



World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

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World Rankings Show Big Opportunities for Athlete Recruitment



Pathways to Paris 2024 Glory Abound for New Athletes

Some divisions still require additional classified athletes, while others are wide open just months before Para Taekwondo launches its most ambitious year ever.

Recruitment Matters

So, you want your athletes in the Paralympic Games? Now is the time for athlete recruitment!

Making sure athletes can compete internationally is not just a requirement of every federation, it's also the easiest way to make sure fighters have the chance to qualify for the Paralympic Games.

With Para Taekwondo nearly doubling the number of Paralympic athletes and medal events at Paris 2024, it's time to focus on athlete recruitment. The Top 6 athletes in each weight category will earn Paralympic qualification for their federation.

Para Taekwondo athletes will have more opportunities than ever to rack up more world rankings points with over 25 international tournaments on tap for 2023 – including the World Championships, four Continental Games, five continental championships, and the Para Grand Prix series.

Some divisions offer instant opportunities for newly classified athletes to quickly move up the rankings ladder. The women's -57 kg group has just 10 ranked athletes from 6 nations, while the women's -52 kg group has 14 fighters from 11 countries.

Consider this – a single Grand Prix win would put a newly classified fighter in the Top 10 in eight of the 10 Paralympic weight categories. In -52 kg or -57 kg – it would put the athlete in the Top 6 – enough for automatic Paralympic qualification.

With a handful of tournaments remaining in 2022 – including G6 Para Grand Prix events in Paris and Manchester – let's get going on athlete recruitment!

Classification Matters

While the July 2022 World Rankings give a good sense of how the weight categories will shape up ahead of the jam-packed 2023 schedule, they are also noticeable for their absences.

Due to a number of reasons, several athletes have not yet been classified, including Peru's Tokyo 2020 Paralympic champion **Angelica Espinoza**, China's 2019 world champion and Paralympic bronze medalist **Yujie Li**, and Great Britain's 2019 world champion **Matt Bush**.

Some federations are expected to classify several athletes in the near future. China, for example, has reserved six spots at next year's Asian Para Games despite not having a single fighter yet classified.

Korea, the birthplace of Taekwondo, has just three fighters on the world rankings; only one of which – Paralympic bronze medalist **Jeonghun Joo** – is in the Top 15. Despite having half the population, Nepal features more fighters in the world rankings, including twice as many in the Top 15 – Asian Para Youth Games champion **Palesha Goverdhan** and teammate **Shrijana Ghising**.

Other federations missed deadlines to classify athletes ahead of major tournaments, showing the importance of planning ahead. Athletes, for example, must appear on the rankings two months ahead of a Para Grand Prix to even have the chance to receive an invitation.

Athletes that have accrued world rankings points in the past will have those points reinstated upon completion of classification, meaning athletes like Espinoza, Li, and Bush will shake up the rankings once they are classified.

Participation Matters

The introduction of the Para Grand Prix series offers athletes another way to gain major ranking points in their efforts to qualify for Paris 2024. Each event is rated G6, meaning Grand Prix champions earn 60 ranking points.

But Para Grand Prix invitations are limited.

For September's Para Grand Prix in Paris, only the Top 12 athletes in each weight category were invited.

Look at Ukraine's **Vladyslav Nechai** in the -80 kg group. A surprise win over Great Britain's European champion **Joe Lane** at the first Para Grand Prix vaulted him to No. 13 in the world rankings. With some fighters ahead of him unable to attend, that impressive win will allow him the opportunity for another Grand Prix medal – and the all-important world ranking points that come along with it.

More prestige events also allow new fighters the chance to prove themselves.

Take, for example, France's **Djelika Diallo**.

A surprise gold medal win over Great Britain's European champion and Paralympic runner-up **Beth Munro** at the first Para Grand Prix took her into the Top 6 in the -65 kg category – enough to qualify directly to Paris 2024, even if she wasn't competing for the 2024 Paralympic host nation.

Success Matters

Still, most divisions are turning into a thrilling race for points, where a single win could vault you into a Paralympic position and an unexpected loss could drop you out of an automatic qualification spot. The men's -80 kg group, for example, features seven fighters grouped within 20 points from the No. 4 to No. 10 spots. With only 6 automatic Paralympic qualification spots per group, every fight matters in the division – even quarterfinal matches.

