The History of the Olympic and Paralympic Games
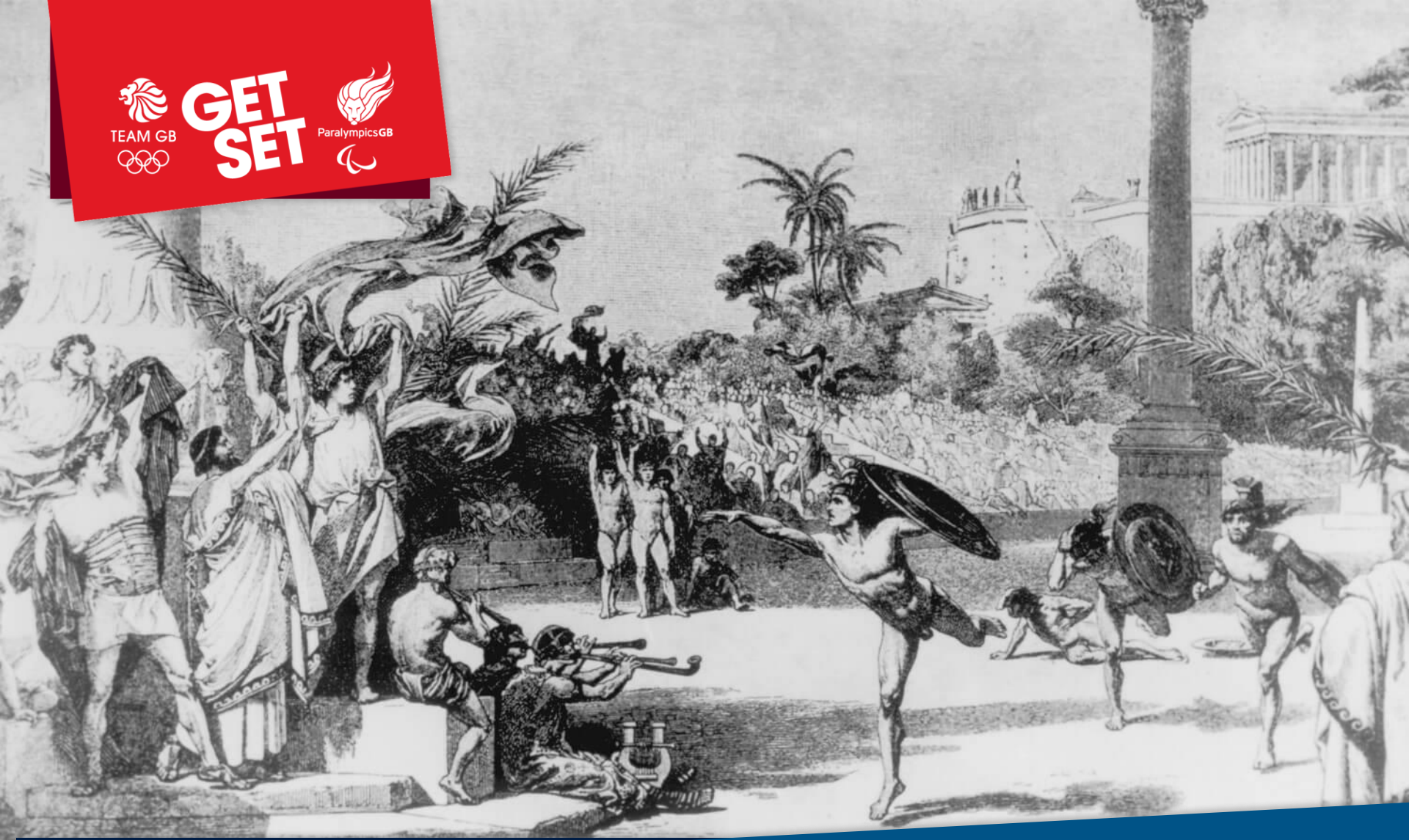
The ancient Olympic Games took place thousands of years ago.

The Games were held in honour of Zeus.

They celebrated the physical qualities of athletes and encouraged cities around Greece to get on well together.

At first, the Olympic Games lasted just one day and consisted of one event – a running race.

The modern Olympic Movement began in Much Wenlock, Shropshire.

William Penny Brookes set up the 'Wenlock Olympian Games'. He wanted to provide PE and sport as part of young people's education.

A French aristocrat called Pierre de Coubertin was inspired by the Wenlock Olympian Games.

