



World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

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History Made!!



Six Paralympic Stars Become Legends After Becoming Para Taekwondo's First Paralympic Champions

Para Taekwondo finally hit the Paralympic stage and our star athletes didn't disappoint!

The thrilling competition featured spectacular acts of athletic prowess, dizzying displays of on-your-toes strategy, and nailbiting, buzzer-beater comebacks that showed the world why the Paralympics' newest sport is one of its most electrifying.

The tournament featured stunning upsets, the emergence of new stars, and six new Paralympic champions that can say they are the best in the business. Fighters from 17 different nations - representing all 5 continental associations - managed to medal on the sport's biggest stage.

As if the introduction of Para sports' first full-contact sport wasn't enough to stir global interest, the inspiring stories of the Refugee Team's **Parfait Hakizimana** and Afghanistan's **Zakia Khudadadi** received wall-to-wall coverage around the world, with the image of Khudadadi carrying the Afghan flag one of the Games' defining images.

Becoming Para Taekwondo Legends

The biggest stories out of Tokyo 2020 were of the athletes themselves - and there were plenty to go around!

Every athlete in Tokyo had spent years preparing for the chance to take home one of Para Taekwondo's six inaugural Paralympic gold medals - and those gold medals are going to six different countries.

Peru's red hot **Angelica Espinoza** got the party started by winning Para Taekwondo's first Paralympic gold medal - Peru's only medal of Tokyo 2020 and the country's first Paralympic gold since Athens 2000.

Later that night, Brazil's teenage star **Nathan Torquato** triumphed in the -61kg category, earning the first of Brazil's three medals at Tokyo 2020.

Denmark's **Lisa Gjessing** managed to get by Brazil's **Silvana Cardoso** in the -58kg semi-final in one of the closest and most strategic fights of the tournament before besting British newcomer **Beth Munro** for gold to fulfill her dream of becoming Paralympic champion.

In one of the most anticipated matchups of the Paralympics, Mexico's reigning world champion **Diego Garcia Lopez** met Iran's four-time world champion and Para Taekwondo legend **Mehdi Pourrahnama** in the -75kg final. In a stunning display of strategy and skill, the Mexican teen came out on top claim the Paralympic title in what promises to be one of the sport's most exciting rivalries.

On the final day of action, Iran's two-time world champion **Asghar Azizi Aqdam** edged Croatia's 2015 world champion **Ivan Mikulic** to claim the inaugural +75kg Paralympic title, while Uzbekistan's **Guljonoy Naimova** won her first international tournament - and an enormous payday from the Uzbek government (see below) - for her triumph in the +58kg category.

Stars Emerge, Stunning Upsets and Other Stirring Stories

Great Britain's **Beth Munro** introduced herself to the world as one of the sport's newest stars. Having just one international fight under her belt, the newcomer bested some of the division's top fighters - including China's reigning world champion **Yujie Li** - on the way to a surprising silver in the -58kg category.

Mongolia's top-ranked duo of **Bolor-Erdene Ganbat** and **Enkhtuya Khurelbaatar** left Tokyo empty-handed after surprising defeats. Ganbat's last-second loss to Turkey's Mahmut Bozteke in the bronze medal semi-final saw an outburst of emotion from the usually stoic four-time world champion.

"I should have lost at a previous tournament", he said directly after his match. "I have never lost before [at a world championships]. I've won at every tournament, in every country. I wish I had tasted defeat before Tokyo. This was harsh."

Australia's 40-year-old **Janine Watson** captured bronze in the +58kg category to become Oceania's first Paralympic medal winner. In the process, she becomes the only Paralympic medalist to also hold a world title in the Poomsae discipline.

Global Appeal on Full Display

If Para Taekwondo's global appeal wasn't evident before Tokyo 2020, it is now!

Athletes from 17 nations - representing every continent in the world - climbed the medal podiums at Tokyo 2020. All six Paralympic champions come from different countries.