Success also breeds more success.

Higher-ranked fighters earn higher seeds at tournaments, ensuring dreaded early-round matchups with tough, top-ranked opponents are avoided. A Para Grand Prix medal could earn your athlete a bye at a future event – and the increased ranking points that come along with it.

Athletes ranked in the Top 4 in January 2024 will have an additional bonus – they will earn Round of 16 byes at Paris 2024, assuring themselves of at least two fights at the most important tournament on the Para Taekwondo calendar.

Consistency Matters

The July rankings are a testament to those athletes who have excelled over the past few years. The sport's top fighters are amassing record rankings points, which will come in handy ahead of a 2023 calendar that will offer more world ranking points than ever before.

Look at Uzbekistan's **Guljonoy Naimova** – the sole reigning Paralympic, World, and Grand Prix champion. Her unbeaten run since Tokyo 2020 sees her atop the +65 kg category with a record 440.7 points. That's over 180 points more than her nearest competitor, Great Britain's former world champion and Paralympic bronze medalist **Amy Truesdale**.

Mexico's dynamic **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** has lost just two fights in the last four years – last-second defeats at the 2019 European championships and 2021 world championships. The only other fighter to have won gold at the Paralympic Games, World Championships, and Para Grand Prix tops the -70 kg category with 440 points – over 140 more than Iran's No. 2-ranked reigning world champion **Mehdi Pourrahnama**, who handed Garcia Lopez one of those losses in a thrilling world championship final last year.

It's a two-way race at the top of the +80 kg group, with Croatia's **Ivan Mikulic** and the USA's **Evan Medell** nearly 100 points ahead of the rest of the division. Both are regular podium threats, with Medell winning bronze at Tokyo 2020 and Mikulic winning silver at the Paralympics, World Championships, and Para Grand Prix.

Time Matters

Opportunities abound for athletes looking to pick up Para Taekwondo – the fastest-growing sport in the Paralympic community – but time is of the essence.

National Paralympic Committees looking for representation at Paris 2024 need to put the time, effort, and resources into recruiting women athletes – just ask Mexican national team coach **Jannet Alegria**:

“We need a girl in -57 kg”, she announced at a press conference to recruit more Mexican Para Taekwondo athletes. “If we find her, we will have a direct [qualification] place at the Parapan Am Games. For the men, we need [an athlete] in +80 kg, who can also qualify directly for the Parapan Am Games”.

There are also opportunities in other divisions for especially shrewd national associations.

There are still only 14 athletes classified in the -52 kg category meaning, as it stands right now, nearly every other fighter in the division could qualify for Paris 2024. The -65 kg category has just 16 fighters on the world rankings.

Nations looking to develop their Para Taekwondo programmes, like the Netherlands – who will host the inaugural multi-sport European Para Championships in 2023 – are also expected to make an athlete recruitment push.

“As far as our country is concerned, there may be opportunities in finding potential talents in other sports, where people often do not know the possibilities of Taekwondo at all”, said **Fred Buitenhuis**, Dutch Taekwondo Federation Chair and Vice-President of the European Para Taekwondo Union.

“So, it’s really Taekwondo that offers opportunities for athletes with ambition”.



Becoming Paralympic Champion Helped Uzbekistan's Naimova Find Her Place in Life



Overcoming financial difficulty and social stigma before becoming Uzbekistan's youngest Paralympic champion, Guljonoy Naimova is now one of the most successful and popular athletes in Asia.

It may sound clichéd to say that sport can change lives; but for Uzbekistan's **Guljonoy Naimova**, the proof is in the pudding – or maybe it's in the 'dough'.

The world's most successful Para Taekwondo fighter since Tokyo 2020 has used her success to pull her family out of poverty and vault her into becoming one of the country's most successful and famous athletes.

She is now the only fighter in the world to simultaneously hold the title of Paralympic, World, and Para Grand Prix champion – and she remains Uzbekistan's youngest Paralympic champion.

