



## World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

January 2022 | Issue #19

### World Taekwondo President Brings New Years Greetings



#### "Para Taekwondo will play an important role"

Dear Taekwondo Family,

First and foremost, I wish all *Taekwondo*in a Happy New Year!

World Taekwondo had an eventful 2021. We were very excited to witness the debut of Taekwondo in the Paralympic Games in Tokyo. This achievement is the result of more than a decade of planning, collaboration with the International Paralympic Committee and our Member National Associations, and the dedication of athletes and officials.

Every single athlete who participated, not just in the Paralympic Games in Tokyo but throughout the qualification tournaments internationally and nationally, deserves recognition.

We witnessed how Taekwondo could be a medium to promote peace when Paralympian Zakia Khodadadi was rescued out of Afghanistan to pursue her Paralympic dreams. Even now, we are still trying to help *Taekwondo* in Afghanistan despite the extremely challenging circumstances.

The year-end World Para Taekwondo Championships also showcased the growing popularity of the sport. As more Para Taekwondo events are organised worldwide, we hope that the movement will create social changes that contribute to a more inclusive and barrier-free global community.

Looking ahead, we expect 2022 to be the restart of normalised operations. World Taekwondo is already planning for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, where we will have 10 medal events instead of the 6 medal events in Tokyo.

We look towards a more accessible Para Taekwondo, with investments to the continental unions to develop Para Taekwondo within their respective regions. We also look forward to developing more classifiers and educators, and raising the global standards of Para Taekwondo worldwide.

Para Taekwondo will play an important role in World Taekwondo's vision of 'One World, One Sport Taekwondo' over the coming year. In this regard, I ask for your continued support and dedication, and wish everyone a safe and wonderful 2022!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Chungwon Choue". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chungwon Choue  
President



Para Taekwondo Committee Chair  
Talks About What's in Store for 2022



## "We are blessed to have 10 medal events at Paris 2024"

*World Taekwondo's Para Taekwondo Committee Chair Chakir Chelbat greets the Para Taekwondo community with this New Year's message.*

"2021 was a fantastic year for Para Taekwondo. Not only did we crown our first Paralympic champions, but we are very blessed to have 10 medal events at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games".

Chelbat spoke about Para Taekwondo's growth and how exciting it is to see new countries become a model of success and an example to other nations looking to excel at the sport.

"Just look at Brazil", he told World Para Taekwondo. "Brazil is like a bomb going off that's inspiring the whole world".

After topping the Paralympic medal table with a medal of each colour, Brazil sent its largest-ever team to the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships. The country now holds tryouts to make the national team.

Chelbat also spoke of some of the goals the Para Taekwondo Committee has for 2022, singling out the training of more classifiers and referees.

"In 15 years we only have 21 classifiers for 211 MNAs (Member National Associations);, he said. "It's too little to cover our needs for the growth of Para Taekwondo."

"Our goal is to have at least 4 female and 4 male classifiers per MNA", he elaborated. "This will minimise the cost of hosting tournaments and we believe strongly that the more classifiers, the more referees we have - will increase the quality."

He spoke about other ideas the committee has to maintain Para Taekwondo's impressive growth.

"2022 will be a very busy year", he said. "We hoping to spur Para-only Taekwondo clubs, introduce cadets , Juniors , Para team competitions and para mixed team competitions".

"It's exciting as Para Taekwondo covers all 10 IPC impairment categories. We want to see more athletes competing in each impairment category".

His message to the Para Taekwondo community to start 2022?

"Lots of work has already been done – but there's lots still to be done in the future."





# Welcome to 2022



## Para Taekwondo Preview

*New tournaments, new rules, new divisions, new rivalries, and new stars – Paris 2024 qualification kicks into high gear in 2022 as a rejuvenated Para Taekwondo continues to take the Para world by storm.*

Already nearly halfway through the Paris 2024 qualification cycle, 2022 promises to set the script for the run to Paris, with everything from new rivalries in new divisions to new stars at new tournaments.

Oh yeah – and a record number of international competitions.

Here are some of the biggest things to look forward to in 2022.

### New Rules

Already previewed at the 2021 European championships and World championships, every tournament in 2022 will feature Para Taekwondo's new rules. Athletes will have to adapt their conditioning to adjust to the single five-minute round format, while coaches will tinker with the timing of the new timeout option. 'Dangerous Play' rules have been adapted so as to not penalise so harshly "unintentional dangerous play", while disincentivizing embellishment. Small changes to the world ranking system (athletes can change weight categories once a year without penalty) and equipment usage (athletes can use additional padding to protect their residual limbs) will also be in effect.

