has some union contacts so I will see if that gives me any leads.

I go home to watch the Olympics on TV. I realize, as I am watching the podium of the women's 1500 m freestyle, that the three women who have won medals represent the nationalities of my children: USA, France and Germany.



Anastasiia Kirpichnikova (France), Katie Ledecky (USA), Isabel Gose (Germany)

I do not go out again, as I am tired.

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Thursday, August 01 Day 7 - At the Terrasses des jeux



Métro station Hôtel de Ville



I am at Hôtel de Ville (city hall) to check out the fan zone called “Les terrasses des jeux”. There are lots of Olympic related activities for children and adults.





Catherine and Kirsten



I have my picture taken by two Olympic volunteers, [Catherine](#) and [Kirsten](#) who also agree to do an interview with me later.

There is a media section here and I notice some journalists from the BBC who are broadcasting. I wait patiently to ask for an interview. The BBC journalist is game but her assistant informs me that their superiors do not authorize any interviews. There is another media guy there but he is in a hurry, so I let it and him go.



With Kirsten

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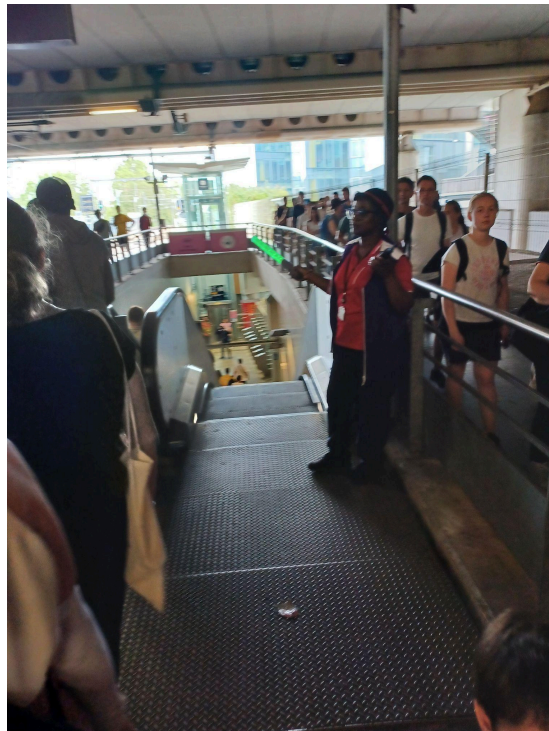
Friday, August 02 Day 8 - Injury time

Today I am going to explore La Villette where various Olympic club houses are located, but before starting my Olympic day, on a whim, I decide to try out a Modern Jazz dance class at Porte Maillot. I hurt my leg again, putting an end to my plans to go to La Vilette and go home instead.

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Saturday, August 03 Day 9 - women's Quarterfinal soccer match: USA vs Japan feat. Snoop

Today I am actually going to attend an Olympic event. A few weeks ago, I purchased a 50 euro ticket for the quarter final of the women's soccer tournament without knowing who would be playing. A quick aside, female team events are the only ones I can afford not having bought my tickets well in advance. It turned out to be a lucky choice, as I discovered that it was USA vs Japan. The match will take place in the 16th district at Parc des Princes in the lower western part of Paris. It is a famous soccer stadium well known for hosting the Star-studded Qatari funded Parisian soccer team Paris-Saint Germain or PSG. It takes me about one hour to get there. I am surprised to see the personnel of the RATP with small light batons to guide the crowds to the metro exit.



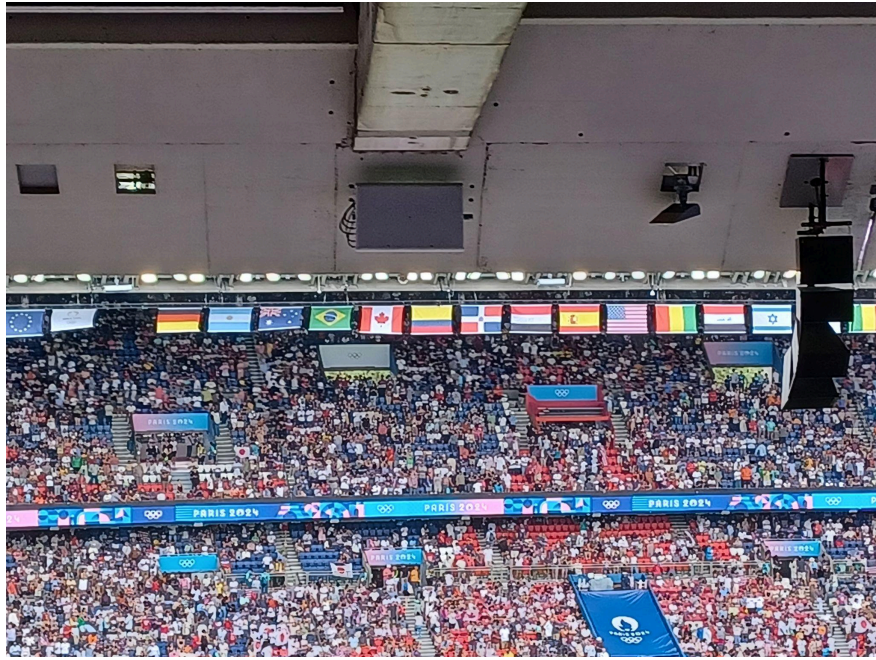


I am waiting in line with a hard copy of the e-mail notification with block and seat number and the ticket person informs me that the e-mail confirmation of my purchase is not valid admission, I need to download the

special Paris 2024 application to my phone in order to get a QR code which will be my ticket. After having waited an hour in line, I am now standing on the side of the line downloading the application to my cell phone while the people behind me are being scanned in. Downloading the application is not a problem, but I start to panic when the application asks for my password to connect me to my Paris 2024 account.

I am not sure what the password is, and in order to get it I would have to make a two-hour round trip back home to the east of Paris and basically miss the whole match. I enter the first password that I think it could be, and hallelujah, I am connected!! I have my QR code, but there is one more obstacle, security. They separate the men from the women (women on the left, men on the right). So, after this final security check I am finally through and able to attend the Olympic event ever in my life.





[After a dramatic countdown](#) the game starts and the atmosphere is great. During the game there is a surprise visit by Snoop Dogg who is just a few seats away from me talking with the broadcasters. I walk over and take a few pictures.

The first half ends 0-0 both teams seem evenly matched. During half time the atmosphere has gone full night club as a large screen karaoke lights up with the words to the song "[Freed From Desire](#)" by the singer Gala. Play resumes and after full time it's still 0-0 and the match has

become quite a nail biter. [I take advantage of the break to interview my neighbor](#) who is a fan from Brazil who, like me, bought his ticket without knowing which teams would be playing. The teams come back onto the field and the crowd finally goes wild when [Trinity Rodman scores for the USA in extra time](#). [The USA wins 1-0](#).