Financial rewards from the Government of Uzbekistan have made her the primary breadwinner in her family – a rarity for those with an impairment in Uzbekistan and a dream come true for Naimova.

But things weren't always so rosy for the Paralympic champion.

Overcoming the Odds

Naimova was born with a plexus lesion, which substantially affects her ability to raise and extend her left arm. While Uzbekistan isn't the easiest place for someone with an impairment to grow up – 85 percent of buildings and social infrastructure still need to be adapted for use for people with impairments – Naimova grew up in a supportive environment.

Her mother, father, and two brothers didn't make a big deal out of it.

"It wasn't until I started school that I realised I was not like the other kids", she told the IPC. "I felt disappointed and offended".

Things got worse for Naimova before they got better.

When her parents divorced, she decided to stay with her mother. She recalls her family's struggles with finances.

“As a kid, I always dreamed of financial success, of solving all my family’s problems and making my mother happy”.

At 11 years old, she discovered the sport of Taekwondo. She was attracted to the sport’s discipline – and physicality. The only problem? Uzbekistan had yet to create a Para Taekwondo programme and she was forced compete with able-bodied competitors.

“I wasn’t successful in able-bodied”, she recalled, “Because I couldn’t raise my arms to block”.

Moving to Para Taekwondo

Naimova spent five years learning the sport of Taekwondo alongside her able-bodied teammates before joining Uzbekistan’s newly created Para Taekwondo team in late 2015.

At the time, Para Taekwondo was experiencing its first major period of growth. The sport had just held its sixth World Championships and had been named to the Paralympic programme in 2020.

She recalls what it was like training in those days.

“We didn’t have enough money for training camp”, she said. “We’d train just 60 percent of what we do now – two weeks of training, and then a month of rest”.

In 2017, when she was 17 years old, she first hit the international circuit. She showed promise at her first competition – the 2017 Asian Championships in Korea – where she won silver, falling to the No. 1-ranked fighter in the world, Great Britain’s **Amy Truesdale**.

It was the beginning of one of the sport’s great rivalries.

Naimova medaled at her next two events – the 2017 World Championships and 2017 IWAS Games – losing in the semi-finals both times to Truesdale.

It didn’t take long for success to come. She won her first international tournament the following year, becoming Asian champion by edging Truesdale in a thrilling 9-8 final.

Becoming the Best

Her success went noticed back home and the Uzbek Paralympic Committee made a significant investment in its Para Taekwondo team.

Beginning in 2019, the government provided the team with funding so that they could train without breaks. Naimova and her teammates engaged in an ambitious 7 hours per day, 3 days per week training programme.

Trainings are intense, thanks in no small part to coach **Bobur Koziyev** – one of the most passionate and animated coaches on the circuit.

“I have a strong character”, he told the IPC. “I even get warnings from the referee”.

Naimova agreed.

“During the trainings, he is very strict”, she said. “Whether it’s a Paralympic Games champion or a newcomer – we make sure to listen”.

Lasting from 7:30 in the morning to 7:00 in the evening, the team does a full range of activities, including fitness, weight, Taekwondo, and video training.

“I watch all the matches of my opponents”, she told the IPC. “I know each and every opponent I face”.

Determined to improve on her bronze medal at the 2017 World Championships, Naimova entered the 2019 World Championships confident that she could beat any opponent.

She even caught a break, as defending world champion and rival Truesdale was upset in the quarterfinal by Japan's **Shoko Ota**. She cruised past Ota 14-5 in the semi-final to qualify for her first World Championship final.

Naimova fell to Brazil's **Debora Menezes** in a hard-fought 7-3 final. It was the last time she lost in regulation time.

In a dramatic post-fight scene, her coach stormed out, leaving a devastated Naimova alone on the sideline. In what turned out to be the beginning of a lasting and unlikely friendship – neither athlete speaks the same language – Menezes came over to console the silver medalist.

"She told me that I fought well and that I'm a great athlete", recalled Naimova. "We became friends because our characters match and we are both kind people".

Admitting regret, coach Koziyev is open about his reaction.

"I love my athletes and I'm so worried about them that I can be harsh", he said. "I see my athletes have a chance to medal and I get nervous when they are about to lose".