Only five nations managed more than one medalist at Tokyo 2020 (Brazil, RPC, Iran, Great Britain, and Turkey), with Brazil leading the way with a medal of each colour.

Espinoza's gold was the only medal that Peru won, while Mikulic missed out on winning what would have been Croatia's only gold medal at Tokyo 2020 on a last-second strike in the +75kg final.

Palesha Goverdhan nearly made history by winning Nepal's first-ever Paralympic medal. She was tied late in the final round with China's reigning world champion **Yujie Li** before falling 12-9 to just miss out.

While losing both of her fights, Afghanistan's Khudadadi was also competitive. She held the lead going into the third round against Ukraine's six-time world champion **Vika Marchuk** before falling to the talented veteran.

All in all, our athletes put on a wonderful display that wowed the world with the beauty of Para Taekwondo and showed just why it's the Paralympic movement's most exciting new sport!

Congratulations to our new champions, all of the athletes that managed to medal, and to everyone that qualified for the most competitive tournament in Para Taekwondo history!

Here's a complete list of medal winners for Tokyo 2020:

Event	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Men's 61 kg details	Nathan Torquato  Brazil	Mohamed El-Zayat  Egypt	Mahmut Bozteke  Turkey Danil Sidorov  RPC
Men's 75 kg details	Juan Garcia  Mexico	Mahdi Pourrahnama  Iran	Joo Jeong-hun  South Korea Juan Samorano  Argentina
Men's +75 kg details	Asghar Aziziaghdam  Iran	Ivan Mikulić  Croatia	Evan Medell  United States Zainutdin Ataev  RPC
Women's 49 kg details	Leonor Espinoza  Peru	Meryem Çavdar  Turkey	Khwansuda Phuangkitcha  Thailand Anna Poddubskaja  RPC
Women's 58 kg details	Lisa Gjessing  Denmark	Beth Munro  Great Britain	Silvana Fernandes  Brazil Li Yujie  China
Women's +58 kg details	Guljonoy Naimova  Uzbekistan	Débora Menezes  Brazil	Amy Truesdale  Great Britain Janine Watson  Australia





2021 European Open First Step to Paris 2024



Registration Deadline is Tomorrow!!

Already a year into the Paris 2024 qualification cycle, this month's European Open championships are the first test for those looking to become - or remain - Paralympic champions.

Now that we know Para Taekwondo's first Paralympic champions, the process of trying to dethrone them - or to once again push aside all challengers - begins on 23 September in Istanbul, Turkey.

As the first tournament in the new Paralympic qualification cycle, there are some things of which to take note.

All Athletes Must Go Through Classification!!

All athletes must be reclassified before competing. Classification will take place on 21-22 September.

New Weight Categories Are in Effect!

Para Taekwondo's new weight categories will be in effect at the European Open championships.

The new weight categories are as follows:

SPORT CLASSES	
K41	
K44	
MALE EVENTS	FEMALE EVENTS
Not exceeding 58kg	Not exceeding 47kg
Not exceeding 63kg	Not exceeding 52kg
Not exceeding 70kg	Not exceeding 57kg
Not exceeding 80kg	Not exceeding 65kg
Over 80kg	Over 65kg

Athletes will be able to transfer their previous ranking points to their new category and the European championships will be the first chance to see just how the new divisions may shape up.

Ranking Points Are Up For Grabs!

As a G4 / G2 event, European athletes will have the chance to earn twice as many ranking points as their non-European opponents. It also means that non-European fighters will have the chance to deny their European rivals the chance to jump up the rankings.

Note that the tournament will also utilise the single five-minute round format.

For additional rules and requirements, including COVID-19 protocols to be used at the event, please see the event guide at <https://worldtkd.simplycompete.com/.../11ebf5e2-6625.../1>.

For more information, please contact the Turkish Taekwondo Federation at taekwondo@gsb.gov.tr.