At the end of the game, I see an American woman holding up a big American flag. [She agrees to let me interview her](#). I am about to leave the stadium when I spot two

photographers from the WSJ and ask for an interview but they say that they are not allowed to give out interviews. Oh well, or as they say in French, tant pis.

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Sunday, August 04 Day 10 - Barricades in the barrios



I am walking around in the 19th district of Paris but parts of it are closed off because of the women's bike race through the city. I witness first-hand a resident losing his cool at Ménilmontant. He wants to cross the street to get to his apartment but the police will not let him through the barricade.

Another man, a younger one, nonchalantly climbs over the barrier but he is then immediately intercepted and interrogated by the police officers on the other side.





While I am in this neighborhood, I find a neat bit of graffiti showing a swimmer swimming through a wall to reveal garbage. Not much else to report on from today.

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Monday, August 05 Day 11 - From terrasses to Tuileries

I am taking the métro and I notice a wall poster that indicates how to reach all the Olympic venues.



It is late at night and I am now in front of the fan zone Les terrasses des jeux at Hôtel de Ville. There is a party going on inside but they are not letting anyone in. They generally stop when they reach full capacity. Nevertheless, there is a crowd of

people gathered outside in front of the entrance dancing to [the music](#) being played inside that can be heard on the other side of the fence. The atmosphere is festive as even the guards are dancing! It is also possible [to film the party inside](#) by holding one's cell phone above the fence.

While we are standing outside the fan zone at Hôtel de Ville we can hear the people cheering because [France has just scored a goal against Egypt](#) in the Olympic men's soccer semifinals.

My next stop is the Tuileries to take some pictures and [video footage of the Olympic flame](#).



There I find a man taking pictures for the Taekwondo Federation. Unfortunately, [he is reluctant to do an interview](#), so I move on towards the Louvre, where I am able to get some nice pictures of the Olympic rings in front of the pyramid.



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Tuesday, August 06 Day 12 - Slovenian breakdance



It is 7 pm and I am at Parc La Vilette. My intention is to go to club France but as I am walking through the nations park or “parc des nations” my eye is caught by something going on at the Slovenian house.

A Breakdance show is taking place. It is being hosted by an MC, who brings out dancers, and at one point brings members of the audience on stage to perform an [improvised battle](#). At the end of the show I ask the Breakdance MC, OG Samson, for an interview. He tells me to come back at 9pm. So, I am back at 9pm sharp and OG Samson brings me into the Slovenian house and tells security that I am a guest.

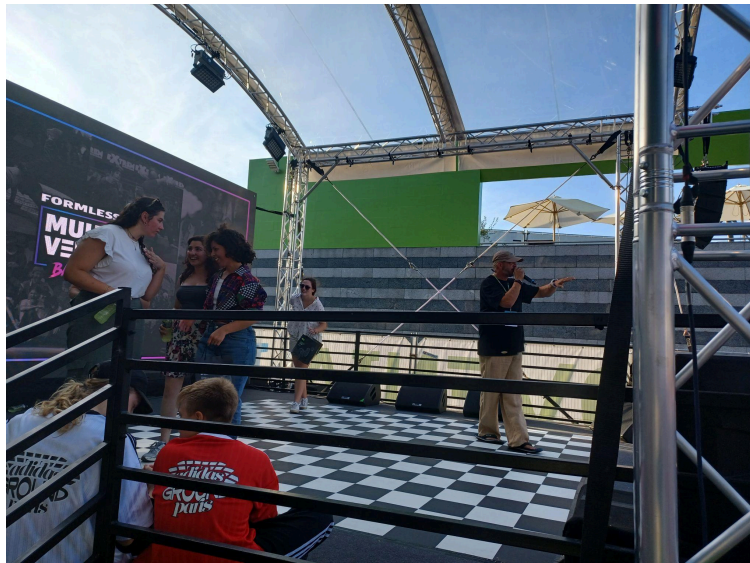


FREE ENTRY
FOOD - DRINKS - MUSIC
BREAKDANCE SHOW 19:00

DOBRODOŠLI!
WELCOME!
BIENVENUE!

ENTRÉE GRATUITE
SNACKS - BOISSONS
MUSIQUE
BREAKDANCE 19:00

I FEEL LOVE



They ask me what company I represent and I reply Acamedia and show them my picture on the Aca-media website. I now have my own guest accreditation for the Slovenian house.



With Marta Kos.

I have to wait for Samson, so I take advantage of my newly acquired access to the Slovenian house [to interview Marta Kos](#), the head of protocol and communications and a journalist as well.

A few minutes later, Samson is finally free. He is accompanied by his protégé, B-boy Tasic and I get [to interview both of them](#). After the interview, I continue to socialize with the people at the Slovenian House.



With OG Samson



With B-boy Tasic

The Slovenian people that I meet there are extremely nice and before I leave, I pretty much promise to visit everyone in Ljubljana for my next vacation. Moreover, I am able to secure two new journalist contacts. The first one is from B-boy Tasic who gives me the e-mail of a Latvian journalist who had interviewed him. The second is

that of a French journalist who is friends with one of the people I have just met at the Slovenian house.



I make a few friends at the Slovenian house

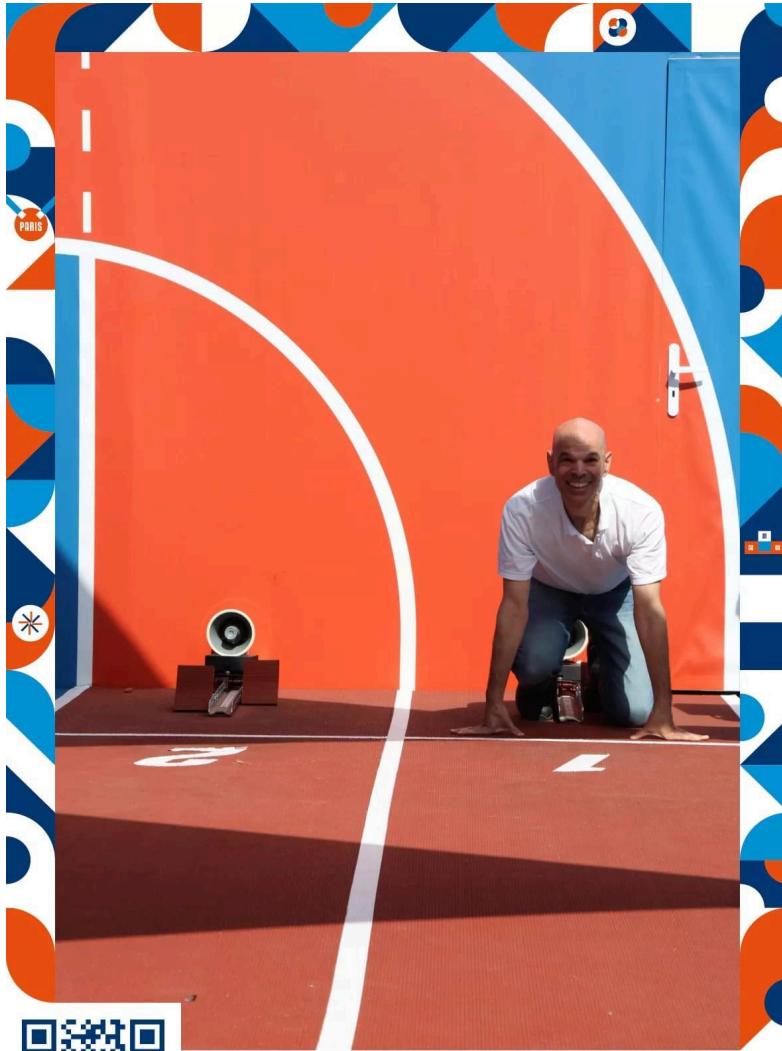
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Wednesday, August 07 Day 13 - Chilling at Club France