## New Divisions

The amalgamation of most athletes from K43 and K42 into the new “Super” K44 classification proved to be a smashing success at the tournaments it featured. Four 43 athletes fought for Paralympic medals – none coming closer than Kazakhstan’s **Nurlan Dombayev**, who lost out on bronze on a well-timed, last-second kick. Israel’s **Asaf Yasur** did them one better, winning five straight fights on his way to becoming world champion in the -58 kg category. Discovering which athletes will choose to compete in which weight categories will be one of the strategic elements to watch in 2022, as fighters explore their optimal routes to qualifying for Paris 2024.

## New Rivalries

With Para Taekwondo moving from three weight categories per gender at Tokyo 2020 to five weight categories per gender at Paris 2024, as well as adding world champion athletes formerly classified as K43 or K42, intriguing new rivalries will emerge in each of the new weight categories. How will six-time world champion **Vika Marchuk** (UKR) fare in the -47 kg category when she won’t need to fight larger opponents like Paralympic nemesis **Anna Poddubskaia** (RTU)? Who will emerge as the No. 1 rival for Paralympic bronze medalist **Jeonghun Joo** (KOR) in the -80 kg category? Who will Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing** (DEN) choose to face: her Paralympic final opponent, **Beth Munro** (GBR) in -65 kg; or world champion **Silvana Cardoso** (BRA), the only woman who has managed to beat her, in the -57 kg category? Competitive rivalries are good for the sport – just ask anyone who watched the enthralling **Mehdi Pourrahnama** (IRI) vs **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** (MEX) classics at the Paralympic and World Championships finals.

## New Stars

Para Taekwondo has been growing for years, and with the increase in the number of Paralympic licences and medals available at Paris 2024, there is every reason to expect this trend to continue in 2022. 2021 made stars out of several athletes, including Paralympic runner-up Munro, world champion Yasur, and Asian Youth Para Games gold medalist **Palesha Goverdhan** (NEP). It also saw the sport take hold in several new countries – Niger sent its largest-ever team to the 2021 world championships, while the sport has boomed in Georgia after teen **Sandro Megrelishvili** set records for points scored and margin of victory at the European Paralympic Qualification tournament. It doesn’t take long to develop an elite Para Taekwondo programme – just ask Brazil. The country went from not winning a medal at the London 2017 world championships to topping the Paralympic medal table in 2021. Who will become the Beth Munros, Asaf Yasurs, and Palesha Goverdhans of 2022?

## New Tournaments

If you want to create stars and develop competitive rivalries among your best fighters, they need to have places to compete. There will be no shortage of competitions in 2022. Beyond the traditional continental and world championships, there will be at least two President’s Cups, the Virtus Pan American Games (poomsae only), and Para Taekwondo’s debut at the Asian Para Games. There will also be a record number of regional G2 events, including tournaments in Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Peru, Puerto Rico, and the USA. Para Taekwondo’s introduction to the Grand Prix series is still in the works, while new cadet, team, and mixed team competitions could make their debuts as early as 2022.

Para Taekwondo took the world by storm last year at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. The sport’s new look will be on full display in 2022 as the race for Paris 2024 hits high gear.



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**Back in Action**



## African Championships & President's Cup - Europe Offer First Chance for Para Fighters to See Action in 2022

We're back!

After a momentous 2021 that saw Para Taekwondo make its Paralympic debut, introduce new weight categories, and consolidate classifications, the race to Paris 2024 heats up as 2022 promises more opportunities than ever for Para fighters to earn ranking points at tournaments held across the world.

### First African Championships Since 2019

First up – the African Open Championships, being held in Niamey, Niger from February 3-4.

The first African Championships since Hurgada 2019 offer African athletes the opportunity to move up in the rankings as a G4/G2 event, meaning African athletes earn double the world ranking points as their non-African opponents.

Over 50 athletes from at least eight African nations are expected to attend, including a record 18 athletes from host Niger.

Also expected to make his return to the tournament for the first time since hosting the African championships in Rwanda in 2017 - is Paralympic Refugee Team star **Parfait Hakizimana**, who lives in a refugee camp in Rwanda.

Looking to join nations like Morocco and Egypt as a regional Para Taekwondo powerhouse, keep your eyes on Niger's **Omar Namata** (-58 kg) and **Daouaa Karim** (-63 kg) as they try to win their first-ever African championships.



Egypt will be sending a strong team as well, including Paralympic silver medalist **Mohamed El-Sayyed** (-63 kg) and his Paralympic teammate, teenage phenom **Salma Ali** (-52 kg).

Kenya also plans to send a record eight athletes to Niamey 2022.

Other African nations expected to compete include Cameroon, Central African Republic, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, and Senegal.

