



World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

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New Champions Put on a Show at 2021 Worlds



Para Taekwondo's New Look on Display at the Last Event of 2021

New weight categories, new classifications, and new rules were on display at the year-end event, but some things never change - and Para Taekwondo's elite proved while they'll be tough to beat as Paris 2024 qualification heats up.

Paralympic grudge matches, clashes between stars from (formerly) different classifications, free-for-alls in brand new weight categories – the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships went a long way to definitively answering the question – how would the new Para Taekwondo look?

The answer? More strategic, more athletic, and more exciting than ever!

After a wildly successful Paralympic debut that showcased the sport's global appeal by seeing athletes from every continent win Paralympic medals, Para Taekwondo was rewarded with more medal events and additional athletes for Paris 2024.

To accommodate the growth, the sport consolidated its classification after substantive medical review to allow more athletes with different impairment types to compete for these spots.

The results were evident at the new-look World Para Taekwondo Championships, which saw a record number of athletes become world champions.

Paralympic Grudges Settled

Tokyo 2020 left many questions unanswered after shocking results saw new athletes emerge on Para Taekwondo's biggest stage. Istanbul 2021 offered some answers.

In the weekend's most anticipated Paralympic grudge match, four-time world champion **Mehdi Pourrahnama** (IRI) faced off against reigning World and Paralympic champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** (MEX) in the -70 kg final.

In a match that had the entire arena buzzing, the two men that have combined to capture every major tournament since 2014 met in a tense final that saw Pourrahnama hand Garcia Lopez just his second loss in three years.

Pourrahnama wasn't the only athlete to claim a fifth world title.

Four-time world champion **Bolor-Erdene Ganbat** (MGL) had never dropped a world championship match and went to Tokyo 2020 as the definitive favourite. In the tournament's biggest shock, he failed to medal for the first time at a major event.

At Istanbul 2021, Ganbat showed why he's still the division's best.

After a dominant 15-0 opening match win, Ganbat used dazzling technique and heavy kicks to leave his next three opponents on the mat and unable to continue, including Paralympic champion **Nathan Torquato** (BRA).

One of the biggest surprises of Tokyo 2020 was the emergence of **Guljonoy Naimova** (UZB), who shocked No. 1-ranked **Amy Truesdale** (GBR) on her way to Paralympic gold.

Naimova proved it was no fluke by handing the 2017 world champion and Para Taekwondo pioneer her second straight head-to-head defeat to win the +65 kg gold.

Cardoso, Yasur, Er Highlight New World Champions

Brazil's **Silvana Cardoso** announced her arrival at the top of the women's game with a dominant run to the -57 kg world title, outscoring her opponents 52-1 before edging hometown favourite **Gamze Gurdal** in a nervy 15-12 final to claim her first world title.

When **Assaf Yasur** claimed the gold in the new -58 kg division, he set two important records – he became the first athlete from Israel to win a world championship and he became the first athlete formerly classified as K43 to win gold in a division with K44 athletes.

Yasur, who trains with Israel's Olympic Taekwondo team, outlasted 2019 world championship bronze medalist **Ali Can Ozcan** 57-42 in the day's most entertaining and highest-scoring match. Within a single kick for much of the match until a break in the final 45 seconds, Yasur pulled away at the end to win by 15.

It's a remarkable achievement for Yasur who failed to qualify for the Paralympic Games and lost to Ozcan by 20 points in their previous fight.

The win was a testament to the effectiveness of the new 'Super' K44 classification that combines athletes formerly classified as K44, K43, and K42 into the same division. Yasur, formerly classified as K43, becomes the first athlete not under the former K44 class to win a world title.

Likewise, Turkey's **Secil Er** captured her first world championship in the wide-open -65 kg group.

Er had never won a fight at a world championship and had only one international medal to her name – an impressive bronze at the 2019 European championships where she topped two Top 5 seeds before losing to soon-to-be Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing** (DEN).

Pourrahnama and Er (pictured below) were named best male and female athletes, respectively.

For full coverage, including exclusive quotes from athletes, please see the World Taekwondo article [HERE](#).



Para Taekwondo Impresses at Asian Youth Para Games Debut



Young Stars from Nepal, Iran Highlight Bahrain 2021

Nepal's Palesha Goverdhan steals the show as she scored the first-ever gold medal for Nepal at the event.