I am back at la Villette and armed with crucial information I had gleaned the day before about how to get into the French clubhouse or “Club France”. This boils down to: arrive a little before 10 am when tickets are put on sale for that same day. The strategy works and I get my ticket after only waiting one hour in line.



I then explore the clubhouse by testing a few activities for children. The first one I come across involves three activities: jumping as high as you can, scoring a penalty against an automated goalie either by throwing or kicking the ball and finally testing one's reaction time by getting into the starting blocks and running after a gun goes off. I start with activity #1 jump as high as you can from a standing position. This one does not go so well for me, remember how I injured my leg a few days ago? My leg hurts even when I try to jump. I hobble on to activity #2 soccer or handball penalty against an automated goalie. The automated goalie is very good and quick. However, I notice that it is fixed in place in the center and can only make an arc like the hands of a clock. This means that there is a spot in the upper corner that is not protected. I choose to throw the ball as I am not very adroit with my feet and proceed to throw the ball into the corner and score a goal. I claim my prize (an Olympic pin)



and proceed to activity #3 Beat Sasha Zhoya's reaction time of 0.129 seconds. Sasha Zhoya is the French 110-meter hurdler competing in the Olympics. I settle into the starting blocks, look up and smile for the photo, then drop my head and listen for the gun. It goes off and I rush out of the starting blocks.

My reaction time is 0.111, injured leg and all! I am ranked second among all the people who have done this test so far.

Unbelievable, especially since I was not particularly fast out of the starting blocks when I did track and field in High School

CLASSEMENT

#1	Nils	0.103 s
#2	David	0.111 s
#3	Yohan	0.113 s
#4	Lea	0.128 s
#5	Marius	0.141 s
#28	Rafael	0.296 s
#43	Francine	0.425 s



I have now won a second prize, and I choose an official EDF sponsored Paris 2024 hand fan

The French club house area is quite large and I notice that there are all sorts of other activities that correspond to almost every single Olympic sport (fencing, boxing, equestrian, track and field). There is even a place where people are playing Chess.







After a quick trip home, I come back to Club France and to the TV studio area where the people get together to celebrate the French medal winners. There is a huge TV screen and hundreds of people are sitting or laying on the floor in front of this screen to watch the Olympics.



I join them on the floor and watch a couple of events on TV (Women's basketball,

men's volleyball). Watching the results along with thousands of fans in real time on a big screen TV is an impressive communal experience. Especially when the home team wins, as [the French volleyball team did](#) reaching the final gold medal match. It is now the end of the day. Two rappers Passi and Kool Chen come out and perform on stage. Once the rappers end their set, two boxing matches are broadcast on TV.



The announcer

The announcer comes out to inform us that the medal celebration ceremony will begin soon. The crowd breaks into [the White Stripes “7 Nations Army” chant and Johnny Hallyday’s “Que je t’aime”](#). This, of course, is what happens every night at Club France: the previous day’s French medal winners come out on stage to be feted by the crowd, sometimes even surfing on the crowd. Speaking of surfing, [today’s medal winner is Johanne Defay](#) who won the bronze in women’s surfing a few days earlier. [Johanne comes out, dances to the music](#), shows off her medal while high-fiving the audience. Then a DJ comes out and the fan zone becomes a nightclub. It’s at this point that I need to leave and catch the last metro.

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Thursday, August 08 Day 14 - From Alps to Eiffel



With Jérémie and Fhéänn a French couple from the Alps

It's 12h15 and I have an interview with Fhéänn and Jérémie, a French couple from the Alps near Geneva who have come to Paris to attend the Olympic events in person. I finish [the interview](#) and then immediately leave for a café near the Grand Palais Éphémère a temporary exhibition hall in the Champ de Mars. This is where the Olympic wrestling events take place. I have an appointment with Didier Favori a wrestling consultant for France Television, the public TV station that has been broadcasting the Olympics. Didier has been doing sports media since 1996 and this is his seventh Olympics. The interview is relaxed and pleasant. However, I often need to translate because Didier prefers to speak in



French. After [this interview](#), I have no more Olympic related activities planned for the day and head back to the métro station. As I am walking my attention is



With Didier Favori



immediately caught by the sound of a woman with a bullhorn [singing out instructions in different languages](#) while a group of people behind her are clapping to punctuate her instructions. “if you take the metro, cross the road!” She is one of the Olympic volunteers and her job is to help tourists find the metro station, but she is doing it in an original way. Here is [a video of her](#) in action.

Now, those of you reading this journal who have some knowledge of the city of Paris might know that there is an obscure metal construction located on the other side of the Champ de Mars. As I am already at the Champ de Mars, I decide to pay an impromptu visit to this vaguely famous monument and snap a few pictures. I then stroll over to Trocadero where the opening ceremony took place and take some more photos.





I arrive home in the late afternoon and find a surprise waiting for me on my computer: the Latvian journalist has answered my message and agrees to grant me an interview. He suggests meeting in the media village.

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Friday, August 09 Day 15 - a second day of rest

I am not going to any Olympic related events today. Instead, I am trying to figure out where the media village is and to coordinate with Lotars Zarins, the journalist from Latvia, to find a day, time and place where we can meet.

