

CLASSIFICATION

In para sports Classification is the system in place that determines which athletes can compete in each sport. Just like in able bodied sports, each para sport is unique and therefore requires different skills to be played. Also, every athlete has different physical limitations due to their impairment and these limitations have an impact on the athlete's ability to execute certain movement and task during sport. The limitations due to the impairment will determine which sport class the athletes will be classed into for each para sport.

Classification is used to minimise the impact of impairments on sport performances so that athletes will compete against other participants with similar physical abilities and the ones with the best sporting excellence will ultimately be victorious. The process can be similar to grouping athletes by gender or weight categories and is sport specific. Each athlete's classification is also evaluated before they compete by medical professionals, also known as classifiers to ensure the integrity and credibility of the competitions.

This system is important and can be modified as needed at all levels. At the International level, all athletes must be classified to compete. Nationally, in certain sports, you can have athletes who are classified and able-bodied athletes competing together to accommodate with the number of athletes. This also helps to promote para sports participation at a recreational level for people with a physical disability since they can bring family members or friends to play with them.

IMPAIRMENT TYPE DESCRIPTION

The following descriptions were developed by the International Paralympic Committee to determine the different types of eligible impairments and these impairments are used in the different para sports classification systems.

Impaired Muscle Power

Athletes with Impaired Muscle Power have a Health Condition that either reduces or eliminates their ability to voluntarily contract their muscles in order to move or to generate force.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Impaired Muscle Power include spinal cord injury (complete or incomplete, tetra-or paraplegia or paraparesis), muscular dystrophy, post-polio syndrome and spina bifida.

Impaired Passive Range of Movement

Athletes with an Impaired Passive Range of Movement have a restriction or a lack of passive movement in one or more joints.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Impaired Passive Range of Movement include arthrogyposis and contracture resulting from chronic joint immobilisation or trauma affecting a joint.

Limb Deficiency

Athletes with Limb Deficiency have total or partial absence of bones or joints as a consequence of trauma (for example traumatic amputation), illness (for example amputation due to bone cancer) or congenital limb deficiency (for example dysmelia).

Leg Length Difference

Athletes with Leg Length Difference have a difference in the length of their legs as a result of a disturbance of limb growth, or as a result of trauma.

Short Stature

Athletes with Short Stature have a reduced length in the bones of the upper limbs, lower limbs and/or trunk.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Short Stature include achondroplasia, growth hormone dysfunction, and osteogenesis imperfecta.

Hypertonia

Athletes with Hypertonia have an increase in muscle tension and a reduced ability of a muscle to stretch caused by damage to the central nervous system.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Hypertonia include cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and stroke.

Ataxia

Athletes with Ataxia have uncoordinated movements caused by damage to the central nervous system.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Ataxia include cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, stroke and multiple sclerosis.

Athetosis

Athletes with Athetosis have continual slow involuntary movements.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Athetosis include cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and stroke.

Vision Impairment

Athletes with Vision Impairment have reduced, or no vision caused by damage to the eye structure, optical nerves or optical pathways, or visual cortex of the brain.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Vision Impairment include retinitis pigmentosa and diabetic retinopathy.

Intellectual Impairment

Athletes with an Intellectual Impairment have a restriction in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour in which affects conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills required for everyday life. This Impairment must be present before the age of 18.