Para Taekwondo made its debut at another major international event this month and once again, it was one of our athletes that had the event buzzing.

This time it was Paralympian **Palesha Goverdhan**, who defeated Iran's **Roza Ebrahimi** 6-0 in the -57 kg final to win Nepal's first-ever medal at the Asian Youth Para Games.

The Nepalese team stole the show by winning an entire set of medals after **Shrijana Ghising** won silver in -52 kg and **Bishal Garbuja** bagged bronze in -68 kg.

The team was welcomed as heroes back home, where a special reception was held in their honour when they arrived home and local and international media covered the story of Nepal's Para Taekwondo breakthrough.

Referring to the success of Nepal, and other Asian nations that captured their inaugural medals at the event like Bhutan, Cambodia, Tajikistan, and Yemen, Asian Paralympic Committee President Majid Rashed told the IPC:

"We've seen some amazing performances that give us hope that the future of Para sport in Asia is bright." Iran also fared well at the competition in Bahrain, topping the medal table with 7 medals, including 3 Asian Youth Para Games champions.

None was more impressive than **Maryam Abdollahpour Deroei's** title in the -47 kg division, as she upended Thailand's reigning world champion and Paralympic bronze medalist **Khwansuda Phuangkitcha** in the process.

Phuangkitcha added a second world championship the next week at the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships.

Deroei's teammates **Sahar Ghanbarikomishani** and **Mahdi Danaeian** won titles in the -52 kg and -80 kg categories, respectively.

Ali Qarainees became host Bahrain's first-ever Para Taekwondo athlete and was awarded gold in the +80 kg category.

Other Asian Para Youth Games champions include Thailand's **Awipa Phuaphan** in -65 kg, Uzbekistan's **Kudratillo Shonazarov** in -58 kg and **Aslbek Khushanova** in -70 kg, Korea's **Dongho Lee** in -63 kg,

Like Tokyo 2020, where athletes from every continental association managed to win a medal, the IPC was impressed with the wide-ranging global appeal.

"One of the highlights of the Youth Games was Para Taekwondo making its debut at Bahrain 2021", the organisation wrote. "More importantly, all the eight participating nations in the competition ended up winning a medal."

For more, check out the IPC article here - [paralympic.org/news/iran-finish-top-curtains-come-down-bahrain-2021](https://www.paralympic.org/news/iran-finish-top-curtains-come-down-bahrain-2021).



2021: Para Taekwondo's Biggest Year Yet



Munro Highlights Host of New Para Taekwondo Stars

Para Taekwondo's Paralympic debut, record-setting world championships, the Asian Youth Para Games debut and, of course, the emergence of tomorrow's stars – here's a look back at the most important year in Para Taekwondo history.

2021 began with an air of uncertainty. When would competitions resume? Would Tokyo 2020 go ahead as planned? Who would claim the remaining spots at Para Taekwondo's Paralympic debut?

No one would have expected Great Britain's **Beth Munro**.

Why not? The fighter from Wales had never fought internationally and had only picked up the sport just months before the year began. She went on to author one of the sport's greatest debuts.

Munro began the year by claiming her position at Tokyo 2020 by winning her first-ever competition – the European Paralympic Qualification tournament. She then on a fairytale run in Tokyo to upset the reigning world champion and No. 3 seeds to claim a memorable silver medal.

While remarkable, Munro wasn't 2021's only breakout star.

In a year crammed with shocking upsets and unforgettable results, perhaps none was more surprising than when Brazil's **Silvana Cardoso** handed four-time world champion and No. 1-ranked **Lisa Gjessing** (DEN) her first-ever loss at the Pan American championships last summer.

Their Paralympic rematch stands out as one of the most strategic and entertaining of the entire Paralympic Games, with Cardoso claiming bronze after a nail-biting loss in the semi-final.

Cardoso ended the year on top though, ascending to the top of the new -57 kg division with a dominant performance on the way to her first world championship.

Other breakout performances include **Asaf Yasur's** world championship – the first for an athlete from Israel and the first for someone formerly classified K43 over a K44 division; and Korea's **Jeong Hun Joo**, who claimed an emotional bronze medal for the birthplace of Taekwondo when he captured bronze in Tokyo.

Asian Youth Para Games Debut

As more and more continental associations add Para Taekwondo to their signature events, it was Asia's brightest up-and-coming stars that took the stage at the Asian Youth Para Games in Bahrain.