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Saturday, August 10 Day 16 - USA's water polo wipe out

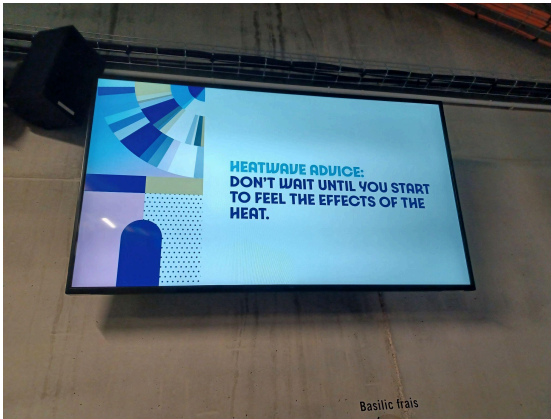
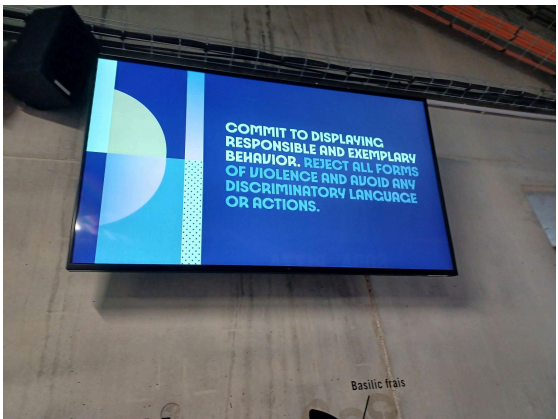
I am really excited about the program for today because I am going to attend my second Olympic event in person. Just as with the women's soccer quarter final, I had no idea when I bought the ticket who the teams would be, it only indicated that it would be the bronze medal match and that it would take place at La Defense Arena.



So, when I arrive there, the first big surprise is that there will also be another game before the bronze medal match, so I am going to watch two matches. [I ask a volunteer for information](#) and she confirms this and gives me information about the time of each match.

The first match is Greece vs Canada for 7th and 8th place. After a short break the USA will play against the Netherlands for the bronze medal. So, once again, I am lucky: I will get to watch the USA participate in the Olympics.

I enter the arena and discover that screen monitors display instructions in English.



I am discovering this building in real time. I enter the stadium area and I am struck by how spacious it is. [A volunteer helps me to find my seat.](#)



The program is about to begin and the lights go out. There is a little [light show](#) as music is played in the background. The announcer asks everyone to hold up their cell phones and turn on the flashlight. This creates a beautiful mosaic of lights.



The first game is between Greece and Canada for seventh and eighth place. Greece wins 19 - 10. In between the two matches there is a short break and I take advantage of this moment [to interview Nathalie](#), a French woman who is sitting next to me. She works for the electric company Engie and is also a unionist.



With Nathalie Steunot

The second game is now about to begin and there is again a wonderful light and music show. It's very innovative the way the images are projected onto the swimming pool making it one large screen. The teams are introduced and we now hear the [national anthems](#) of the USA and the Netherlands. The game begins and I can see that most of the people in the stadium are Netherland supporters. Moreover, most of the French, like Nathalie, are also rooting for the Dutch team. Yet, despite disadvantage, the USA gets off to a good start and it seems like the game is going to be a formality. At half time the USA is leading 7-3. Like in the other event I saw last week, the half time show is very festive and there is even [a dance cam segment](#) while we listen to 'Shake it Off' by Taylor Swift. In a dramatic turn of events, all of a sudden the USA is not able to score. The goalkeeper for the Netherlands is playing much better and at the same time the Netherland shooters are scoring every time. As time is running out the Netherlands bring the game level at 10-10 and it seems that the game will go into overtime. But with only one second left, the Dutch team

[scores again to win the game 11-10](#) and the crowd explodes. What an unbelievable finish for the Dutch, and what a disappointment for team USA.



Although I was disappointed that the USA lost, I was relieved that the game did not go into overtime because I have an appointment on the other side of Paris and need to leave quickly otherwise I will be late. I am now outside the building about to walk towards public transport. I spot someone wearing a team USA shirt and we commiserate about the US loss. Our conversation then turned surreal and provided me with a bit of levity.

David: Where are you from?

Team USA guy: USA

David: LOL!! Where exactly?

Team USA Guy: Los Angeles, you never know.

David: I am from Chicago.

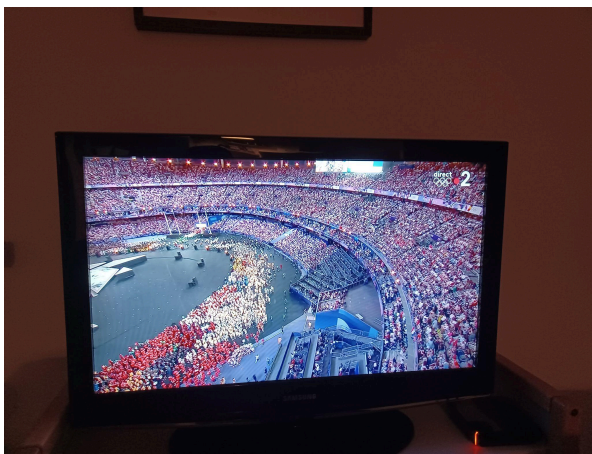
I could not help myself and just laughed out loud when he said he was from the USA because he was speaking to me in English with an American accent, he was wearing a team USA hat, it said USA on his shirt, I mean everything about this guy was

screaming USA. I was also speaking to him in English with an American accent and I just assumed that he identified me as an American as we were talking about how the USA should have won. When he said that he was from the USA I thought it was a joke and even considered one upping him by answering “Well, I am from the planet earth.”

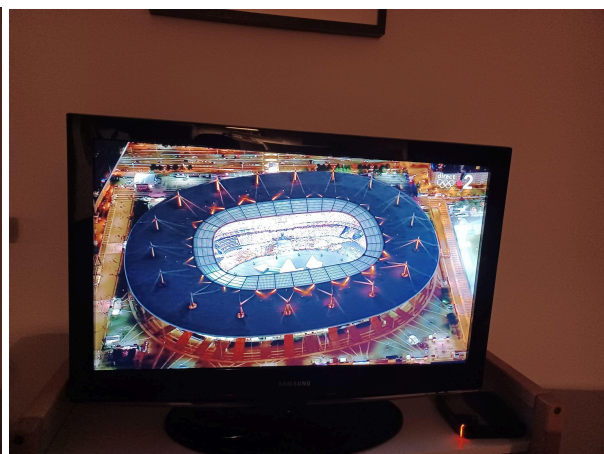
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Sunday, August 11 Day 17 - The End

Today is the last day of the Olympics and I have [an interview with Stephanie and Pascal](#), a Parisian couple who have chosen to stay in Paris and even to attend Olympic events in person. Pascal also participated in the Marathon for all, a Marathon run by amateurs on the same course as the Olympic marathon runners the night before. I have just finished with Stephanie and Pascal but I am not going to attend the closing ceremony because it is just as expensive as the opening ceremony. It is being held at the Stade de France which is located in the Parisian suburb of Saint Denis. Instead of trekking all the way out there, I decide to stay at home and watch the ceremony on television. In this manner, my experience is similar to the billions of other viewers around the world, except for the fact that the commentary is in French