[Click to Register for 2021 European Open](#)



Para Taekwondo Introduced to Global Audience



Para Taekwondo's Introduction to a Global Audience Led to Wide Coverage of the Sport Worldwide

Para Taekwondo's introduction to a global audience has led to wide coverage of the sport worldwide.

Besides the blanket coverage of **Parfait Hakizimana** becoming the first refugee athlete to compete for the Refugee Paralympic Team to come directly from a refugee camp and **Zakia Khudadadi's** dramatic escape from Afghanistan in time to compete at Tokyo 2020, the introduction of the Paralympic Games' newest sport made headlines across the world. You can find articles on the sport in publications in dozens of languages worldwide.

Here is a taste of the coverage you can find online. Let us know if you see something that was especially insightful!

10 Things to Know About Para Taekwondo – Paralympic.org

This article by the IPC gives a brief primer on the sport itself, making it a must read for anyone first learning about Para Taekwondo.

To read, please visit <https://www.paralympic.org/news/sport-week-10-things-know-about-para-taekwondo>

Taekwondo Kicks Its Way into Paralympics – France24.com

France.24 was one of the dozens of international news agencies in Tokyo to cover Para Taekwondo's first day of Paralympic action. Here is their in-depth look at the sport's Paralympic debut.

To read, please visit <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210902-taekwondo-kicks-its-way-into-paralympics>

Why Para Taekwondo Is the Most Thrilling New Sport – TheConversation.com

The Conversation was clearly thrilled by the introduction of the Para movement's first full-contact sport and goes into some detail about the physicality of the sport.

To read, please visit <https://theconversation.com/tokyo-paralympics-why-para-taekwondo-is-the-most-thrilling-new-sport-167293>

Inclusion of New Paralympic Sports Hailed as Game-Changing – Eurosport.com

Great Britain Taekwondo CEO Matt Archibald was glowing about the introduction of Para Taekwondo to the Paralympic Games – and why not? GB took home two medals at Tokyo 2020 (**Beth Munro** – silver, **Amy Truesdale**, bronze) – even with world champion **Matt Bush** out with injury.

To read, please visit https://www.eurosport.com/badminton/inclusion-of-new-paralympic-sports-hailed-as-game-changing-by-gb-taekwondo-ceo-archibald_sto8520748/story.shtml

18 of the Biggest Moments From the 2020 Paralympic Games That You Need to See – BuzzFeed.com

Para Taekwondo even got the BuzzFeed treatment, with four of their '18 Biggest Moments' tied to Para Taekwondo. Their top two moments feature **Parfait Hakizimana's** Refugee Paralympic Team and **Zakia Khudadadi's** incredible journey out of Afghanistan. Para Taekwondo's debut gold medal match between Peru's Paralympic champ **Angelica Espinoza** and Turkey's **Meryem Cavdar** comes in at No. 11, while Australia's decision to award Paralympic medal winners the same as their Olympic counterparts comes in at No. 18. That's good news for **Janine Watson**, who comes away with \$10,000 for her bronze medal performance!

To read, please visit <https://www.buzzfeed.com/amatullahshaw/biggest-paralympics-moments>

Para Taekwondo Competition Calendar



- 2021 European Open Championships (G4/G2) - September 23 - Istanbul, Turkey
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
REGISTRATIONS OPEN IN GMS!! Deadline September 15, 2021
- 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships (G14) (To Be Confirmed)
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- 2021 Asian Youth Para Games (G2) - November 28 - December 7 - Bahrain
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- 2021 World Taekwondo Grand Prix Final G10 - December - TBA

Para Taekwondo Around the World

Africa:

Hakizimana Makes History as First Athlete From Refugee Camp to Compete at Paralympic Games

Burundian refugee **Parfait Hakizimana**, who lives in the Mahama Refugee Camp in Rwanda, made a stir in Tokyo by becoming the first refugee athlete to compete at the Paralympic Games to come directly from a refugee camp. The six member team represents the 82 million people around the world who are refugees, a point not lost on Hakizimana. “To come here a lot of people helped me. I would like to thank the children that I teach at my refugee camp back in Rwanda – they helped me”, he told World Para Taekwondo after finishing his tournament, “And I want to thank the refugees around the world – I hope that people love each other through sport.”



