

Classification 101

What is Classification?

Athletes competing in Paralympic sports have disabilities that lead to a competitive disadvantage. The classification system mitigates the impact of disabilities on Paralympic sport performance and ensures success is determined by skill, fitness, power, endurance, tactical ability and mental focus.

Classification determines who is eligible to compete in a Paralympic sport and groups eligible athletes according to their disability type and/or severity.

Steps to Classification:

- Does the athlete have an eligible disability for the sport?
 - At least 1 of the 10 eligible disabilities
 - Disability must be caused by a verifiable eligible underlying health condition
 - The impairment must be permanent
- Does the athlete's disability meet the minimum criteria of the respective sport?
- Which sport class(es) describe the athlete's activity limitation most accurately?
 - Athletes undergo evaluation (medical, technical, observation in competition) to allocate sport class(es).

Eligible Disabilities

Impaired Muscle Power:

- A health condition that either reduces or eliminates their ability to voluntarily contract their muscles in order to move or to generate force.
- Example Athlete: Daniel Romanchuk, Para T&F



Impaired Passive Range of Movement (ROM):

- A restriction or a lack of passive movement in one or more joints. Example: Arthrogryposis, contracture resulting from chronic joint immobilization or trauma affecting a joint.
- Example Athlete: Alyssa Gialamas, Para swimming



Ataxia:

- Poor muscle control that causes clumsy voluntary movements. It may cause difficulty with walking and balance, hand coordination, speech and swallowing, and eye movements. Ataxia usually results from damage to the part of the brain that controls muscle coordination (cerebellum) or its connections.
- Example Athlete: Dennis Connors, Para-cycling



Limb Deficiency:

- The absence or severe hypoplasia of a limb or part of a limb. Severe hypoplasia is the incomplete development or underdevelopment of an organ or tissue.
- Limb Length Difference – When one leg or arm is shorter than the other leg or arm.
- Example: Brenna Huckaby, Para snowboarding



Athetosis:

- A condition in which abnormal muscle contractions cause involuntary writhing movements. It affects some people with cerebral palsy, impairing speech, and use of the hands.
- Example Athlete: Nick Mayhugh, Para T&F



Short Stature:

- A condition in which a child or a teen's height is well below the average height of his or her peers. Short stature typically means that a person's height is below that of the shortest 3 percent to 5 percent of children of the same age and sex.
- Example: Hagan Landry, Para T&F



Hypertonia:

- A condition in which there is too much muscle tone making it difficult for body parts, like the arms or legs for example, to move.
- Example: Jill Walsh, Para-cycling



Intellectual Impairment:

- When an individual has problems with general mental abilities that affect functioning in two areas; Intellectual functioning (such as learning, problem solving, judgement); And adaptive functioning (activities of daily life such as communication and independent living).
- Example: Breanna Clark, Para T&F



Blind:

- A condition where person's eyesight cannot be corrected to a "normal" level. Vision impairment may be caused by a loss of visual acuity, where the eye does not see objects as clearly as usual.
- Example: Asya Miller, Goalball



Athlete Evaluation

The evaluation process is conducted by a classification panel, which is composed of individuals authorized and certified by a sport federation to determine an athlete's sport class.

- The process (typically) includes:
 - Verification of the presence of an eligible impairment for that sport
 - Physical and technical assessments to examine the degree of activity limitation
 - Allocation of sport class(es)
 - Observation in competition
- At the conclusion of the evaluation process, athletes are assigned a sport class and sport class status. All classifications differ from sport to sport. This is because the severity and location of an eligible disability may cause relatively little impact on one sport and a significant impact on another.