



UNDERSTANDING SELECTION PROCEDURES

A Guide for Athletes and Staff

Updated October 2026

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This guide gives a general, non-exhaustive overview of how USA Taekwondo (USATKD) creates Selection Procedures. Each event may have unique requirements set by outside organizations, such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC), World Taekwondo (WT), the Pan Am Taekwondo Union (PATU), Panam Sports, or the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC), that are not covered here. If this guide and an official Selection Procedure ever differ, the official Selection Procedure governs.

WHAT ARE SELECTION PROCEDURES?

Selection Procedures are the **official rules** that explain exactly how an athlete or staff member earns a spot on a USATKD team, including Team USA at the Olympic, Paralympic, and Pan American Games. Each Selection Procedure spells out:

- Which events count and what results are needed
- Who is eligible, such as citizenship, passport, age, weight division, and license requirements
- Key dates and deadlines
- How and when the team is nominated

Selection Procedures cover both athletes and Games staff, such as coaches and support staff. Athlete and staff procedures are published as separate documents.

WHY DO THEY MATTER?

Selection Procedures remove guesswork and keep the playing field level. They are built on four principles:

- **Fairness:** Athlete representatives help write and review every procedure, and the USOPC reviews procedures for the major Games, so the rules are consistent and applied the same way to everyone.
- **Performance:** The criteria are designed to identify the athletes most likely to reach the international podium for the United States.
- **Transparency:** Every athlete knows the rules in advance, before the first evaluation event.
- **Timeliness:** Procedures and key dates are published early enough for athletes and coaches to plan their training and competition schedules.

SELECTION PROCEDURES VS. PATHWAYS

Pathways and Selection Procedures work together, but they serve different purposes.

	PATHWAY	SELECTION PROCEDURE
Think of it as	The map	The rulebook
What it is	A multi-year development plan that moves an athlete toward USATKD's biggest events	The officially approved rules for one specific team and selection period

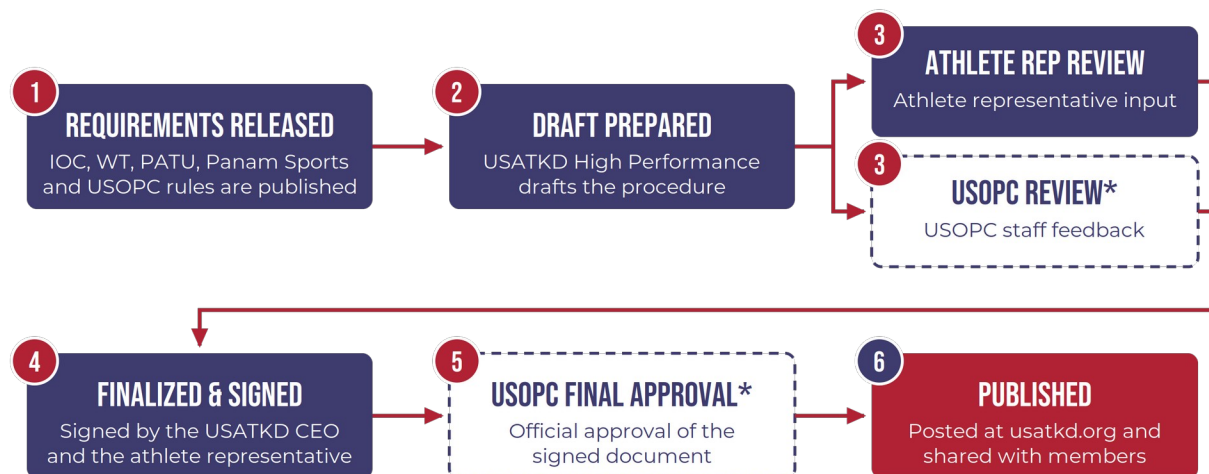


PROTECTED AND NON-PROTECTED EVENTS

The rules and approvals required depend on the type of event.

EVENT TYPE	EXAMPLES	APPROVAL
Protected Competitions	The Olympic, Paralympic, Pan American, and Parapan American Games, plus events used to qualify or select athletes for them	Strictest requirements. Signed by USATKD and the athlete representative, then approved by the USOPC.
Non-Protected Events	Events such as the Cadet Pan Am Championships	Simpler requirements. Approved by USATKD; USOPC approval is not required.

HOW SELECTION PROCEDURES ARE CREATED



* USOPC steps apply to Protected Competitions only (see Protected and Non-Protected Events).