Pierre de Coubertin founded the International Olympic Committee in 1894.
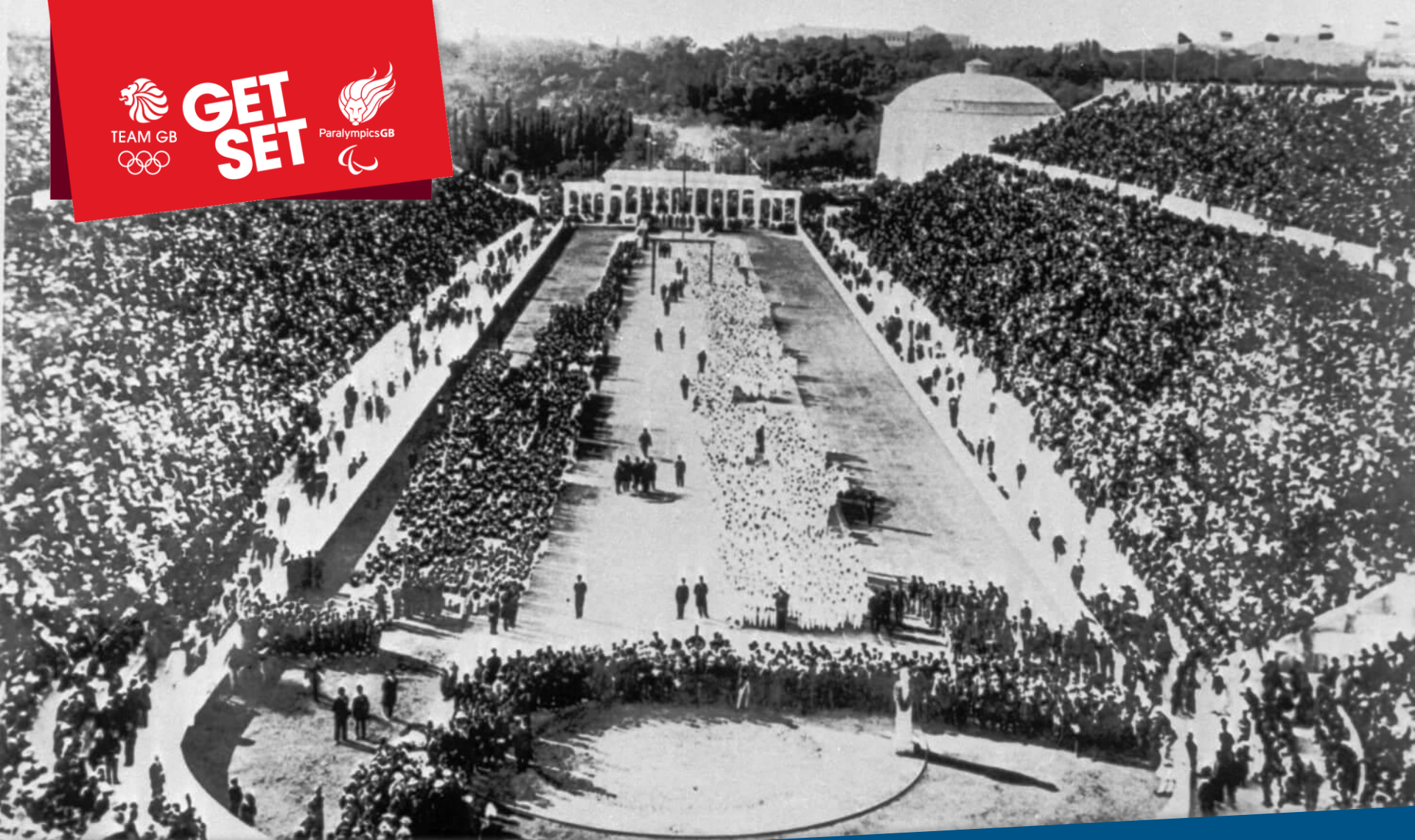
In 1896 the first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens.

The winners received a silver medal and an olive branch.

Now the Olympic Games last more than two weeks and, at Tokyo 2020, athletes will compete in 32 sports.

In Rio 2016, 205 countries took part and Team GB won an amazing 67 medals!

TEAM GB
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The Paralympic movement began in 1948.

Ludwig Guttmann was a German neurologist working with patients with serious spinal injuries at Stoke Mandeville hospital in Buckinghamshire.