To see more about Hakizimana’s inspiring story, please visit <https://www.unhcr.org/news/videos/2021/8/611e6dd74/the-inspiring-story-of-parfait-hakizimana-paralympics.html>



Asia:

Khudadadi's Incredible Journey to Tokyo Dominates World Headlines

While horrifying images from Afghanistan were splashed across television screens worldwide last month, at least one feel-good story emerged – and it was the dramatic escape of Afghanistan’s **Zakia Khudadadi** and her team with the assistance of several governments and international organisations, including World Taekwondo. Appearing in news stories from The Guardian to TMZ, Khudadadi’s appearance in Tokyo is a

testament to the power of perseverance, determination, and teamwork. Khudadadi was competitive in both of her fights, leading going into the third round before falling to Ukraine’s six-time world champion Vika Marchuk to finish her competition winless. Still, Khudadadi’s grace under the intense spotlight of the international media became the biggest story of the Paralympic Games. Alongside teammate Hossain Rasouli, she carried Afghanistan’s flag into the Closing Ceremony in one of the event’s most poignant moments. Khudadadi has been granted a humanitarian visa to Australia.

“Despite the political turmoil ... we managed to raise our flag and represent Afghanistan at the world stage with the help of friends and [a] group of philanthropists who saved [our] lives and made [our] dreams come true.”, she wrote on Facebook.

For the most recent CNN article (as of printing), please visit <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/08/28/sport/paralympics-afghanistan-team-arrives-tokyo-spt-intl/index.html>

Paralympic Champion Azizi Aqdam Thanks Iranian Fans

Newly crowned Paralympic champion **Asghar Azizi Aqdam** was sure to thank his fans after narrowly beating Croatia's 2015 world champion Ivan Mikulic to capture the +75kg category's first-ever Paralympic gold medal. The two-time world champion told Paralympic.ir, "I dedicate this medal to all the people of Iran and, of course, to the souls of my late parents, whom I have lost", he said. "With our results at the Paralympics, fans of Taekwondo and Para Taekwondo will be happy and I thank them for praying for me."



To read the full story (in Persian), please visit

<https://www.paralympic.ir/fa/news/4482/%D8%B9%D8%B2%DB%8C%D8%B2%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D8%B4%DA%A9%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%BE%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%BE%DB%8C%DA%A9-%D8%B1%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%AF%D9%85>



Korea's Joo Stars as a Samsung Vlogger at Tokyo 2020

Before thrilling the ancestral home of taekwondo with his payback win over RPC's **Magomedzagir Isaldibirov** in the -75kg bronze medal match, Korea's **Jeong-hun Joo** took fans behind-the-scenes of what life is like as an athlete at the Paralympic Games as a Samsung Vlogger. Joo was one of 11 athletes selected to "vlog" about his experiences in Tokyo and produced videos on what it's like eat, train, visit the venue, and even win a medal!

For his behind the scenes look at the venue, please visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzP29Q9OaLU>

To see how he works out, please visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zs_hWbdcF0s

For his reaction on winning bronze, please visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CddNekucUvk>

To learn more about the Samsung Vloggers, please visit <https://www.paralympic.org/news/tokyo-2020-samsung-paralympic-vloggers-competition-launched>

Paralympic Champ Naimov Wins Rich Package from Uzbek Government

There was no better time for Uzbekistan's **Guljonoy Naimova** to win her first international tournament than at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games – and the Uzbek government agrees! After her thrilling 8-4 win over Brazil's reigning world champion **Debora Menezes** to capture the first-ever Paralympic gold medal in the +58kg category, Naimova and other Uzbek champions were greeted at the airport by the Deputy Prime Minister and paraded through central Tashkent for an unforgettable welcoming ceremony at the 'New Uzbekistan' Park, where thousands of fans were waiting. The champions were awarded \$200,000 USD, before being whisked away in their new Chevy Tahoe cars (worth \$85,000 USD) to their new one-room houses (worth \$50,000). Naimova's coach also received a cheque for \$20,000 USD. The athletes met with President Shavkat Mirziyoyev later in the week.