## **Gjessing to Make Her Return at President's Cup – Europe**

The President's Cup series returns in 2022 with events slated for Albania and Iran.

The series kicks off with the 7<sup>th</sup> President's Cup – Europe in Durres, Albania on February 19.

An open event offering G2 ranking points to all competitors, the tournament is expected to draw primarily European athletes.

The tournament is expected to attract a mix of young fighters looking for their first taste of international action and experienced veterans looking to kick off that winter rust.

Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing** (DEN) is expected to make her long-awaited return in her first international action since winning gold at Tokyo 2020.

With registrations still open, the tournament will feature at least five world champions, a dozen world championship medalists, and at least eight Paralympians, including medalists **Beth Munro** (GBR) and **Amy Truesdale** (GBR).

Georgia will be sending a record eight athletes, with large teams also expected from Ukraine, Russia, and Great Britain.



## Calendar



- 2022 African Para Taekwondo Open Championships (G4/G2) - February 3-4 - Niamey, Niger  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- 2022 7th WT President's Cup Europe (G2) - February 19 - Durrey, Albania

(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

- 2022 WT President's Cup Europe (G2) - March 14 - Kish Island, Iran

(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

- Dominican Open (G2) - March 19 - Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

- Puerto Rico Open (G2) - April 1 - San Juan, Puerto Rico

(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

- 2022 Asian Para Games Qualification (G1) - TBC - TBC

(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

- Rio Open (G2) - April 15 - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

- Las Vegas Open (G1) - April 30 - Las Vegas, USA

(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

- European Open Para Taekwondo Championships (G4/G2) - May 19-22 - Manchester, Great Britain

(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

- Asian Open Para Taekwondo Championships (G4/G2) - August 14 - Ulaanbaator, Mongolia

(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)



## Education



### Para Taekwondo ONLINE Coach Certification Course [Level 1] (English)

- January 22-24

### Para Taekwondo ONLINE Coach Certification Course [Level 2] (English)

- January 26-28

## Around the World

### Refugee:

#### **France Khodadadi Highlights Innovative Mentorship Programme for Refugees in France**

Tokyo 2020 star **Zakia Khodadadi** is one of five refugees that will participate in an innovative Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation project in France, Partnering with the French Federation of Taekwondo and Associated Disciplines, the project aims to assist refugees in integrating into French society through the use of mentorship, language learning, and social inclusion through Taekwondo. Participants will be mentored by refugees and go through a language course while continuing their Taekwondo training. The final stage of the project will see the refugee participants placed in partner Taekwondo clubs, where the THF will cover their membership fees so they can continue their training and develop friendships that will assist in social inclusion.





“The originality of the programme, which focuses on inclusion through the practice of Taekwondo”, reads the project description, “lies in this double dimension of human support – supervising uprooted young people by people who have experienced the same situations and offering them prospects for social and professional integration”.

For more on the project, please read the article on the World Taekwondo website [HERE](#).



**Asia:**

### **Ganbat's Triumph Makes Mongolia Proud**

**Bolor-Erdene Ganbat's** dominant display at Istanbul 2021 to pick up his fifth straight world championship medal was named as one of “Five Highlights That Made Mongolians Proud and Confident” in 2021 by 24tsag.mn. It was welcome relief for Ganbat, who failed to medal at his first major international event when he was upset twice at Tokyo 2020. One of the greatest fighters in the history of Para Taekwondo, Ganbat has never lost a fight at the world championships.

“Athletes who have shown this unparalleled success are rare in Mongolia”, said the news site. “He is the best athlete in the world in recent years [and] Mongolians praised his success.”

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

### **Nepal's Goverdhan Featured in Women's Lifestyle Magazine**

**Palesha Goverdhan** could be the most famous athlete in Nepal. After narrowly missing out on claiming the Himalayan country's first medal at the Olympic or Paralympic Games, the young fighter became the first athlete from Nepal to win gold at the Asian Youth Para Games. She returned home to a media frenzy and has become one of the most sought-after interviews in Nepal. The World of Women fashion and lifestyle magazine was the most recent to feature the burgeoning star in an article that praises Goverdhan for helping change the public perception in Nepal towards those living with impairments. The magazine called Goverdhan's achievements “system-altering” while profiling her battles with self-doubt.

“I was living in a cocoon until I joined Taekwondo. It changed me in such a way that I felt free”, said Goverdhan in the interview. “From then on, I was never afraid to show who I was”.