The Life-Changing Paralympic Games

Naimova continued to improve and in her final tournament before the COVID pandemic, she beat No. 1-ranked Truesdale 16-8 in the 2019 European Championship semi-final. She fell to Azerbaijan's **Aynur Mammadova** by golden point in the final, but not before securing automatic qualification to Tokyo 2020.

Naimova admitted to feeling the pressure ahead of Para Taekwondo's debut at the Paralympic Games.

“My mother always dreamed her daughter would become a Paralympic champion”, she said, “And I didn’t want to let her down”.

There was also a potential financial windfall.

The Uzbek government awards Paralympic champions the title of ‘Pride of Uzbekistan’. They also receive 200,000 USD, a new apartment, and a new car. Coaches of Paralympic champions receive the title ‘Honoured Sports Coach of the Republic of Uzbekistan; they also earn 40,000 USD.

A Paralympic silver earns Uzbek athletes 100,000 USD, while bronze medalists receive 50,000 USD.

These are life-changing sums in a country where the average Uzbek makes less than 350 USD per month and, according to the World Bank, only 7.1 percent of the impaired population is gainfully employed.

At Tokyo 2020, Naimova was drawn on the same side of the bracket as two of her most dangerous opponents – Japan’s hometown favourite Shoko Ota and 2017 world champion and No. 1-ranked Truesdale. A comfortable 37-12 win over Ota in the quarterfinal set-up one of Tokyo 2020’s most highly-anticipated matchups – and set the stage for one of Para Taekwondo’s most unforgettable upsets.

After a tense opening 30 seconds that saw her go down 6-4 to Truesdale, Naimova put together 10 straight points before closing the round with a stunning 22-6 lead over her perennial rival. Not letting up, Naimova easily won the next two rounds to qualify for the Paralympic final with a statement 60-14 win.

The win thrilled Uzbeks back home, including President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who promised to tune in for the Paralympic final.

Naimova bested reigning world champion and friend Menezes 8-4 in the final to become her division’s first-ever Paralympic champion.

She hasn’t looked back since.

She returned home to an adoring crowd at Tashkent’s Yangi Uzbekistan Park where she received greetings from the President, a giant novelty cheque for 200,000 USD, and the keys to her very own scarlet Chevrolet Tahoe. At the end of the ceremony, she was driven to her new apartment.

“The President personally chose the colour of my car”, she recalled. “He watched the fight and said he wanted to give me something to stand out ... It’s the only one of this colour in the country”.

The financial reward provided by the Uzbek government changed Naimova’s life.

“Before, I lived only with my mother and two brothers”, she said. “Now I have my own place, paid for university for both of my brothers, and made their lives better”.

Becoming a Legend

Naimova’s triumph in Tokyo was the beginning of an unparalleled run of success. She hasn’t dropped a fight since, while winning her first World Championship, the inaugural Para Grand Prix, and a pair of European Championships.

She collected another \$12,000 for her victory at the 2021 World Championships and has become one of Uzbekistan’s most famous and popular athletes.

“I have over 80,000 followers on Instagram”, she told the IPC. “And now everyone in Uzbekistan knows me and respects me”.

It has been a long road for the kid that fell into a depression after realising as a child that she was different from all her classmates. But through sport, Naimova has found more than just success, acceptance, and financial security – she’s found her own place in life.

Just 22 years old, Naimova holds every major title in the world and provides financial security for her family. So, what's next for Paralympic champion?

"After making my mom's wish come true", she told the IPC, "Now I want to impress my coach".



Education is the Key to Continued Growth



Stressing education's role in the development of sport, Chelbat urges MNAs to recruit new classifiers and ensure that coaching certificates remain valid.

It's all about the 'course' for Para Taekwondo Committee Chair **Chakir Chelbat**.

In an interview with World Para Taekwondo, he spoke at length about how to grow the sport in new areas of the world.

"It starts with education", he said. "Understanding Para Taekwondo is the foundation for recruiting and training new athletes".

Calling All Coaches

Chelbat spoke about the need for Para Taekwondo coaches to renew their certificates after two years. He pointed out that the 'refresher' courses would differ from the initial courses and would focus on recent rule changes.

