



World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

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Philippines, Nepal and India make history in Asia qualifier



Thailand secure three quota places at Tai'ian city



Exciting competition was underway at Tai'an city which offered nations 10 quotas for the Paris 2024 Paralympics to nations. There were nations too who secured quota spots through the qualification event for the first time
The Asia Qualification for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games was marked by ecstasy, excitement and full of promise.

Seven nations secured 10 spots, on offer in Tai'an city, China, at the Paris 2024 Paralympics with Nepal, India and Philippines earning the quota places in a

qualification tournament for the first time in the history of the sport.

In Men K44 -80kg, Philippines' **Allain Keanu Ganapin** defeated **Sandeep Singh Maan** of India 25:13 to claim the one quota on offer in the category.

The women's events were even more electrifying as Nepal's **Palesha Goverdhan** won a close contest against Iran's **Leila Mirzaee** 5:4 to qualify for Paris 2024 Games.

Goverdhan, the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Para Games bronze medallist, is already eyeing a gold medal at Paris 2024.

"This will be my second time competing in the Paralympics, following Tokyo 2020. I am filled with excitement for Paris 2024! I am putting in the work with a positive mindset, feeling optimistic about earning a spot. I believe this upcoming experience will be even more incredible," Goverdhan, who has won a bipartite slot for Tokyo 2020 Games, told *World Para Taekwondo*.

Aruna, who also has a bronze medal at Asian Para Games 2022, clinched the quota place for India in Women K44 -47kg.

"I have no words how happy I am, I just hope that I can bring a medal for India in the Paralympics," an elated Aruna said.

Among others who build on their success at the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Para Games was China's **Yao Yinan** who overcame a strong challenge from Kazakhstan's **Mariam Salimgereeva** 5:4 in Women K44 -65kg.

Meanwhile, Hangzhou 2022 bronze medallists from Thailand, **Thanwa Kaenkham** (Men K44 -58kg), **Tanapan Sotthiset** (Men K44 -70kg) claimed a spot for their nations looking ahead for success in Paris.

Other gold medallists in Tai'an city were **Dongho Lee** (KOR) - Men K44 -63kg, **Ludong Liu** (CHN) - Men K44 +80kg, **Aylar Jami** (IRI) -Women K44 -52kg and **Jiraporn Wongsuwan** (THA) - Women K44 +65kg.





Successful classification at qualification events for Paris 2024



The start of the new season has been very fruitful for the development of Para Taekwondo in various regions. Not just athletes were classified, but the newly-classified athletes secured quota places for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

Moreover, several trainees were promoted to International classifiers making successful

qualifying events in Dakar (Africa), Sofia (Europe) and Tai'ian City (Asia).

"We had a successful classification at the qualifications as several trainees finished their practicum besides several athletes were classified. The interesting part is about how the classification in these events gave the opportunity for some of the new athletes who have just been classified but were good enough to qualify for the Paralympics," said Hadwah Matloub Moawad, chair of Para Classification Committee.

AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS

15 athletes classified (10 males and 5 females)

3 trainees from the African region qualified to International classifiers (2 males & 1 female)

Dr. Amany ABDELTAWAB (medical) Egypt

Mr. Yousuf FARGHAL (Technical) Egypt

Mr. Abdulrahman ZAGLOUL (Technical) Egypt

EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS

6 athletes classified (3 male & 3 female) one of the classified females (Greek) qualified for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games

5 trainees from the European region qualified to International Classifiers (2 males & 3 females)

Ms. Atifa NOORI-KHELWATTY (medical) UK

Mr. Ajay SINGH (Technical) UK

Dr. Luka BOBAN (medical) Germany

Dr. Bihter AKINOGLU (medical) Turkey

Dr. Tugba KOCAHAN (medical) Turkey

ASIAN QUALIFICATIONS

5 athletes classified (3 males & 2 females) one of the classified females (Iran) qualified for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games

1 trainee from the Asian region (Malaysia) Mr. Sivam ARUMUGAM has qualified to become an International Classifier

Poland, Georgia and Greece secure Paralympic quotas for first time





Fighters displayed strong technique and as Khudadadi along with nine others book slots for the Paris 2024 Games in Sofia, Bulgaria

The European Qualification tournament for Paris 2024 Paralympic saw Games several thrilling matches with Refugee Team athlete **Zakia Khudadadi**, one of the top names in the field, making the cut for her second Games.

There were athletes from three nations – Poland, Georgia and Greece – making history as they secured quotas for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, at the one-day event in Sofia, Bulgaria.

These will also be the first time these nations will be part of the Paralympics, after Para Taekwondo made its debut in Tokyo 2020 Games.

Khudadadi, who became the first female athlete from Afghanistan to participate in the Paralympics since Athens 2004, three years back in Tokyo, defeated **Dzhetsun-sholbana Kara-Ool** 16-14 in a K44 women - 47kg thrilling final.

“I couldn't believe that I would be able to win gold again and get the permit to enter the Paris 2024 Paralympics on March 8, International Women's Day. I'm very happy and I feel I'm slowly getting closer towards my dreams.

“Even if I am a refugee on this path, I believe I will achieve my dreams. My identity will never change. I will always be an Afghan girl and I am proud of it, and I will continue my fight so that Afghan women are not forgotten by the world,” said an emotional Khudadadi, who trains in France now.

Among other names, who left a mark was Serbia's **Nikola Spajic** who beat **Joseph Lane** of Great Britain by a big margin 30-7 in K44 men -80kg final.