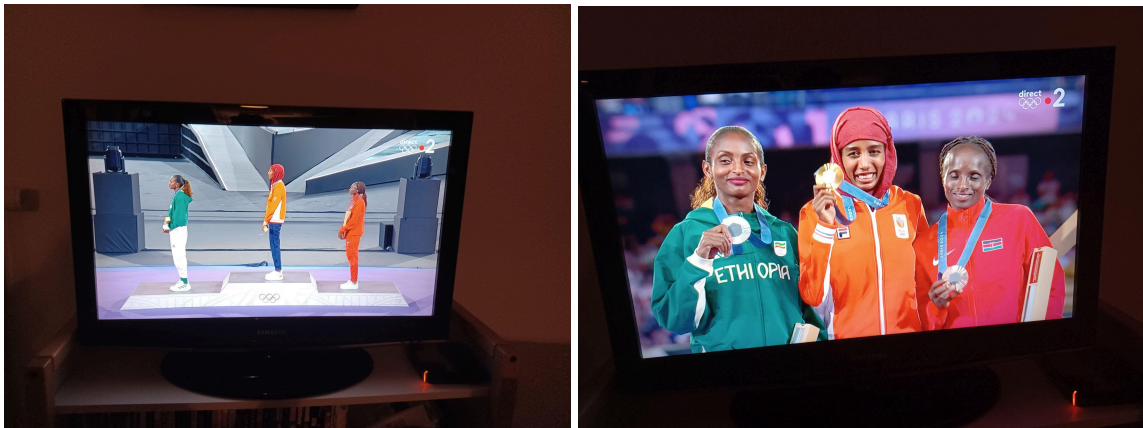


The Stade de France is packed



Aerial view of the Stade de France

There was one final podium for the women's marathon.



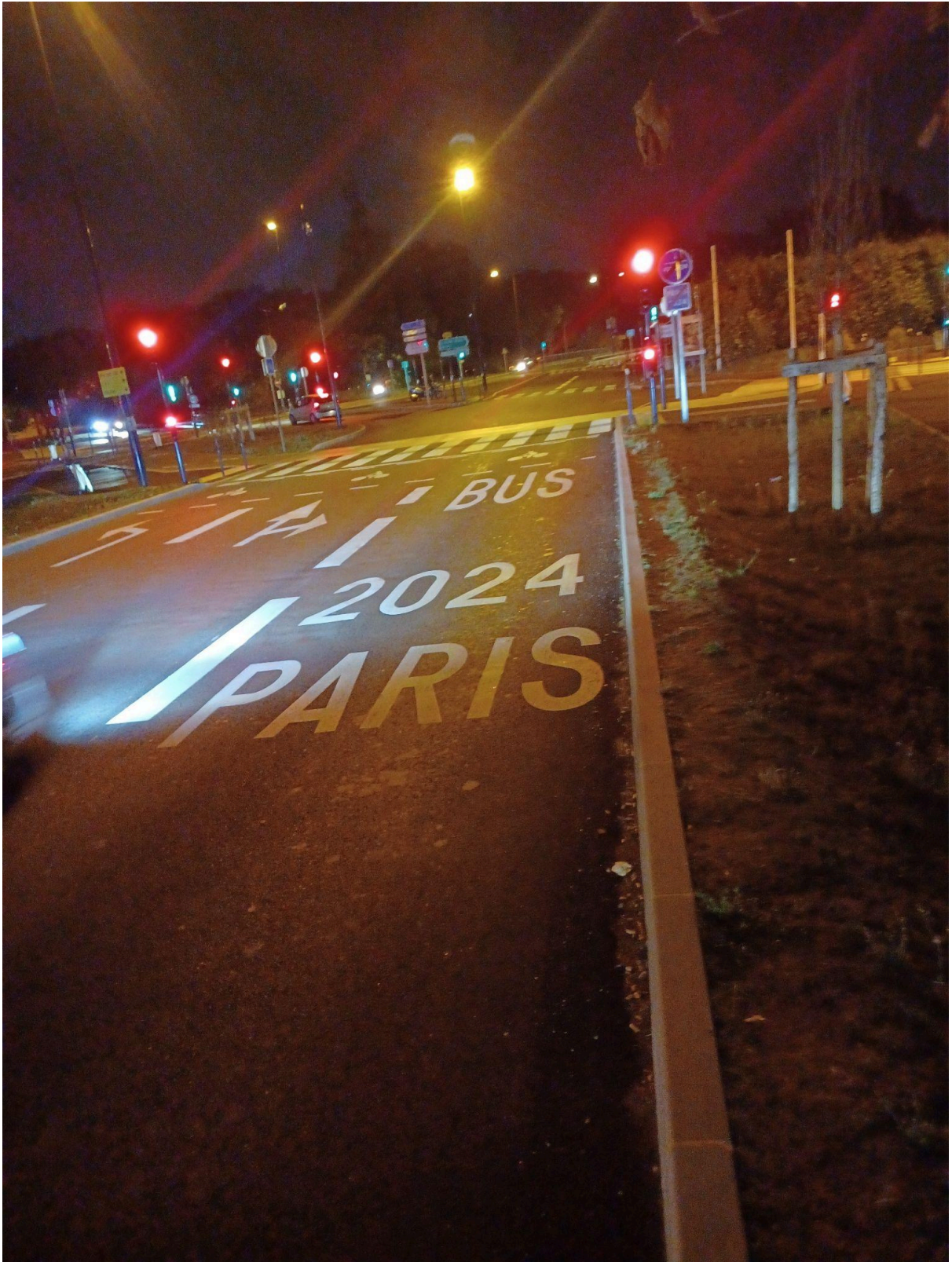
1 Sifan Hassan (Netherlands), 2 Tigst Assefa (Ethiopia), 3 Hellen Obiri (Kenya)

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Monday, August 12 Day 17 +1

It is now one day after the end of the Olympics, and I have an interview with Lotars Zarins, a Latvian journalist. We are meeting late at night all the way out in the northern Parisian suburb of Dugny at [the Media Village](#). Lotars, is really sweet and comes out to meet me and we find a nearby bench where we sit to do [the interview](#).





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Paralympics

The Paralympics are being held from August 28th to September 9th a period that leads into the end of vacation and what is referred to in France as “La rentrée” this means when children and students are going back to school. Moreover, my wife and children are back from vacation. In sum, I will have much less freedom during this period, logging only 4 days. Although I went to two events in both the Olympics and Paralympics, I could not be out and about during the Paralympics as my time was spent with family and preparing for the start of the school year at the University of Strasbourg. This also meant that I took family with me to these events further limiting the scope of what I could do. There was also a third factor to take into account: my sister and father were visiting me during this period as well. So what follows is what I was able to get despite the aforementioned constraints.