Guttmann was determined to give his patients hope. He believed that physical activity and sport would strengthen his patients…
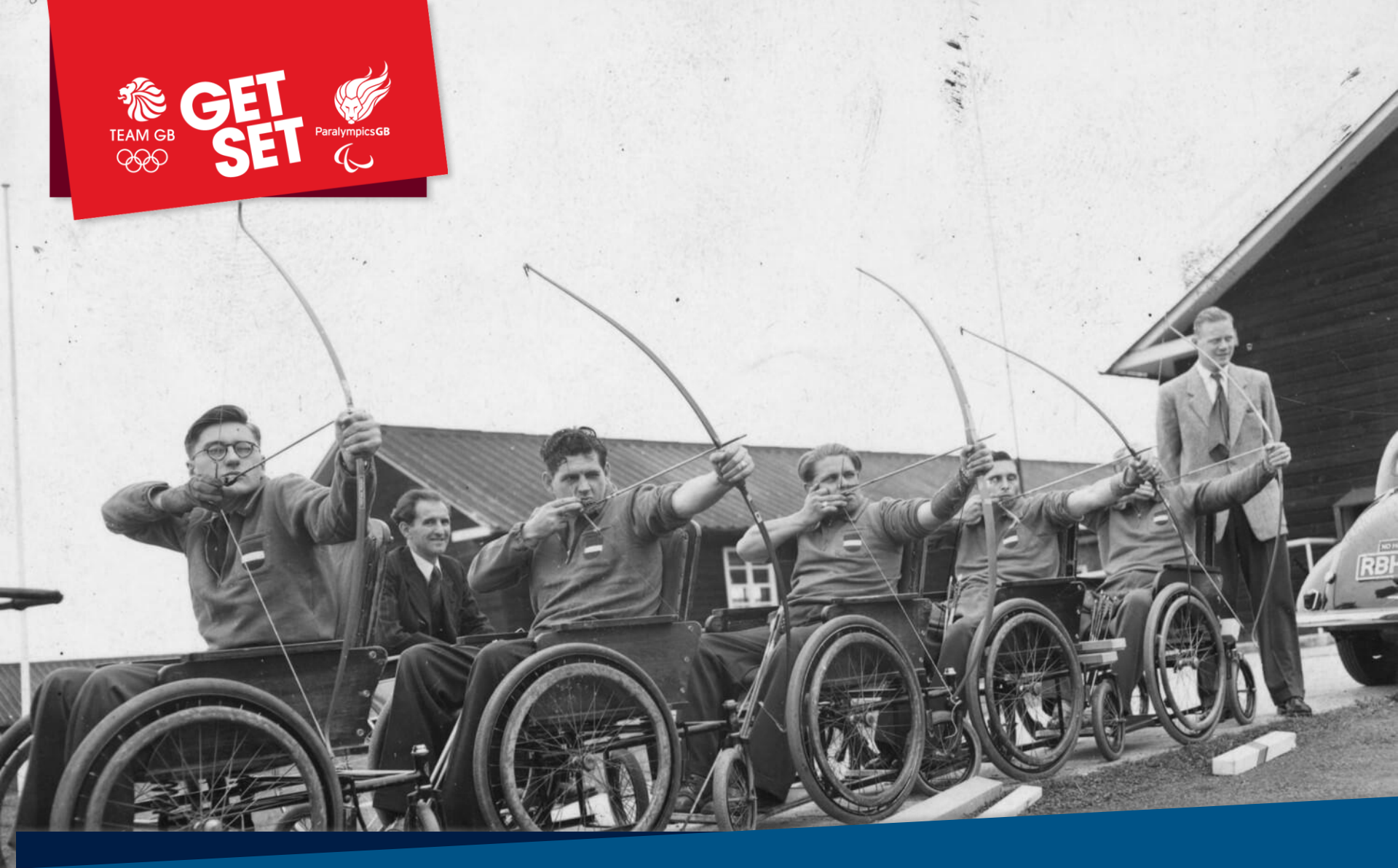
…and give them confidence and ambition for a brighter future.

On 28 July 1948, Guttmann organised the Stoke Mandeville Games, a sports competition for soldiers recovering from spinal injuries received during the second World War.

By 1960 Guttmann's vision had grown into an international movement and the first Paralympic Games were held in Rome.

It was to be held in parallel to the Olympic Games, once every four years.

"I foresaw a time when this sports event would be truly international and the Stoke Mandeville Games would achieve world fame as the disabled person's equivalent of the Olympic Games."

Guttmann had a powerful vision…

London 2012 saw the biggest ever Paralympic Games to date.

4,302 of the world's best Paralympic athletes competed from 164 nations.

At Rio 2016 4,328 athletes from 159 countries competed in 22 sports.

Paralympic athletes are even challenging Olympic athletes with awe-inspiring agility and technology.

What's you favourite Olympic or Paralympic moment?