

## NATIONAL TEAM SELECTION CRITERIA

### 2025-2026 U.S. Paralympics Nordic Skiing Standards

The U.S. Paralympics Nordic Skiing Team aims to win medals in Paralympic Winter Games (PWG). Athletes will be nominated to the 2025-2026 National Team or Development Team based on objective criteria (results) from the previous season (July 2024-May 2025), along with subjective criteria that demonstrates each athlete's capacity, preparation, and commitment to winning at PWG competition in 2026.

#### General National and Development Team Guidelines

- National Team or Development Team status does not guarantee Athlete Stipends or activity support for the entire season. Athlete Stipends and activity support will be based on continued progress towards individual goals as outlined in each athlete's Personal Performance Plan and a sustained commitment to excellence in training and performance in international competition. Similarly, athletes who are not on the National Team or Development Team may earn funding/support for particular projects and competitions by showing significant potential towards achieving international competitive success in individual or relay events.
- National Team and Development Team status will be evaluated after each season is completed.
- No minimum team size will be established.
- Athletes selected to the National Team must demonstrate a commitment to and performance trends indicative of podium results in future Paralympic Winter Games, in addition to the criteria described below.
- National C Team is the entry level of the National Team Program and is meant to identify developing athletes who are on their way to achieving higher levels of National Team status toward achieving PWG medal objectives. Therefore, returning National Team Program athletes are not expected to remain on the National C Team for more than three (3) years and athletes who have been on the National A or B Team levels will not be permitted to drop down to National C Team status without special consideration.
- Development Team status is not considered equivalent to "National Team" status but recognizes progress towards achieving that Team and international success. Development Team criteria is described in Part B below.

#### Part A: General National and Development Team Criteria

To qualify for the 2025-2026 National Team or Development Team, athletes must achieve the criteria described both in Part A and in Part B during the 2024-2025 season (July 2024-May 2025). Eligibility criteria:

- Athletes must be internationally classified by the International Ski Federation Para Nordic (FISPN).
- Athletes must be eligible to compete in the 2026 PWG according to the qualification guide criteria including classification eligibility and events on the PWG program.
- To qualify for the 2025-2026 National Team or Development Team, athletes must achieve the criteria described in Part B below during the 2024-2025 season (July 2024-May 2025).
- National Team status includes A, B, and C Teams as described in Part B below.
- National Team status can be achieved in any combination of biathlon and cross-country races.
- Returning National Team athletes must meet any individual performance criteria in their Personal Performance Plan from the previous season(s) in addition to the below published criteria.
- Athletes age 18 or older will be required to undergo a background screen in accordance with the current USOPC Background Check Policy.
- Athletes age 18 or older will be required to complete the U.S. Center for SafeSport's online training.
- World Cup (WC) "test" events (testing a new format that is not accepted in World Championship (WCH) or PWG program) will not be considered for National A or B Team Criteria but will be considered for National C Team and National Development Team.

## **Part B: Specific National Team (A, B, C) and Development Team Criteria**

### NATIONAL A TEAM CRITERIA

Athletes must achieve one of the following:

- Two WC/WCH podium results in individual events [field must include at least 2 athletes who have fewer than 20 FISPAN points or at least 3 athletes who have fewer than 40 FISPAN points on the FISPAN overall rankings in that sport class (i.e. sit, stand, visually impaired) on the date of competition].
- Four WC/WCH results within 5 FISPAN points of 3<sup>rd</sup> place [field must include at least 2 athletes who have fewer than 20 FISPAN points or at least 3 athletes who have fewer than 40 FISPAN points on the FISPAN overall rankings in that sport class (i.e. sit, stand, visually impaired) on the date of competition].

### NATIONAL B TEAM CRITERIA

Athletes must achieve one of the following:

- Four WC/WCH results within 20 FISPAN points of 2<sup>nd</sup> place [field must include at least 2 athletes who have fewer than 20 FISPAN points or at least 3 athletes who have fewer than 40 FISPAN points on the FISPAN overall rankings in that sport class (i.e. sit, stand, visually impaired) on the date of competition].
- Finish in the top 4 in two WC/WCH XC sprint races [race must have maximum semi-finals participation by the rules and include at least 2 athletes who have fewer than 20 FISPAN points or at least 3 athletes who have fewer than 40 FISPAN points on the FISPAN overall rankings in that sport class (ie sit, stand, visually impaired) on the date of competition].
- Three WC/WCH results within 5 FISPAN points of 3<sup>rd</sup> place [field must include at least 2 athletes who have fewer than 20 FISPAN points or at least 3 athletes who have fewer than 40 FISPAN points on the FISPAN overall rankings in that sport class (i.e. sit, stand, visually impaired) on the date of competition].
- Standing & VI athletes achieve a calculated 175 points (or lower) in any one USSS race.
- Standing & VI athletes achieve a calculated 225 points (or lower) in any two USSS races.