And it was the coming-out party for Nepal's Paralympian **Palesha Goverdhan**.

Goverdhan had already become a household name back home after nearly claiming Nepal's first-ever medal at the Olympic or Paralympic Games. She lost to reigning world champion **Yujie Li** (CHN) by a single kick in a tense bronze medal match in Tokyo.

The young Goverdhan showed she's one to watch in the -57 kg division by capturing gold at Para Taekwondo's debut at the Asian Youth Para Games in Bahrain – Nepal's first-ever medal at the event.

Emergence of the Americas

When Para Taekwondo was officially named a Paralympic sport in January 2017, no one could have expected Brazil to top the Tokyo 2020 medal table – but that's exactly what happened.

Nathan Torquato's gold, **Debora Menezes'** silver, and **Silvana Cardoso's** bronze gave the South American nation a full set of medals – better than any other nation at the Paralympic Games.

They followed it up with a commanding performance at the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships, where they brought a record-breaking 17 athletes. The team finished fourth overall with 7 medals, highlighted by Cardoso's first world title.

Brazil wasn't the only country from the Americas to see success.

Mexico's **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** established himself as one of the sport's greats by becoming a Paralympic and world champion before he was even 20, while Peru's Parapan Am champion **Angelica Espinosa** also struck Paralympic gold.

The USA's **Evan Medell** and Argentina's **Juan Samorano** also claimed Paralympic medals, both winning bronze, with Medell having to get by Costa Rica's **Andres Molina** in a close bronze medal final.

In all, athletes from the Americas won three of six Paralympic events and seven medals total (3g, 1s, 3b). Just how impressive was that?

At Para Taekwondo's most competitive event yet, it was the Americas that stood strong, winning three of the six divisions and seven medals total, a far cry from 2017, when not a single fighter from the Americas claimed a world title.

And Brazil?

Well, the Paralympic champions didn't win a single medal at the 2017 worlds.

Change comes fast in Para Taekwondo.

Worlds Return with New Look Para Taekwondo

The ninth World Para Taekwondo Championships returned this year in spectacular fashion, showcasing new rules, new classifications, and new weight categories as athletes gear up for Paris 2024 qualification.

Most athletes formerly classified as K42 and K43 joined their K44 counterparts in a 'Super' K44 classification, allowing new athletes a path towards their own Paralympic stories.

The influx of new athletes also allowed the sport to move to five weight categories per gender, up from the three featured at Tokyo 2020 – which meant a record amount of world championships were crowned at the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships in Istanbul, Turkey.

After Paralympic defeats, perennial favourites like Mongolia's **Bolor-Erdene Ganbat** and Iran's **Mehdi Pourrahnama** each added their fifth world titles.

Uzbekistan's **Guljonoy Naimova** added her first world title to her Paralympic crown to become Para Taekwondo's only reigning Paralympic and World champion.

Newcomers like Israel's **Asaf Yasur** and Turkey's **Secil Er** also added their first world titles. Besides becoming Israel's first world champion, Yasur demonstrated that K43 and K42 athletes can rise to the elite of the new 'Super K44' classification.

Host Turkey took home the most medals, winning 12 including world titles from **Meryem Cavdar** and **Secil Er**. Er was named top female athlete, while Iran's Pourrahnama was named top male athlete for the second time in three world championships.

Para Taekwondo Finally Makes Paralympic Debut

2021 will forever be remembered as the year Para Taekwondo finally made its Paralympic debut.

And what a debut it was!

The sport dazzled spectators with its speed, skill, and strategy while making household names out of athletes from around the globe.

With just 24 medals on offer, athletes from 17 nations won a medal – including a medalist from every continental association.

It left such an impression, in fact, that the IPC rewarded Para Taekwondo by nearly doubling the number of athletes and medal events for Paris 2024.

Congratulations go to Brazil's **Nathan Torquato**, Mexico's **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez**, Iran's **Asghar Azizi Aqdam**, Peru's **Angelica Espinoza**, Denmark's **Lisa Gjessing**, and Uzbekistan's **Guljonoy Naimova** for succeeding in becoming Para Taekwondo's first-ever Paralympic champions.