"I'd remind MNAs that this is a requirement – not a request", he said, "And that all coach's courses taken now will be valid throughout the Paris 2024 Paralympic cycle".

He highlighted the online coach's course offered from 14-16 August and noted there would be several more offered in 2022.

There was no update yet on the status of the upcoming Level III Coach's Course, although he confirmed that it will be "coming soon".

Calling All Classifiers

Chelbat spoke passionately about the need to recruit classifiers from every part of the world, saying that having a pool of classifiers from every country is imperative to the sport's continued growth.

He stressed the need for MNAs to recruit and train their own classifiers.

"This will have a huge impact on bringing down the cost of hosting events", he explained. "Having classifiers from all over the world will allow more cities to host marquis international events leading to continued growth".

He emphasised the upcoming classifiers courses, happening in Vietnam in August (18 for Level I and 19-20 for Level II) ahead of the 2022 Asian Championships.

He also thanked MNAs that have made recent efforts for additional recruitment of athletes, coaches, and classifiers.

"Para Taekwondo continues to grow", he said, "and with the continued assistance of the MNAs – our sport will be bigger than ever in 2023!"

Education



Upcoming Courses - Registration Open Now!!

Para Taekwondo ONLINE International Coach Certification [Level II] (English)

- Course Dates: August 14-16, 2022 Registration Deadline: August 9, 2022

World Para Taekwondo National Classifier Certification Course [Level I] (English)

- Location: Ho Chi Min City, Vietnam

- Course Date: August 18, 2022 ; Registration Deadline: August 12, 2022

World Para Taekwondo International Classifier Certification Course [Level II] (English)

- Location: Ho Chi Min City, Vietnam
- Course Date: August 19-20, 2022 ; Registration Deadline: August 12, 2022

Calendar



- Asian Open Para Taekwondo Championships (G4/G2) - August 23 - Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- Paris 2022 World Para Taekwondo Grand Prix Series (G6) - September 5, 2022 - Paris, France
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- Sao Paulo Para Taekwondo Open (Pan Am Series III) (G2) - September 15, 2022 - Sao Paulo, Brazil
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- WT President's Cup Oceania (G2) - September 30, 2022 - Papeete, French Polynesia
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- Oceania Para Taekwondo Open Championships (G4/G2) - October 1, 2022 - Papeete, French Polynesia
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

- **Manchester 2022 World Para Taekwondo Grand Prix Series (G6) - Oct.20, 2022 - Manchester, Great Britain**

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

- **Open Bicentenario del Peru (G2) - November 3, 2022 - Lima, Peru**

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

- **1st VIRTUS Oceania-Asia Regional Games (P20) - November 5-11, 2022 - Queensland, Australia**

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

Around the World

Refugee:

Khodadadi Featured by France's Credit Cooperative

Afghan fighter **Zakia Khodadadi**'s journey from Taliban-held Afghanistan to Tokyo 2020 was well documented as it happened in real time in front of the international press. Now, she has settled in France, where she teaches Taekwondo to other refugees with the support of the French government and INSEP. France's Credit Cooperative selected her as one of four athletes to profile as part of its Performance Pact programme and recently released a 4.5-minute video of her journey in France. Featuring interviews with Khodadadi, French National Team Coach **Oury Sztantman**, and representatives from INSEP, the video documents the changes Khodadadi has experienced since Tokyo 2020.

"In Afghanistan, being born a girl was already a shame – plus I was born with a disability", she says in the video, "Para Taekwondo was the only sport open to people with disabilities in Afghanistan. I wanted to show everyone what I was capable of and the best way was through sport".

"Liberty, equality, fraternity – that's a motto that I find wonderful", she says about France's national motto. "I already see myself on a podium, I hope to be able to shine in France and be an example in the world on behalf of all refugees".

For more on Khodadadi, Credit Cooperative's Performance Pact programme, or to watch the video, please click [HERE](#).





Asia:

5-Time World Champ Ganbat Expresses Disappointment on Mongolian TV

Reigning world champion **Bolor-Erdene Ganbat** was interviewed by Mongolian sports TV station MSports.mn, where he expressed his disappointment for not being recognised as an Honoured Athlete of Mongolia. Dressed in a colourful buttoned shirt, the five-time world champion expressed his disappointment of the decision. “I won the Para World Championships 5 times. I won the Asian Championship 4 times. I was named the world’s Top Athlete twice – but I was not awarded the Merited Athlete of Mongolia”, he told the

network.