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





## Europe:

### Denmark's Paralympic Champ & Cancer Survivor Gjessing Becomes Ambassador for Cancer Charity

While the Para Taekwondo world awaits word on whether Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing** will stick around to defend her title at Paris 2024, the Danish superstar has developed into a star in another field entirely – that of a sought-after spokesperson and advocate. The latest organisation to land the talents of Gjessing is the Association for Families with Children of Cancer (FMKB). A promising Olympic Taekwondo fighter when she had her hand amputated due to her own fight with cancer, her triumph at Tokyo 2020 is a powerful story for all families currently battling the same disease.

“I didn’t hesitate for a second to say yes when asked if I wanted to be an ambassador”, Gjessing said about taking on the role. “What an honour”.

For more on FMKB activities, please click [HERE](#).

### Truesdale Featured on Britain's Rebecca Davi Show

2017 world champion and Tokyo 2020 bronze medalist **Amy Truesdale** was recently profiled on The Rebecca Davi Show – a programme that showcases celebrities to help empower people to “step into their greatness”. The Para Taekwondo pioneer spoke about her journey from Great Britain’s sole Para Taekwondo fighter to her triumph at London 2017 to her Paralympic experience, focusing on what she’s learned throughout her career. After winning silver at the 2021 world championships in Istanbul – her eighth world championship medal – Truesdale lists the 2022 European Championships in Manchester and the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris as events she’s aiming to next conquer.

“Being the medal prospect from Tokyo, creating a world-class programme, and allowing other athletes to be part of the para programme is what I would say are my biggest achievements so far”, she said in the interview. “Along with the bronze medal from the 2020 Paralympic Games”.

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





Taekwondo paralimpico - Antonino Bossolo

## Italy's Bossolo Profiled on Local TV After Worlds Success

2021 was a big year for Italy's **Antonino Bossolo**. After providing one of Tokyo 2020's biggest shocks by toppling top-seeded **Bolor-Erdene Ganbat** (MGL) on his way to a fifth-place finish, Bossolo looked strong in claiming the silver medal at last month's world championships in Istanbul, where he fell in a rematch of the Tokyo 2020 stunner. Still, his successes have seen him rise to No. 4 in the world rankings and he's become

a local celebrity at home. Regional TV provider SicilmedTV.it interviewed Bossolo about winning his world championship silver medal at a recent training session.

To check out the segment (in Italian), please click [HERE](#).

## Pan Am:

### Brazil Caps Year to Remember with Best Athlete, Best Coach Awards

2021 was a year to remember for Brazil as the South American nation joined the likes of Turkey, Iran, and Russia among Para Taekwondo's elite. It's been a rapid rise to the top for Brazil, who didn't win a single medal at the 2017 World Para Taekwondo Championships. **Debora Menezes** won the country's first world championship in 2019 and then the team ended up on top of the Tokyo 2020 Para Taekwondo medal table after winning a medal of each colour – **Nathan Torquato's** gold, Menezes' silver, and **Silvana Fernandes'** bronze. At the end of the year, Brazil sent its largest team yet to the 2021 World Championships, which saw the team finish with the third most medals, winning 7, highlighted by Fernandes' first world title. To cap the year, World Taekwondo named Torquato Best Male Para Taekwondo Athlete and Brazilian coach **Rodrigo Ferla** Best Para Taekwondo Coach.



For more on the World Taekwondo awards, please read the article [HERE](#).





## Mexico's Pedroza Named Sportsman of the Year 2021

Mexican Paralympian **Francisco Pedroza** was named Sportsman of the Year 2021 in his home state of Juarez by the Municipal Sports Institute of Juarez after nearly medaling at Tokyo 2020. The 2019 Parapan Am Games runner-up battled his way to the bronze medal final by besting Turkey's **Mehmet Yakut** and Kazakhstan **Nyshan Omirali** before falling to RPC's **Zainutdin Ataev** for the bronze medal. The Institute also recognised his achievements of winning the Pan American Paralympic qualification tournament and winning bronze at the 2017 world championships.

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

## Retired Star Espinosa Named USA Para Team Head Coach

In a sign of Para Taekwondo's maturity, another retired star athlete has become a national team coach – this time the USA's **Daniel Espinosa**. One of the sport's early Para stars, Espinosa had already been winning medals at local tournaments for years by the time he became Pan American champion in 2016. The veteran also has three world championship medals to his name – silver in 2017 and bronzes in 2014 and 2019. After announcing his retirement in September, Espinosa was named Head Coach of the USA's national Para Taekwondo team ahead of the 2021 World Championships. He becomes the second retired athlete to coach a national team after Spain's **Amado Garagarza**.

"I have the honour to announce that I am the new Head Coach of the USA Para Taekwondo team", he announced shortly before Istanbul 2021. "I think there is nothing more exciting than being able to continue to represent the country that has given me so many opportunities and so many blessings."

For more on Espinosa, check out his profile on USA Taekwondo [HERE](#).



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