With Paris 2024 qualification heating up and a slew of new tournaments being offered in 2022, Para Taekwondo will look to continue its impressive global growth as action resumes in spring.



Committee Chair Chakir Chelbat Reflects on 2021



...and Looks Ahead to 2022

Para Taekwondo Committee Chair Chakir Chelbat reflects on 2021 – considered to be the most important in Para Taekwondo history – and what's ahead for 2022.

With Tokyo 2020 and Istanbul 2021 now behind us, Chelbat reflects on how 2021 turned out and what the new-look Para Taekwondo leadership has in store.

“It was a great Christmas gift when the IPC approved 10 events and 120 athletes for Paris 2024”

Para Taekwondo danced and dazzled its way into the hearts of anyone that witnessed Para sports' first full-contact event – and the IPC took notice.

Last month, the IPC announced that Para Taekwondo would see 10 medal events (up from 6 at Tokyo 2020) and 120 athletes (up from 72 at Tokyo 2020) – one of the largest increases in a single Paralympic cycle in Paralympic history.

“2021 was very successful for Para Taekwondo”, said Chelbat. “It was a great Christmas gift [from] the IPC.” To accommodate the changes, Para Taekwondo introduced new weight categories and consolidated classification, allowing athletes previously classified as K43 and K42 to compete in a single ‘Super’ K44 class.

Rules were also adjusted to clarify the dangerous play statutes and to consolidate judging.

“I was very satisfied as the new rules were very well done. There were no strange incidents. Issues surrounding dangerous play have been solved”, he said. “The new officials' system worked very well and will prove very cost-effective for new host countries.”

“We want classifiers around the world”

Chelbat also spoke about World Para Taekwondo's goals for classification and education.

“We want more classifiers around the world – we need quantity to improve quality.”

At the same time, he announced plans to introduce a Level III Coaches Course and a new Examiners Course.

There are also plans to introduce a standardised belt system, with the eventual desire to have mandatory minimum requirements for international events.

“Para Taekwondo is inclusive and gives all athletes worldwide the chance to compete”, he said. “But consistent evaluation criteria and teaching system will help safety.”

He also spoke of the need for national courses for referees.

“You need both classifiers and referees to run domestic competitions.”

World Para Taekwondo will be conducting a survey in early 2022 to determine the resources and needs of its MNAs in this regard.

Cadet, Team Events Coming Soon

Chelbat also checked off a wish list of events that Para Taekwondo athletes can expect to see soon.

“We want cadet categories and team competitions, that will include mixed-gender events”, he said. “We need a masters division and are working towards a Grand Prix series.”

He also expects to see an explosion of special open domestic events, where athletes can make up ranking points, like the US Open or Chuncheon Cup.

“These former G1 ranking events will now be G2, which should attract more athletes”, he said. “It's also why we need more classifiers and referees worldwide.”

Sincere Appreciation to Outgoing Committee Members

He also expressed a debt of gratitude for outgoing committee members and their contributions toward building the sport of Para Taekwondo.

"I would like thank, and express sincere gratitude, to the [former] Classification Committee, especially Terrie [Moore, former Committee Chair]. They've done an amazing job in the past and the new committee will need to live up to the work of the past."

He spoke about the rapid success of Para Taekwondo and wanted to thank all those involved in making it happen.

"I want to thank the Para Taekwondo Committee, the Para Poomsae Committee, and [WPT] staff – Olof [Hansson, WPT Director] and Thomas [Page, WPT Assistant Manager], he said.

"You all have done a lot of work, but there's a lot more work ahead!"

Below is a list of new committee members:

Para Taekwondo Committee

Chakir Chelbat (NED) - Chair
Usman Dildar (GBR) - Vice-Chair
Mohamed Argoubi (NED)
Said Khelwatty (GBR)
Hadwah Moawad (KSA)
Yiannis Theodorakis (GRE)
Sookyung Park (KOR)

Para Taekwondo Classification Committee

Hadwah Moawad (KSA) - Chair
Amine Khelladi (ALG) - Vice-Chair
Ashanti Ramirez Montes de Oca (MEX)



Calendar



- 2022 African Para Taekwondo Open Championships (G4/G2) - February 5-6, 2022 - Niamey, Niger
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- 2022 7th WT President's Cup Europe (G2) - February 19, 2022 - Durrey, Albania
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

Around the World

Refugee:

Syrian Refugee Aldaji Makes World Championships Debut

Syrian refugee **Ahmad Rafiq Aldaji** became the latest in a growing line of refugees to take the stage at Para Taekwondo's biggest events. Aldaji fled to Turkey after being injured from shelling during a battle outside Damascus, Syria. He picked up Para Taekwondo as part of his rehabilitation and the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships was his first international event. He gave a game performance, before ultimately falling to Paralympian **Abulfaz Abuzarli** (AZE) 12-8 in the Round of 32. Aldaji becomes the fourth refugee to compete at an elite Para Taekwondo event, after **Hadi Hassanzada** (2016 European Championships), **Parfait Hakizimana** (2017 African Championships, Tokyo 2020), and **Zakia Khodadadi** (Tokyo 2020).



For more coverage on Aldaji, check out this IPC article [HERE](#).



Africa:

Taekwondo Experiencing Popularity Boom in Niger

After winning its first-ever Olympic gold medal in Taekwondo at Tokyo 2020, the sport is experiencing a boom in popularity in Africa's sixth-largest country. The same can be said about Para Taekwondo, after the nation sent its largest-ever team to the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships. The team saw its best results in the -6 kg category, where **Oumar Babey Aska Gaoh** bowed out in the Round of 32 by Superiority after fighting to a Golden Round draw, and where teammate **Mounkaila Karimou Daouda** won the nation's only fight at Istanbul 2021 before bowing out in the Round of 16 to world championship and

Paralympic bronze medalist **Mahmut Bozteke** (TUR). Niger held its first national-level tournament in September when the Para Al-Fazazi Cup drew athletes from two nations. The country hopes to attract an even bigger field when the event returns in August 2022.

For more information on Niger Para Taekwondo, please visit the federation website [HERE](#).

Asia:

Confusion as India Hosts Competing Qualifying Events for Istanbul 2021

There was some confusion ahead of India announcing its team to compete at the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships as the India Para Taekwondo Association (IPTA) and India Taekwondo (IT) held competing selection events. After IPTA held a selection event in Chandigarh on November 11-12, IT sent out a memo stating that all athletes would need to participate in the IT selection event held in Pune on November 19. "It is a difficult situation for Para athletes as two separate units are conducting national selection trials", said **Aruna**, winner of a bronze medal at the 2019 world championships that had been selected to participate in Tokyo 2020 before travel restrictions prevented her participation.



"If any other organisation in India is conducting national selection trials for the World Para competition, it is misleading athletes", India Taekwondo told media outlet SportSkeeda, who covered the confusion.

In the end, India sent 12 athletes to Istanbul 2021, with **Chandeep Singh** winning the country's sole medal – silver in +80 kg K41. Aruna lost her Round of 16 match 29-0 to silver medalist Nurcihan Ekinci (TUR).

To read SportSkeeda's full article, please click [HERE](#).



Iran's Maryam Abdollahpour Welcomed Home as Hero

What awaits you when you return home after beating a reigning world champion? Why, a ceremony fit for a champion, of course! Just ask Iran's **Maryam Abdollahpour**, who was welcomed home in style after beating reigning world champion and Paralympic bronze medalist **Khwansuda Phuangkitcha** (THA) to become the Asian Youth Para Games champion. Showing how impressive the feat was, Phuangkitcha captured her second straight world title the following week after getting past 2017

world champion **Enkhtuya Khurelbaatar** in the semi-final. A star in the making, Abdollahpour was welcomed to a flower ceremony and parade upon her return to Bandar Azali, where she was presented with prizes by national and local government officials.

For more, or to check out the pictures, click [HERE](#).

Japan's Ota Trades Blocking for Blogging

What do you do when you're not competing? Well, for Japanese Paralympic legend **Shoko Ota**, you start blogging. Ota announced on her blog that Japan was unable to attend the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships due to increased COVID-19 travel restrictions due to the Omicron variant. While noting that this puts her in a hole to qualify for Paris 2024, the ever-positive Ota announced that since she won't be competing in a tournament for awhile, "Let's try Poomsae!" Ota's blog also chronicles the life of a Paralympic medalist – from speaking to school students to meeting with various governmental officials.



For more information, please check out Ota's blog [HERE](#).