“In fact, my Para Taekwondo Association sent a request to the top, but I don’t know where the problem is”, he said. “Every athlete spends a lot of sweat and hard work to achieve success. I am a little disappointed that I wasn’t awarded even though I have already met the conditions of a meritorious athlete”.

To view the full interview (in Mongolian), please click [HERE](#).

Nepal's Athletes Win Financial Awards

Showing the strength of Nepal’s programme, four Para Taekwondo athletes won financial Athlete Incentive Awards from Nepal’s National Sports Council (NSC) last month – more than any other sport. Asian Para Youth Games champion and 2020 Paralympian **Palesha Goverdhan** was one of two athletes to be awarded the top prize of \$1,175 USD, while teammate **Shrijana Ghising** was one of four athletes to earn \$870 USD.



Ranjana Dhami and **Bishal Garbuja** were among seven athletes to receive \$400 USD each. In total, the Para Taekwondo team received four of the 13 prizes awarded to Nepal’s athletes worth over \$3,700 USD, or nearly 50 percent of the \$8,200 total prize money awarded. Athletes also received letters of appreciation.

For more, please check out the full story by The Himalayan Times by clicking [HERE](#).



Europe:

Denmark's Summer Camp Has International Flavour

The Denmark Taekwondo Association's Summer Camp 2022 had an international flavour with athletes and coaches from Denmark, the Netherlands, and Ukraine. There was plenty of star appeal on hand with Ukraine's six-time world champion **Vika Marchuk** joining Denmark's Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing** for a series of trainings and lectures. Athletes were treated to Taekwondo trainings, physical trainings, and sparring sessions with some of Para Taekwondo's top coaches, including Danish National Team coach – and coach of

Paralympic champion Gjessing – **Bjarne Johansen**, and Ukraine National Team coach – and Top Referee of Tokyo 2020 – **Andriy Starkov**. In lectures, Johansen shared his insights into training a Paralympic champion ahead of Tokyo 2020, while Starkov discussed the impacts of recent rule changes in Para Taekwondo.

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

Forsythe Stars on British Reality TV Show

Great Britain's **Keira Forsythe** briefly hung up her dobok to head to the South China Sea to compete in the second season of Great Britain's popular reality TV show *The Bridge: Race to a Fortune*. "A Paralympian in the making, Keira is well-versed in Taekwondo, and hopes to represent Team GB in Paris 2024", reads her bio on the programme, "A disability ambassador, she speaks in schools about inclusivity and diversity". An "epic reality competition", the promo says, "teams of strangers have just days to build an enormous bridge, in the ultimate test of physical ability, mental skill and teamwork – with big money up for grabs!" Forsythe, who won bronze at the European Championships earlier this year, could stand to win 200,000 GBP should she win the competition. The winning team chooses just one member to receive the full monetary prize. The final episode airs on Great Britain's Channel 4 at 10pm local time on 29 June.



"In January I flew to Vietnam for the adventure of a lifetime building a 1,000-foot bridge across the South China Sea", she wrote on social media in a post titled 'Stumpy's Structural Engineering after the name she gave her newly amputated arm, "Watch me thrive (or barely survive) on Channel 4".

For more information on the show, please click [HERE](#). For the show's promo video, please click [HERE](#).



Oceania:

Australian Paralympic Legend Transitions to Coaching

Australia's **Janine Watson** – the first person from Oceania to win a Paralympic medal in Para Taekwondo and the only athlete in the world with a Poomsae world championship and Paralympic medal – has found a new calling in her post-competition career: Coach. Watson completed her Level II Coaching Certificate with World Taekwondo and has led a series of Para Awareness seminars this year. Australia is hoping to recruit athletes ahead of the return of the Oceania Championships this autumn after a three-year hiatus in the hopes of building a powerful Para Taekwondo programme before hosting the 2032 Paralympic Games in Brisbane.