Step 1: Event Requirements Are Released

Organizations such as the IOC, WT, PATU, Panam Sports, and the USOPC publish the rules for an event, including quota places and eligibility. For the Olympic and Paralympic Games, USATKD may also publish a **Preliminary Notice** so athletes can start planning before the full procedure is approved.

Step 2: A Draft Is Prepared

USATKD High Performance drafts the procedure based on the needs of the event. Most drafts include:

- **Quota:** How many spots are available (for example, one athlete per weight division).
- **Eligibility:** Must-haves such as U.S. citizenship, a valid U.S. passport, and a WT Global Athlete License.
- **Age:** The age group the team is for.
- **Evaluation Events:** The competitions, trials, or camps used to evaluate athletes.
- **Selection Process:** How athletes are ranked and nominated, including tiebreakers.
- **Discretionary Elements:** Any decisions that use committee judgment, who makes them, and the written criteria they must follow.
- **Timeline:** Every key date leading to nomination.



Step 3: Athlete Representative and USOPC Review

An athlete representative reviews the draft and provides input to make sure athletes' interests are protected. The representative may also gather input from other athletes. For Protected Competitions, USOPC staff review the draft against national standards for fairness and clarity.

Step 4: Finalized and Signed

The final document is signed by the USATKD CEO and the athlete representative. Every document is completed early enough to meet both event and USOPC deadlines.

Step 5: USOPC Final Approval

For Protected Competitions, the signed document goes to the USOPC for official approval before it can be published.

Step 6: Published

Approved procedures are posted at usatkd.org/team-selection-procedures, where all current Selection Procedures and related National Team documents are kept. For Protected Competitions, USATKD posts the procedure within five business days of USOPC approval. USATKD also shares new procedures through member communications and official social media channels.

WHO IS INVOLVED

Each Selection Procedure is drafted by a committee of USATKD High Performance staff and an athlete representative. The current drafting committee is:

NAME	POSITION
Stephen Lambdin	Chief Performance Officer, USATKD
Eric Winger	Director of National Teams, USATKD
Alex Lee	Team USA Athletes' Commission Representative (10-Year Athlete)

Committee membership can vary by event. The committee for each team is listed in that team's Selection Procedure.

The Athlete Voice

USOPC rules require athletes to make up at least one-third of any committee that drafts Selection Procedures or nominates a team, and at least half of those athlete representatives must be 10-Year Athletes (athletes who have represented the United States in major international competition within the past 10 years). Athlete representatives are selected by the USATKD Athletes' Advisory Council (AAC). [Learn more about the AAC.](#)

Discretionary Decisions and Conflicts of Interest

When a procedure includes discretionary selection, a designated Selection Committee makes the decision using only the criteria written in that procedure. Any committee member with a conflict of interest, such as coaching or being related to an athlete under consideration, must step away from that decision.

UPDATES AND AMENDMENTS

Rules can change during a season. If an outside organization such as WT changes its requirements, or an event is cancelled or moved, USATKD will:

- Update the procedure with **redlines** (visible tracked changes) so everyone can see exactly what changed
- Include a summary of changes and the date of the update



- Involve athlete representatives in the revision and, for Protected Competitions, obtain USOPC approval before the change takes effect
- Repost the updated procedure and notify members so athletes can adjust their plans

QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, AND SUPPORT

USATKD High Performance and our athlete representatives are always happy to answer questions as athletes and coaches work to represent Team USA at the highest levels.

NAME	POSITION	EMAIL
Stephen Lambdin	Chief Performance Officer, USATKD	slambdin@usatktd.org
Eric Winger	Director of National Teams, USATKD	ewinger@usatktd.org
Alex Lee	Team USA Athletes' Commission Representative	alexlee.usa@gmail.com

Independent Support: Athlete Ombuds

The Athlete Ombuds offers free, independent, and confidential advice to Team USA athletes about selection rules, how to raise a concern, and how to respond to a selection decision.

Phone: (719) 866-5000 **Email:** ombudsman@usathlete.org **Web:** usathlete.org

KEY TERMS

TERM	MEANING
Athlete Representative	An athlete chosen to represent athletes' interests on a committee.
Delegation Event	The Olympic, Paralympic, Pan American, or Parapan American Games.
Discretionary Selection	A selection decision made by a committee using written criteria, rather than automatically by results.
Pathway	The long-term development plan that guides an athlete toward USATKD's top events.
Preliminary Notice	An early notice of the expected selection rules, published before the full procedure is approved.
Protected Competition	A Delegation Event, or any competition used to qualify or select athletes for one.
Redline	A marked-up version of a document showing exactly what was added or removed.
Selection Procedure	The official, approved rules for how athletes or staff are named to a specific team.