Korea Holds Joint Training with Nepal at Asian Youth Para Games

What do you get when you mix the world's most well-established Taekwondo nation with one of its up-and-coming ones? Five Asian Youth Para Games medals – that's what! Athletes from Korea, the birthplace of Taekwondo, welcomed athletes from Nepal, a nation that has yet to see an Olympic or Paralympic medal, to train together ahead of the 2021 Asian Youth Para Games. After all was said and done, it was Nepal that wound up higher on the medal table with three medals to Korea's two. Korea's **Dongho Lee** (gold in -63 kg) and **Eojin Baek** (bronze in -47 kg) were nipped by Nepal's **Palesha Goverdhan** (gold in -57 kg), **Shirjana Ghising** (silver in -52 kg), and **Bishal Garbuja** (bronze in -58 kg). Still, the training session looked fantastic.

To check out the training session for yourself, click [HERE](#).

Mongolian Superstars Receive Heroes Welcome

Mongolian superstars **Bolor-Erdene Ganbat** and **Enkhtuya Khurelbaatar** received a heroes welcome upon their return from the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships in Istanbul, Turkey. Ganbat was dominant on his way to capturing his fifth straight world title, leaving his competitors scrambling to keep up, including Paralympic champion **Nathan Torquato** (BRA). 2017 world champion Khurelbaatar picked up her third straight world championships medal, falling to two-time world champion **Khwansuda Phuangkitcha** (THA) for the second straight worlds. It was welcome relief for the dynamic duo after both missed out on Paralympic medals at Tokyo 2020. It's been a big month for Khurelbaatar, who was awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labour – one of Mongolia's highest civilian awards – for her contributions to sport. Sponsor RELO Mongolia shared the airport welcome footage on Facebook.



To see the athletes greeted on their return home, please click [HERE](#).



Nepal's Goverdhan Media Sensation After Youth Games Triumph

It has been a whirlwind 2021 for Nepal's **Palesha Goverdhan**. After nearly winning Nepal's first medal at either the Olympic or Paralympic Games, the young fighter from the Himalayas followed it up by winning Nepal's first gold medal at the Asian Youth Para Games. Her success has been noticed by Nepalese media, who regularly cover the burgeoning star and,

more than ever, Nepal's entire Para Taekwondo team. Besides Goverdhan, Nepal won two other medals at the Asian Youth Para Games – **Shirjana Ghising** won silver in -52 kg and **Bishal Garbuja** won bronze in -58 kg. The athletes were festively greeted upon their return to Nepal at a celebration for the team. Check out the coverage below.

"My goal of hearing Nepal's national anthem playing in foreign lands has been achieved", she told the BBC. "Now I'm hoping to win a medal at the Asian Games in China next year."

BBC.com – [HERE](#).
The Himalayan Times – [HERE](#).
NamiNews – [HERE](#).
Online Khabar – [HERE](#).
Asian Paralympic Committee – [HERE](#).
News of Bahrain – [HERE](#).

Europe:

Gjessing & Coach Up for Denmark's Top Sports Awards

Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing** has been shortlisted to the final five Danish athletes / teams still in the running to win Denmark's prestigious Sports Name of the Year award for 2021. The four-time world champion outlasted big names - like the Danish national football and handball teams - to make the last five. Other athletes to be shortlisted include swimmer Pernille Blume, cyclists Kasper Asgreen, Lasse Norman Hanssen, and Michael Morkov, and rowers Frederic Vystavel and Joachim Sutton. Open to both Para and able-bodied athletes, the national track cycling team won last year.



Gjessing's coach, **Bjarne Johansen**, has also been shortlisted as one of Denmark's top three coaches. He's up against handball and cycling coaches and is the only Para coach to make the finals.

"This comprehensive list of the best Danish sports performances testifies to a great extent to how strong a sports year it has been", said Team Denmark chairman Lars Krarup in a statement.

For more, please read the press release about Gjessing [HERE](#), and for Johansen [HERE](#).



Israeli World Champion Yasur a Hit at Home

Israel has had a very good year in Taekwondo. Just months after winning its first-ever Olympic gold medal in the sport, Israel now has its first-ever world champion in Para Taekwondo thanks to a remarkable run by **Asaf Yasur** at the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships in Turkey. Formerly classified as K43, Yasur not only becomes the first Israeli world champion in the sport, but also the first from outside the former K44 class to become a K44 world champion – and he did so in memorable fashion. Yasur bat No. 3-seeded **Ali Can Ozan** (TUR) in a highly entertaining and tightly contested -58 kg final for his fifth win of the day and his first world championship. Yasur, who trains with Israel's Olympic team, had his story picked up by outlets across the country as Israel looks to become the next

hotbed for Para Taekwondo.