“What I found was a lot of instructors and people I talked to were really nervous about how to teach or coach someone with a disability”, Watson told Australia Taekwondo. “It’s just because they’ve never experienced it before and the anxiety is ‘I don’t want to make that person feel unwelcome, I don’t want to make them feel unwanted, [and] I don’t want to offend them”.

To read the full article on the Australia Taekwondo website, please click [HERE](#).

Pan Am:

Argentina Hosts Talent Identification Camp

The Argentine Olympic Committee held a national tournament in July designed to identify talent for future international tournaments. Para Taekwondo fighters from both Kyorugi and Poomsae participated in the event. Para Taekwondo continues to grow in popularity in the country thanks to the continued success of Paralympic bronze medalist **Juan Samorano** and the team hopes for even bigger success leading into the 2023 Parapan Am Games in neighbouring Chile. The event was broadcast live on Argentine national channel TyC Sports Play.



For more on the event, please click [HERE](#).



Brazil's Mega Open Names Paralympic Champ Torquato as Ambassador

Brazil's Paralympic Champion **Nathan Torquato** was named the Ambassador of the 23rd Mega Open Taekwondo Championship held in Sao Joao, Brazil on 9-10 July. More than 750 athletes, coaches, and team members registered for the event that featured Kyorugi, Poomsae, and Para Taekwondo competitions. Torquato was the big draw at the event, featuring in promotional materials and ad campaigns.

"It's an honour for me to have been chosen as the name of Para Taekwondo at the event", he said about the experience. "Being here as an icon of the sport is very gratifying!"

For more on the event, please click [HERE](#).

Chile's World Champion Martinez Training in USA

Chile's world champion Poomsae Taekwondoin **Paloma Martinez** was recently greeted by Puenta Alto Mayor German Cordina ahead of leaving on 16 July for a training camp with Team USA in Miami. The No. 1-ranked athlete in the P20 -30 category, Martinez recently added the Mexican Open title to the world title that she won in Turkey. Her success has delighted the Chilean Para Taekwondo Federation, with the organisation head **Javier Borquez** recently telling World Taekwondo Chile,

"We started Para Taekwondo in Chile in 2015 with the INAS Games in Ecuador. Since then, we haven't stopped working and have dreamed of achieving a World No. 1", he said. "It is a tremendous achievement – historic for Taekwondo in Chile! This is the beginning of the development of Para Taekwondo in our country and our Federation".

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





Mexico's Garcia Lopez Keeps Winning Awards

Mexico's **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** won the Top Adapted Athlete Award from the Autonomous University of Sinaloa last month – the first time the award was offered to Para athletes. It's been a remarkable run for Garcia Lopez, who has lost just two fights since winning his first world championship in 2019 – a last-second loss to Russia's **Magomedzagir Isaldibirov** at the 2019 European Championships and a last-minute loss to Iran's **Mehdi Pourrahnama** at the 2021 World Championships. He's won every other tournament he's competed in – including the 2020 Paralympic Games and the 2019 Parapan Am Games – and has twice been named the Top Para Athlete in Mexico. This year alone, he's already been named champion of the Pan American Championships, European Championships, and first-ever Para Grand Prix.

"I am very honoured to be the first adapted athlete to win

the University Sports Merit Award", he said about his latest achievement. "It is an honour for me to receive this award and I would like to extend my thanks and congratulations to the [university] for creating the Adapted Athlete category".

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

Other:

Para Taekwondo Research Released in Major Academic Journal

Academic research into the difference in reaction time among Para Taekwondo athletes from different sport classes was released in this month's issue of *Healthcare*. Prepared by Para Taekwondo research pioneer and former Para Taekwondo Classification Committee member **David O'Sullivan**, along with researchers **Hee Seong Jeong** and **Hyung Jin Won**, the trio's research into '*Functional Reaction Times of a Simulated Blocking Test among Para Taekwondo Athletes*' was released in the journal's 1 July issue. According to the findings, "the results indicated no significant differences between the [K44, K43, and K42] classes for the lower body foot stepping reaction times and the upper body blocking performance times", while also finding that "neurologically impaired athletes were disadvantaged and therefore belonged in a separate class".

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



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