All 10 gold medallists (5 each in men and women) secured the quotas for their respective nations.

The gold medallists who earned quotas for their nations in each categories are: **Joel MARTIN** (ESP) - K44 Men -58kg; **Adnan MILAD** (ISR) - K44 Men -63kg; **Giorgi NIKOLADZE** (GEO) - K44 Men -70kg; **Nikola SPAJIC** (SRB) - K44 Men -80kg; **Aliskhab RAMAZANOV** (AIN) - K44 Men +80kg; **Zakia KHUDADADI** (RTA) - K44 Women -47kg; **Ana JAPARIDZE** (GEO) - K44 Women -52kg; **Yuliya LYPETSKA** (UKR) - K44 Women -57kg; **Patrycja ZEWAR** (POL) - K44 Women -65kg; **Eleni PAPASTAMATOPOULOU** (GRE) - K44 Women +65kg

Idrissa Keita - A Tale of Grit and Resilience



From the streets of Dakar to qualifying for Paris 2024 Paralympics, **Idrissa Keita's** story is of resilience, grit and unwavering determination.

His journey of rising from destitution – when he had to even beg money in the streets of Dakar for food – to making destiny through Para Taekwondo is no less than a fairy-tale story and, the 20-year-old from Kaolack, Senegal describes it as a 'dream'.

"Everything for me is a dream now - my journey from Kaolack to obtaining the ticket for the Paris 2024!"

"It is the biggest dream of every athlete to participate in Paralympics and for me, I am very happy and honoured to have qualified and is proud to represent my country," said Keita, who earned the qualifying ticket for Paris 2024 after winning the gold at the Africa Qualification event in Dakar, Senegal.

He now aspires to win a Paralympic medal for his country, which will be a first for Senegal which has participated in the Paralympics since Beijing 2008.

And for that, Keita is putting all his hours and energy in improving his technique and skills, five days in a week, in his taekwondo club, Keumgang Léopold Sédar Seghor, in Dakar.

"My biggest dream is to help my family, especially my mother – fulfil all her needs and give her a comfortable life. All thanks to Para taekwondo, I am already making her feel proud and happy."

For Keita, Para Taekwondo means 'discipline' now. "It's (Para Taekwondo) a way of life which allow us (disabled people) to thrive and not have any complexes about ourselves. It's about showing the whole world that we can do something with our disability."

The journey

Forced to leave school at the age of 16, Keita left his home and his hometown Kaolack to support his family after his father passed away.

"Our economic condition had deteriorated - I had to leave school and look for work to help my mother. But despite trying for several months, I didn't succeed. It was when I left my native village and moved to Dakar in search of work and better life," said the promising player, who has disability in his right hand.

There were days when Keita had to beg in the streets of Dakar for food, but fate had other plans for him. Soon, his life was going to change.

"In my free time I like to go for a walk at the (Parcelles Assainies) beach, listen to music and watch videos of taekwondo fights. I was always passionate about Taekwondo," he shared.

It was one of the days last year when Keita met Maitre Abdoulaye Ndiaye, coach of the Senegalese

national Para Taekwondo team, in the streets to the Parcelles Assainies beach and the rest was history.

“He (The coach) asked to join Para Taekwondo after knowing my interest in the sport. I didn't have to pay any registration fees as he (Maitre Abdoulaye Ndiaye) took care of everything for me. I started training right away at a club - I was determined to be part of the national team, after learning that the Paralympic Games could change my life forever and allow me to support my family.”

‘Life has changed’

With two and a half months of training, Keita participated in the African Qualification tournament for Paris 2024 Games under the colours of the Senegalese national team, and it was a ‘dream come true moment for him to have qualified for the Paralympics’.

“All the credit goes to coach Abdoulaye Ndiaye who introduced me to taekwondo, found me a club and inserted me into the national team. My life has changed completely since then. My sole focus is getting better in Para Taekwondo now.”

“I hope to win a Paralympic medal for my country which has not yet happened so far.”
Having taken a step in realising his biggest dream, Keita also has a message for the aspiring Para Taekwondo players.

“Everything is possible if you believe in yourself – you can start from nothing and achieve your goals,” he concluded.



Calendar



2024

- Oceania Qualification for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games (G1), Honiara, Solomon Islands, April 6, 2024

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

- Pan Am Qualification for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games (G1), Dominican Rep., April 11, 2024

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

- Pan Am Para Taekwondo Open Championships (G4/G2), Rio de Janeiro, May 3, 2024

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

- Rio Para Taekwondo Open (G1), Rio de Janeiro, May 5, 2024

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

- Asian Para Taekwondo Open Championships, Da Nang, Vietnam, May 19, 2024

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

- World Para Taekwondo Open Challenge, Chuncheon, Korea, July 5, 2024

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

- Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, Paris, France, Aug. 29-31, 2024

Around the World

Mexican athletes undergo training camp in France

In a quest to achieve the best result at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, Team Mexico underwent a preparation camp in France in the build-up to the all-important Games.

The Mexican team held the training sessions with the French and Brazilian teams.

The visiting team also experienced the atmosphere of the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games taking a photo with the official mascot of the Paralympic Games to be held from August 28 to September 8.

Mexico clinched a gold medal in Para Taekwondo's debut at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games thanks to the efforts of **Juan Garcia** (K44 men's -75kg).

With the likes of star athletes Jessica Garcia Quijano, the reigning world champion, and Claudia Romero, the Best Female Para Athlete of the Year 2023, among others in their ranks, Mexico is expected to improving their medal tally in Paris.



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