"I think it's a great idea. I'm happy that it's mixed", Yasur said of the new "Super" K44 class that combines most fighters formerly classified as K42 and K43 with their K44 opponents. "You need to win with what you've got!"

To read the coverage on Yasur, please click [HERE](#), [HERE](#), [HERE](#), and [HERE](#).

Italy Holds National Para Poomsae Championships

To mark the International Day of Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Italian Taekwondo Federation held the – in-person – Para Taekwondo Poomsae Italian Championships at the Extra Mario D'Agata Palasport in Arezzo. Champions included **Lia Borri** (P10 Female), **Emilio Paone** (P10 Male), **Joel Delgadillo Zamora** (P23 Senior Male), **Stefania Monaco** (P20 Female), **Michele Chianciotto** (P20 Senior Male), **Luca Santoro** (P20 Coloured Belts), **Giulia Cassar** (P40 Female), **Riccardo Zimmerman** (P30 Senior), and **Cristiano Sgarella** (P30 Master).

The Para Taekwondo Poomsae Italian Championships are “an occasion to reaffirm how sport is an instrument of equality and integration”, the federation said in a statement.

To see the full results, please click [HERE](#).



Spanish Legend Gets Sidewalk Star

They're seeing stars in Ribeira, Spain – and one of those belongs to our own **Alex Vidal Alvarez**! The four-time world champion and three-time European champion became the first person from his city to compete in the Paralympic Games when he traveled to Tokyo 2020 this summer. The Minister of Sports and Mayor presented Vidal Alvarez and three other athletes from the region with their very own sidewalk stars along the Hall of Fame passage along the Castiñeiras seashore.

For more information, please check out the article [HERE](#).

Turkey Fetes Its World Champions

They know how to celebrate a winner in the hotbed of Para Taekwondo, and host Turkey found two deserving champions to hail at the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships in Istanbul. Paralympian **Meryem Cavdar** and European champion **Secil Er** led the way by collecting their first world titles as part of a haul of 13 medals (2 g, 5 s, 6 b) that saw host Turkey finish second in the overall standings. It's been a big year for Cavdar, who also won her second European title and collected silver at Tokyo 2020, after falling to Peru's **Angelica Espinoza** in the final. Er also won gold at the European championships before picking up her first world title. Local media, politicians, fans, friends, and family greeted the new world champions on their return home. Both fighters have their eyes firmly set on the future.

"My biggest dream is to return from the Paris Paralympics with a gold medal", said Er after her win. "Since I'm young, I'm thinking of pushing 2-3 more Paralympics", said Cavdar. "Frankly, I don't think I can get enough of the gold medal.

For coverage on Er's celebration, click [HERE](#). For coverage on Cavdar, click [HERE](#). For the Turkish Taekwondo Federation's round-up, click [HERE](#).



Ukraine's Lypetska Caps Breakthrough 2021 With Worlds Bronze

Ukraine's **Yuliya Lypetska** is basking in the glow of her sensational 2021 – and the media buzz that comes with it. Lypetska collected her second straight world championship bronze medal – and first since the classifications combined in the 'Super' K44 class – to add to her surprising Paralympic run from earlier in the year. Lypetska made it to the semi-final, before falling to then-reigning

champion **Debora Menezes** (BRA) in the semi-final and Poomsae world champion **Janine Watson** (AUS) in the bronze medal match to finish 5th. Now ranked in the Top 6 of the new -65 kg class, Lypetska has her sights set on qualifying for Paris 2024.

"[My success in] 2021 has changed me. I began to be more confident, more persistent, calmer", she told the Kyiv Post. "I received tremendous experience from the Paralympics, where the pressure is immense because the whole world is watching."

For more coverage of Lypetska, please click [HERE](#), [HERE](#), or [HERE](#).