For a video of the ceremony (Naimova not featured), please visit <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1177367136103831>

For more about the ceremony, please visit

<http://paralympic.uz/%d0%bc%d0%b0%d1%82%d0%be%d0%bd%d0%b0%d1%82%d0%bb%d0%b8-%d0%bf%d0%b0%d1%80%d0%b0%d0%bb%d0%b8%d0%bc%d0%bf%d0%b8%d1%8f%d1%87%d0%b8%d0%bb%d0%b0%d1%80%d0%b8%d0%bc%d0%b8%d0%b7-%d1%82%d0%b0%d0%bd%d1%82%d0%b0/>



Europe:

Paralympic Silver Medalist Mikulic Named Croatia's Flagbearer

The day after dropping a nail-biting gold medal final match to Iran's **Asghar Azizi Aqdam**, Croatia's silver medal-winning **Ivan Mikulic** carried the Croatian flag into Tokyo's Olympic Stadium during the Closing Ceremonies. Accompanied by his coach, Mladen Tomić, the 2015 world champion smiled for the cameras and took selfies on the stadium floor. "This is not just my medal", he told Dalmacija Danas news agency, "This is the medal of my team, family, friends. This is for all of you. I can't believe how many people have bitten their

nails because of me, getting up at 5:30 in the morning to be able to watch on their cell phone how the score changes from point to point. I want to thank you all!"

For more, please read the article on Dalmacija Danas at https://www.dalmacijadanas.hr/intervju-ivan-mikulic-razocaran-sam-i-ljut-kao-i-svi-ostali-to-je-tolika-diskriminacija-i-omalovazavanje-sporta-osoba-s-invaliditetom/?fbclid=IwAR37VS8bHwWVNid4IW1GtGRM_IzHd-wUrbKLZD7zqU2NAieDkVBgEjDAL8

Denmark's Crown Prince Calls Paralympic Champ Gjessing Moments After Victory

It's not often you get to speak to the Crown Prince of your country – even when you are the country's flagbearer! Denmark's **Lisa Gjessing** added the first -58 kg Paralympic gold medal to her already sterling trophy case and then during the post-match media scrum, received a call from none other than Frederick, Crown Prince of Denmark. The royal then posted a message of congratulations on his Facebook page, "Huge congratulations to Lisa Gjessing on the beautiful gold medal in Taekwondo", he wrote, "it's been a pleasure to follow you from home."

The message has received over 9,000 'likes'.

Photo: Lars Møller ©

To read the Crown Prince's congratulatory message, please visit <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=405003244330892&set=a.402971521200731>



Oceania:

Australia's Poomsae World Champion Watson Wins Oceania's First Paralympic Medal

Australia's Poomsae World Champion Watson Wins Oceania's First Paralympic Medal
Australia's world champion Poomsae taekwondo Janine Watson made history by claiming Oceania's first Paralympic medal – a bronze in the +58kg category. It was a fitting way

to finish a pioneering competitive career for the 40-year-old barrier-breaking fighter, who also becomes the first – and only – Paralympic medal winner with a world championship in Taekwondo's other form – Poomsae. "It's very, very rare to have both a world champion in Poomsae and a Paralympic [medal]", she told World Para Taekwondo after collecting her medal. "I don't think many Olympic champions also have a Poomsae world championship – I'd like to see some Olympic champions try to do some Poomsae patterns."