Metro advertisement for the Paralympic games

Tuesday August 27th 2024 Day -1 - Back at the Terrasse

It is the day before the opening ceremony, I am with my children at the Terrasse des jeux. There is no media here and no wait in line to get in, even though it is 3pm in the

afternoon. Nevertheless there are some people and a few small lines to do certain activities. On stage, a group is performing songs, mainly French standards. I participate in an open quiz while waiting in line to play badminton with my children. The quiz is online, accessible through a QR code. My score comes back and it's a perfect 10, I am surprised. Yet, I do not make the top three, so no prize for me. I surmise that I was not fast enough. Some of the questions were pretty easy, like "which monument in France attracts the most tourists?" But there were also challenging ones, like "how many different Olympic and Paralympic events are there?"

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Thursday August 29th 2024 Day 2 - Club France forever

It is 3pm and I am at Club France with my children and my sister. One of the big differences from my experience with the Olympics is that the ticket window is not closed in the afternoon and there is an informal line of people buying tickets from various volunteers standing in front. Things are also different inside the club house. The activities are now oriented more towards the Paralympics. You can try and score a goal while wearing a blind fold to get a sense of what it is like to play blind soccer, you can also play wheelchair ping pong or do wheelchair fencing. While my children and sister are busy doing other activities, I venture into the club house where people watch events in front of a large TV screen and athletes come out on stage with their medals in order to celebrate with the crowd. It just so happens that at the moment I am there, a swimming race is taking place. It is the men's 400 meter freestyle S9 final. The French swimmer Ugo Didier is currently second but he is behind Simone Barlaam of Italy and then overtakes him in the end [to win Gold](#). The crowd in the club house explodes as France wins its first medal of the Paralympics.



Posing for a photo with a cardboard Paralympic Phryge mascot

We are fortunate enough to meet two former Paralympic athletes, Yohann Taberlet and Solène Jambaqué. Yohann participated in wheelchair skiing and Solène, is a two time Paralympic champion hemiplegic alpine skier with 8 Paralympic medals in all. They let us take pictures of them with the children and also talk with us about the

evolution of Paralympics over the years. They feel that the Paralympics are starting to get more media attention and more money.

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Sunday September 1st 2024 Day 4 - Cécifoot sensation

My first Paralympic event ever is going to be a session of Cécifoot (= blind soccer) at the Eiffel Tower Stadium. There will be two matches at the group stage: Colombia vs Japan and then Argentina vs Marocco.



My wife is sick, so it's just me and my two children. We take the métro to Alma Marceau and start walking towards the Eiffel Tower. One thing I can say about the organization is that it is excellent. Although there is not a singing lady with a bull horn, there are plenty of signs and volunteers to show us where to go.

It is 11h30 am, the weather is beautiful and we are outside in an open stadium. but as there are no clouds to protect us from the sun beating down on us throughout the entire two games, it is very hot. I take refuge under my windbreaker.



Cécifoot | Blind football

Les matchs de cécifoot se jouent en deux mi-temps de 15 minutes, sur un terrain de 40 mètres de long et 20 mètres de large. Le ballon est sonore, les joueurs portent des masques occultants pour égaliser les situations de handicap et se guident uniquement au son.

Il y a 3 guides voyants par équipes, répartis chacun sur un tiers du terrain : le gardien, qui est voyant et joue sans masque, aide à orienter ses coéquipiers en défense.

Le silence est donc de rigueur pour les spectateurs pendant le jeu, mais dès qu'un but est marqué, tout le monde peut crier de joie ! Une démonstration remarquable de technique, coordination et communication !

Blind football matches are played in two 15-minute halves, on a pitch 40 metres long and 20 metres wide. The ball is played with sound, and the players wear masks to compensate for the different levels of disability, and are guided solely by sound.

There are 3 sighted guides per team, each assigned to one third of the pitch: the goalkeeper, who is sighted and plays without a mask, helps to guide his team-mates in defence.

The spectators have to remain silent during the game, but as soon as a goal is scored, everyone can shout for joy! A remarkable demonstration of technique, coordination and communication!



Explanation of blind football (or blind soccer in the US)