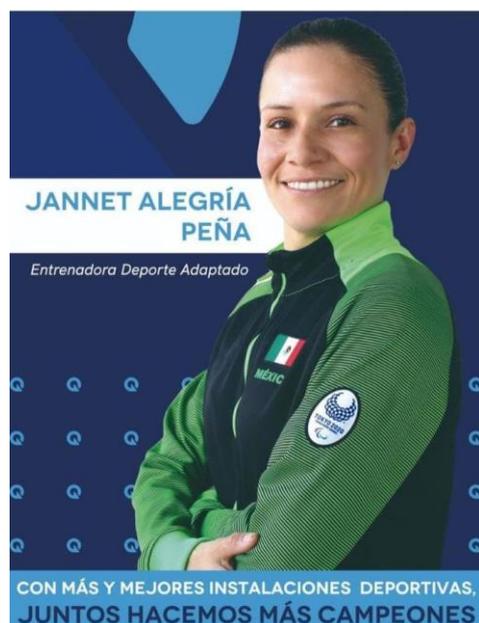
Pan Am:

Brazil Holds National Championships Ahead of Worlds

The Brazilian Para Taekwondo Championships took place last month in São Paulo ahead of the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships in Istanbul, Turkey. A total of 52 athletes took part, including 15 in the P20 and P30 Poomsae sports classes, and 37 in the Kyorugi competition. At the same time, Para Taekwondo made its debut at the School Paralympics for athletes aged 12 to 17. Champions will be invited to train with the national team in January. Brazil sent a record 15 athletes to Istanbul 2021, where the upstart team finished fourth on the medal table with 7 medals, including new world champion **Silvana Cardoso** in the -57 kg division.



For more information, please visit the Brazil Confederation of Taekwondo website [HERE](#).



Mexican Para Taekwondo Coach Wins Prestigious State Award

One year after her athlete – Paralympic and former world champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** – won Mexico's most prestigious sports award, his coach has now too. **Jannet Alegria** was named Coach of the Year by the Mexican National Sports Commission (CONADE) ahead of 69 other nominated entries. Alegria will be awarded nearly \$40,000 USD, a first-class gold medal featuring a rosette, and a diploma signed by Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. Since joining the Mexican National Team in 2018, Alegria has turned Mexico into one of the strongest Para Taekwondo nations in the region. Led by superstar Garcia Lopez, Alegria has coached a world champion, a Paralympic champion, and two Parapan Am champions. At the Pan American Open this year, seven Mexican athletes won medals, including three gold, while Mexico won a silver (Garcia Lopez) and bronze (**Jessica Quijano**) at this month's 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships.

"I feel very happy and grateful with life", Alegria said after winning. "It is an award that motivates me to keep going and work harder to continue giving good results for Mexico ... as we work towards Paris 2024, where we want to qualify more than three athletes and dream of more Paralympic medals."

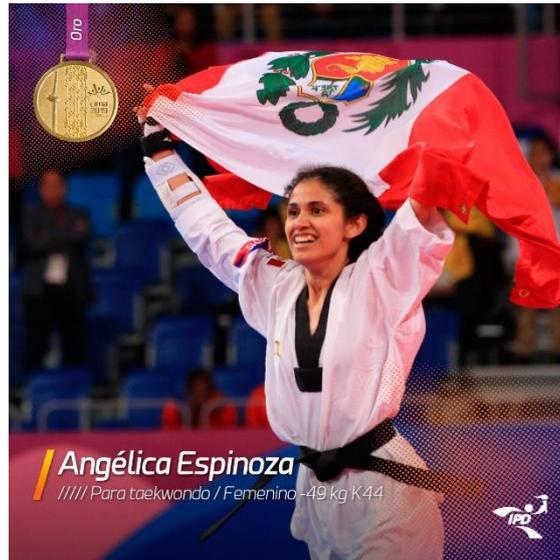
For more about Alegria winning the award, please click [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

Popular Latin Website Names Peru's Espinoza a Top Story of Tokyo 2020

Remezcla, a popular alternative media website for Latin communities, named Peru's **Angelica Espinoza** as one of the athletes "From Latin America Who Dominated the Summer Paralympics This Year". Espinoza famously became Para Taekwondo's first-ever Paralympic champion this summer when she beat **Meryem Cavdar** (TUR) on the first day of action at Tokyo 2020.

"The Taekwondo martial artist won Peru's only medal of the Games with gold in her -49 kg group", the website states. "It was Peru's first Paralympic title in 21 years and first medal in 17 years."

To read the article, please click [HERE](#).



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