### NATIONAL C TEAM CRITERIA

Athletes must achieve one of the following:

- Finish in top 4 in one WC/WCH XC sprint race finals [race must have maximum semi-finals participation by the FISPAN Rules & Regulations and include at least 2 athletes who have fewer than 20 FISPAN points or at least 3 athletes who have fewer than 40 FISPAN points on the FISPAN overall rankings in that sport class (i.e. sit, stand, visually impaired) on the date of competition].
- One WC/WCH result within 35 FISPAN points of 2<sup>nd</sup> place [field must include at least 2 athletes who have fewer than 20 FISPAN points or at least 3 athletes who have fewer than 40 FISPAN points on the FISPAN overall rankings in that sport class (i.e. sit, stand, visually impaired) on the date of competition].
- Two WC/WCH results within 45 FISPAN points of 2<sup>nd</sup> place [field must include at least 2 athletes who have fewer than 20 FISPAN points or at least 3 athletes who have fewer than 40 FISPAN points on the FISPAN overall rankings in that sport class (i.e. sit, stand, visually impaired) on the date of competition].
- Two FISPAN points ranking race results within 30 FISPAN points of 2<sup>nd</sup> place [top three in the results must include at least 2 athletes who have fewer than 20 FISPAN points on the FISPAN overall ranking in that sport class (i.e. sit, stand, visually impaired) on date of competition. Race results in which genders or classes have been combined (per FISPAN Points Rule 9.3.1.4) are not eligible.
- Standing & VI athletes achieve a calculated 225 points (or lower) in any one USSS race.
- Standing & VI athletes achieve a calculated 275 points (or lower) in any two USSS races.

### DEVELOPMENT TEAM CRITERIA

Sitting athletes must achieve:

- Years 1-2 being named to Team: 150 FISPN points (or lower) in any 2 races or 120 (or lower) in any one race.
- Years 3+ being named to Team: 120 FISPN points (or lower) in any 2 races or 90 (or lower) in any one race.

Standing & VI athletes must achieve:

Years 1-2 being named to Team:

- a calculated 400 points (or lower) in any 2 races or 350 points (or lower) in any one USSS races.  
OR
- 150 FISPN points (or lower) in any 2 races or 120 (or lower) in any one race.

Years 3+ being named to Team:

- a calculated 350 points (or lower) in any 2 races or 300 points (or lower) in any one USSS race.  
OR
- 120 FISPN points (or lower) in any 2 races or 90 (or lower) in any one race.

Development Team athletes will not be permitted to remain on the team for longer than 4 years total without special consideration. If Junior/U20 athletes achieve Development Team status, their years on the team as juniors will not count toward their 4 year maximum.

U20/Junior Athletes Criteria

Eligible athletes born in 2005 or later must achieve the following criteria:

- 180 FISPN points (or lower) in any 1 race  
OR
- A calculated 450 points (or lower) in any one USSS race

#### DISCRETIONARY CRITERIA

U.S. Paralympics Nordic Skiing may use discretionary criteria to select additional athletes onto the National Team who have not met the objective criteria for the National Team for several reasons. These include, but are not limited to, injury or illness (via the "Injury or Illness Provision" of the National Team Agreement) and the occurrence of exceptional circumstances (e.g. earthquakes, cancellation/postponement of IF events, epidemics, riots, pregnancy).

Discretionary nominations, if any, may be based on a variety of factors, including consideration of competition results outside of the (12-month) selection period and data analytics of individual and relay events, to ensure that U.S. Paralympics Nordic Skiing is investing in the most qualified athletes with the greatest potential of winning Paralympic Winter Games medals in individual events and in Team Mixed and Open Relay events. The following factors will be considered when considering an athlete for discretionary selection:

- athlete achieved a medal in the 2018 or 2022 Paralympic Winter Games.
- athlete demonstrates a trend of improving performance in international competition that is indicative of a podium performance by the current international standards within the next two (2) years.
- athlete is eligible for and needed to complete the make-up of a Team Relay due to specific sport class requirements for the Relay.

Discretionary nominations for the National Team, along with National Team status and term length, will be determined by a panel of three U.S. Paralympics Nordic Skiing program staff and two elite athlete representatives meeting the eligibility requirements under, and appointed pursuant to, the USOPC Bylaws. The selection committee will automatically consider all athletes who have reached Development Team

objective criteria by April 30, 2025. In addition, the selection committee will consider all athletes who are still competing and who achieved an individual medal in the 2022 PWG, but who were unable to achieve Development Team status due to circumstances described in this section.

Additional nominations to the Development Team will be considered for any athlete who has been on the Development Team within the last 2 seasons, is still competing, and failed to meet objective criteria due to injury, illness, or other reasons beyond their control. Selection will be based on athlete's progression and commitment level toward the National Team.

Any member of the selection committee that has a possible conflict of interest must disclose it. If such conflict exists, the selection committee member must recuse him/herself from committee discussions and voting. Further, the committee member should not otherwise influence other members of the committee in the selection process. However, a committee member who recused him/herself, but who has relevant and necessary information with respect to athlete performance, for example a national team coach or high performance director, may, if requested by the selection committee, provide such information to the committee so long as such information is provided in a fair and unbiased manner and the committee member who declared the conflict of interest does not vote toward the final decision.