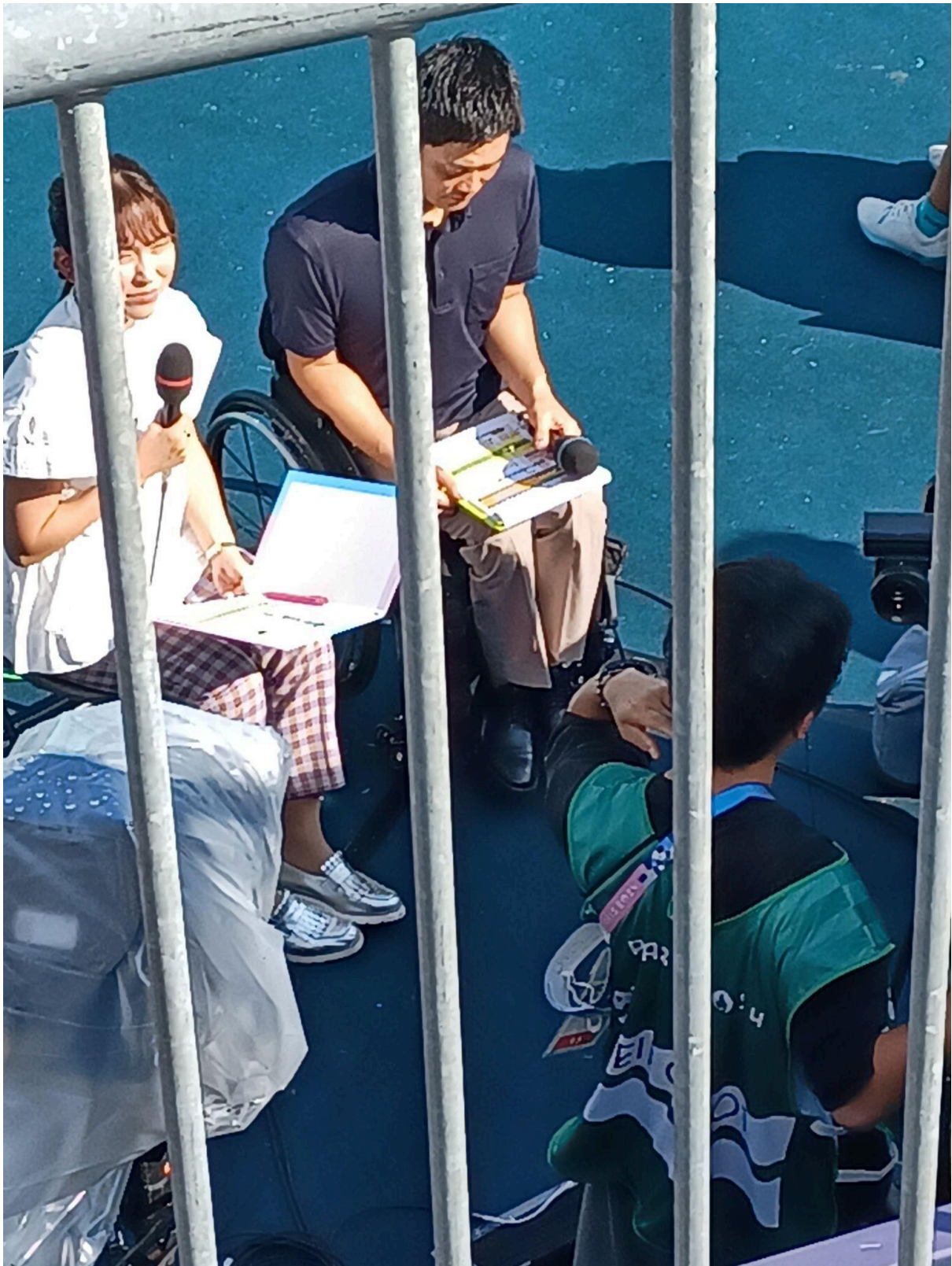


The Eiffel Tower Stadium

Before the game starts, [I film the stadium](#). The [atmosphere is very festive](#).

The announcers explain that we must be silent during the game and that we can make noise during breaks and when there are pauses. There is a man holding a sign that says on one side “Get Loud” and “Shhhh” on the other side, and he holds up the sign to cue the crowd.





Japanese media

[Cheerleaders come out and perform](#) during time-outs and pauses. Both goalkeepers are sighted so it is difficult to score a goal. So, when [Columbia scores a goal](#) the

crowd goes wild. Columbia holds on to win 1-0. There is a short break before the start of the next match: Argentina vs Marocco.



I take advantage of the pause to take a selfie.

Then, there is an [energy cam sequence](#) where cameramen film the crowd on the lookout for the most energetic spectators dancing to "Freed from Desire", of course.



After the energy cam sequence ends, it is now time for the second match of the day. There are a lot of chances to score but the first half ends in a scoreless tie. During half-time there is another [dance performance by the cheerleaders](#). In the video you can see the "Get Loud" sign, it was actually blocking half of the dancers so I had to move to the other side. The match is nearly over and there is a time-out, still 0-0. The announcer asks the crowd to "[make some noise.](#)" The match ends in a 0-0 tie. Since it is the group stage, there are no penalties.



























As we walk back to the métro I notice some souvenir shops with Olympic Phryge mascots all over the place, filling up the shelves and the storefront window.



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Saturday September 7th 2024 Day 11 - Para Swimming with père.

7 SEPTEMBER

Para Swimming		13 items
09:30	Men's 200m Individual Medley - SM10, Women's 200m Individual Medley - SM10, Men's 100m Backstroke - S6, Women's 100m Backstroke - S6, Men's 100m Butterfly - S8, Women's 100m Butterfly - S8, Men's 50m Butterfly - S7, Women's 50m Butterfly - S7, Men's 50m Backstroke - S4, Men's 100m Butterfly - S12, Women's 100m Freestyle - S11, Men's 200m Freestyle - S3, Women's 200m Individual Medley - SM5	
•	09:30 Men's 200m Individual Medley - SM10 Heats	 
•	09:40 Women's 200m Individual Medley - SM10 Heats	 
•	09:51 Men's 100m Backstroke - S6 Heats	 
•	09:59 Women's 100m Backstroke - S6 Heats	 
•	10:09 Men's 100m Butterfly - S8 Heats	 
•	10:16 Women's 100m Butterfly - S8 Heats	 
•	10:25 Men's 50m Butterfly - S7 Heats	 
•	10:31 Women's 50m Butterfly - S7 Heats	 
•	10:38 Men's 50m Backstroke - S4 Heats	 
•	10:47 Men's 100m Butterfly - S12 Heats	 
•	10:54 Women's 100m Freestyle - S11 Heats	 
•	11:04 Men's 200m Freestyle - S3 Heats	 
•	11:20 Women's 200m Individual Medley - SM5 Heats	 

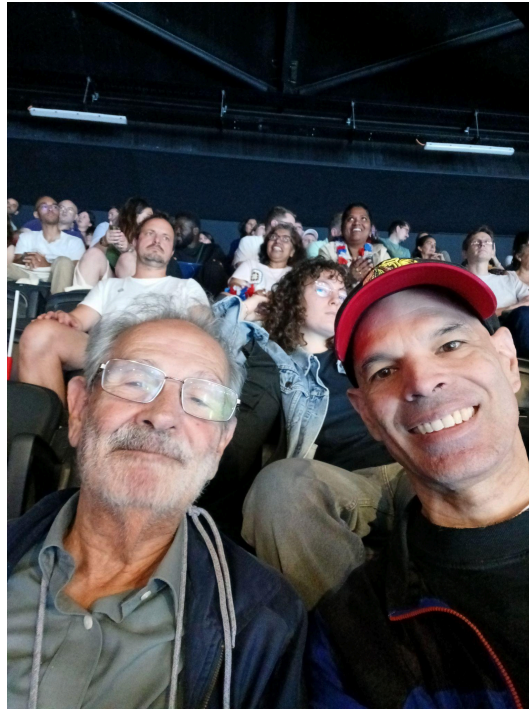
The schedule for the 9h30 Para Swimming session

Today I am going to my second event of the Paralympics, this time accompanied by my father. We are going to discover Para Swimming at the Defense Arena. It's the last day of the competition. There are 13 races scheduled (see program above). We arrived early and there are not too many people inside the stadium.



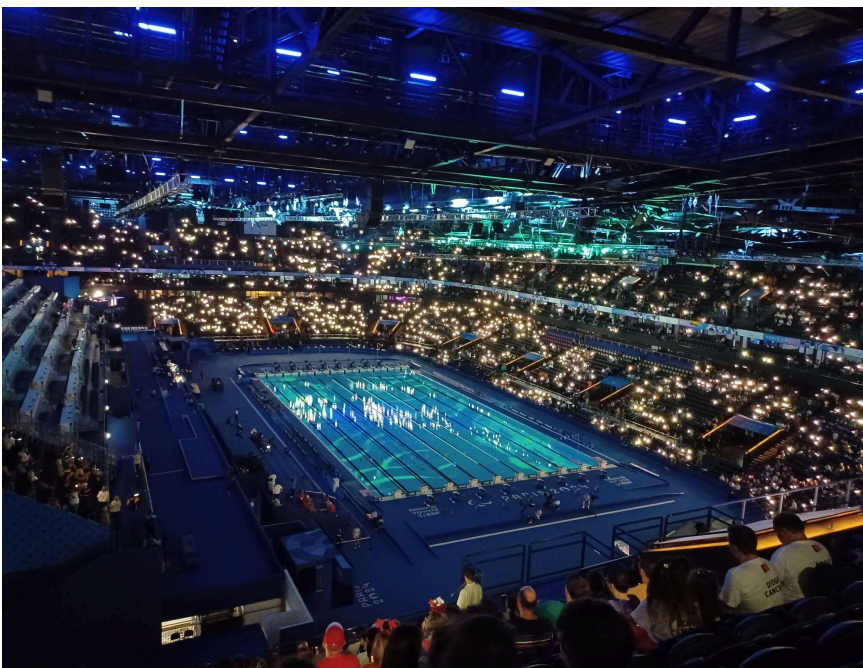


selfie before the start of the session



selfie with my father

My father and I have just taken our seats and we are waiting for the show to begin. I decide [to interview my father](#) before it gets too noisy and ask him about his impressions so far, before the Para Swimming events begin.