To read the Paralympics Australia feature on Watson, please visit <https://www.paralympic.org.au/2021/09/one-and-done-watson-brings-home-the-bronze-medal/?fbclid=IwAR3r01lv73OIkWkwa69tLY4HJJ0OC8YARy5fpmL3lYd6JouXpshMSqf1rAQ>

Pan Am:

ESPN Features Argentina's Bronze Medal-Winning Samorano

In a thrilling Paralympic tournament full of close fights and last kick finishes, perhaps no one was more familiar with the tension than Argentina's **Juan Samorano**, who had two epic clashes against Kazakhstan's **Nurlan Dombayev**. Dombayev got the best in the quarterfinal match, winning by Golden Point. Samorano returned the favour in the bronze medal match, grabbing bronze with a last second strike. The thrilling finishes, and Samorano's outgoing personality, led ESPN Argentina to feature the bronze medal-winning fighter.

"I wanted to make history with this medal, and I did it", he told ESPN, "I promised my old man a medal and, luckily, and can take it to him."

For the full feature, please visit

https://www.espn.com.ar/olimpicos/nota/_id/9149838/en-el-ultimo-segundo-juan-samorano-se-quedo-con-la-medalla-de-bronce-en-taekwondo-en-tokio-2020-juegos-paralimpicos



Brazil's Paralympic Champ Torquato Gets Cake in His Image

Brazil's teenage superstar – and now Paralympic champion – **Nathan Torquato** celebrated his triumph in Tokyo with a parade through the city and a cake bearing his likeness and photos of his taekwondo successes throughout the year. First, the local government of Praia Grande threw a parade for the Paralympic champion that saw him whisked through the city's main avenues atop a fire engine. Then, his family surprised him with a beautiful cake featuring pictures of their champ with medals from his childhood.

To see video of the parade, please visit

<https://www.facebook.com/pgnatela/videos/187777883443368/>.

Mexico Throws Parade for World & Paralympic Champ Garcia Lopez

Mexico's **Diego Garcia Lopez** was given a triumphant parade through his native Sinaloa after becoming the first – and only – Para Taekwondo athlete to be both World and Paralympic champion at the same time. Garcia Lopez memorably beat Iranian great **Mehdi Pourrahnama** in the final in what is considered one of the most strategic Para Taekwondo fights of all time. Awards are being heaped upon the teenage champ, with several organisations feting the star, including his city government and his former taekwondo school, who presented him with a ring.

To see the parade, please visit

<https://www.facebook.com/100015430397135/videos/397913631922530/>



Espinoza Greeted by Peru President on Return

Para Taekwondo's first Paralympic champion, Peru's **Angelica Espinoza**, was congratulated by the President of Peru after her return from Tokyo. Espinoza claimed Peru's only medal of the 2020 Paralympic Games and Peru's first gold medal since Sydney 2000. A delighted President Castillo congratulated Espinoza and her coach Maria Yvonne de la Cruz at a 15-minute ceremony shown on national TV. Espinoza's Paralympic triumph marks the culmination of

a dominant two year run, which saw her drop only a single fight in her last seven international events.

To check out the ceremony, please visit

<https://www.facebook.com/100000756426458/videos/831043517438053/>

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Classification Committee
Vice Chair



Amine Khelladi
Para Taekwondo Committee
Member



David O'Sullivan
Para Taekwondo
Classification Committee
Member



Sookyung Park
Para Taekwondo Committee
Member



Judith Cameron
Para Taekwondo
Classification Committee
Member



Marck Harb
Para Taekwondo Committee
Member



Primoz Rus
Para Taekwondo
Classification Committee
Member

Ad-Hoc Para Taekwondo Poomsae Committee



Min Hak Seo
Ad-hoc Para Taekwondo
Poomsae Committee
Chair



Said A Khelwatty
Ad-hoc Para Taekwondo
Poomsae Committee
Vice-Chair



Nadezhada Petrova
Ad-hoc Para Taekwondo
Poomsae Committee
Member



Luciano Mazzeo
Ad-hoc Para Taekwondo
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