The lights then go out and the announcer asks everyone to turn on the flash light of their cell phones to create the same [mosaic light show](#) seen before the water polo session at la Défense Arena on Saturday August 10th which is accompanied by [the same music](#).



The program has been set up so that no one in the audience has time to feel bored. The arena shows [a video trailer that summarizes the Olympic spirit, followed by the announcer asking the audience to display their flags](#). We hear “les 3 coups” or three knocks. This is the traditional signal that is heard to indicate to the audience that the play is about to begin. The organizers of the Olympics have included this ritual into the beginning of each session. Immediately following “les trois coups” an English activity leader, who seems to have come straight from Club Med, takes the mike and starts encouraging the crowd “to make some noise!!” and leads a [countdown to launch the last session](#). I wondered beforehand whether the Paralympics would be as festive as the Olympics, this breakneck beginning of the session as well as the crowd reaction demonstrates that the Paralympics are just as festive if not more festive than the Olympics.

Before the start the announcers also explained how the handicapped system works. In para swimming the classification starts with S for swimming. The S is then followed by a number. The higher the number the weaker the handicap. So if you are in an S4 race you will be more handicapped than someone in S9. Numbers 11-13 indicate visual impairment so if you are S13 you are less impacted than someone who is S11. Finally S14 is athletes with mental impairments.

During the events we saw a few S11 races where the athletes are totally blind. For these athletes, there are helpers at the end of each length of the pool holding poles. When the swimmer approaches the wall they tap them on the head with the pole so that they know they are close to the wall.

Most of the people in the crowd are French but there are not always French swimmers competing in each race. This means that when there is a French person the crowd really goes wild. This was the case when [Kylian Portal qualified for the final](#) for the men’s 100 meter butterfly S12. A few races later and it’s 11:20, time for the women’s individual medley SM5 heats. [This is the last race of the session](#). The session is over and we meet up with some French friends who are also present at the event. I ask one of them, Claude, if she is willing to talk about her Paralympic experience. She agrees and we sit down at a neighborhood cafe for [an interview](#).



with Claude

I return home with my father and he agrees to do [a second interview](#) and talk about his impressions after having seen the Para Swimming event.

Later at night I watch the closing ceremony on TV.

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Olympics vs Paralympics

What follows are two encounters with two French people who were present not only at the Olympics but also the Paralympics. One person from the inside as an active participant in the creation of spectacle and entertainment during certain events. The other person from the outside, as a spectator, a passive observer of the events and spectacle involved.

Interview of hip-hop dancer Aston - Sweet serendipity

During the Olympics I tried to get an interview with one of the dancers who participated in the opening ceremony. He was nice enough to respond to my

message, but politely informed me that he was all booked up at the moment. Therefore, I had given up on the possibility that I would be able to work my dance connections to interview someone who danced in the Olympics or Paralympics for that matter. Then, serendipity struck again. During the back to school picnic gathering I met my children's PE teacher Raphael who also teaches them hip-hop dancing. I asked him if he could put me in contact with someone who had participated in the Olympics. He said he would look into it. I was not sure that this would lead to anything. In any case, I had other things to take care of like preparing my course for the new school year at the University of Strasbourg and getting the children ready for their new school year. A few weeks later I discovered that [a dance studio](#) near my apartment had a class on Thursday night that really interested me. I went to the first class and enjoyed it and decided to continue the next week. A few days later, I received this message from a dancer named Aston. "Hello, I was given your contact information for the interview." I deduced that this was the dancer that Raphael had told me about. I sent Aston a message introducing myself and the Olympic podcast project I was doing for Aca-media and he agreed to meet me for an interview at a café near my apartment. Now, it turns out that the dance teacher where I took my class on Thursday is also called Aston. So, I am thinking that it is quite probable that this is the same person, especially since he chose to meet on Thursday September 19th a few hours before his class. And I was right. When Aston showed up for our appointment at the café he was also surprised. When he saw me he said "Weren't you in my class last week?" I said I was and that there was no link between the two things, it was just a case of Paris being a small world.

[During our interview](#), I learned that Aston had participated in the dance entertainment provided at time-outs and breaks of several events like 3 x 3 basketball both during the Olympics and the Paralympics.



With the dancer Aston

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Interview of French spectator Candice Lemaire - It's academic

Candice Lemaire is an associate professor of American Poetry at the [Université de Bourgogne](#). I met her through academic symposiums and meetings of The French Association of American studies (AFEA). I noticed that she had posted several times about the Olympics and the Paralympics on social media. So, I contacted her and requested an interview because she had attended both the Olympic and Paralympic ceremonies and thus could compare the experience. She agreed on the condition that we could speak a few weeks after the beginning of the school year when she would have more free time. [Our interview](#) took place on September 20th.



Candice Lemaire

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Concluding remarks - apples vs oranges?

The Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics represent a once in a lifetime event that I would not have experienced had it not been for the fact that they were being held in the city where I currently reside. This was an opportunity for me to explore the Olympic sites of Paris, explore the atmosphere in the stadiums, in the arenas and on the street. This was also an opportunity to explore, in a small modest manner, what it is like to be in the shoes of a journalist, in search of someone to interview or something to report. I was on the beat nearly every day.

In contrast, the Paralympic experience was short and sweet. There is something infinitely pure about it. It has not yet been flooded with corporate money and the

people that come to watch are really enthusiastic and interested in what is happening. There is a bit of a carryover effect from the Olympics and the venues were just as packed. Perhaps. French people attended because they were on vacation or purposely avoided the Olympics and wanted to feel a part of this movement. During the Para Swimming session, the crowd cheered during every race, sometimes cheering the loudest for the athlete that was furthest behind and finishing up their race dead last. This is what made the Paralympic experience for me, more humane, more than just a sports competition. Every athlete that was there was different and had their own story. Just participating was in and of itself a kind of personal victory.

But in the end, it is perhaps a bit unfair to compare the Olympics and the Paralympics, more a case of apples and oranges, especially when one takes into account structural differences due to scheduling, media attention and money.

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