



World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

April 2022 | Issue #22

Asian Para Games Taking Shape



40 Athletes Have Already Booked Their Spots, Qualification Tournament Set for Next Month

Following continental championships in Africa, Pan America, and Europe, it's time for our Asian athletes to put on a show.

Para Taekwondo will make its debut at the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Para Games this year from 9-15 October. If it's anything like the Lima 2019 Parapan Am Games, it'll serve as a breakout moment for the region's top Para Taekwondo athletes.

Despite having 10 qualification spots set aside as host, China will send only six athletes when it hosts Hangzhou 2022, highlighted by former world champion **Yujie Li**. Still, the six-member Chinese team will be the largest China has ever sent to a Para Taekwondo tournament.

With qualification spots awarded to the Top 4 athletes from Asia in each division, Iran has already qualified seven athletes - more than any other nation - highlighted by reigning world champion **Mehdi Pourrahnama**.

Other countries to secure multiple qualification spots through the rankings include Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (5 each); India, Korea, Mongolia, and Thailand (3 each); and Japan and Nepal (2 each).

Who to Watch at Hangzhou 2022

Hangzhou 2022 will feature some of Para Taekwondo's top fighters and will allow dozens of athletes to make a statement of intent about their ambitions for Paris 2024.

Six-time world champion Pourrahnama, Mongolia's five-time reigning world champion **Bolor-Erdene Ganbat**, and Uzbekistan's reigning Paralympic and world champion **Guljonoy Naimova** are all expected to compete. There are already some intriguing matchups.

The -47 kg category should include two world champions – Mongolia's **Enkhtuya Khurelbaatar** and Thailand's reigning world champion **Khwansuda Phuangkitcha**.

The -80 kg category has a pair of Paralympians looking to add an Asian Para Games title to their credit. Kazakhstan's **Nurlan Dombayev** won bronze at the 2021 world championships after narrowly missing out on the same colour medal at Tokyo 2020, while Korea's **Jeonghun Joo** thrilled thousands of Koreans by claiming bronze at Tokyo 2020.

Keep your eyes on the -57 kg category, which will feature two of the sport's up-and-coming stars. Nepal's **Palesha Goverdhan** captured the Asian Youth Para Games crown last year, while Kazakhstan's **Kamilya Dosmalova** won bronze at the 2021 world championships.

Asian Para Games Qualification – 26 May in Sharjah, UAE

There are still plenty of qualification spots up for grabs – and most of those will be decided next month at the 2022 Asian Para Games Qualification tournament in Sharjah, UAE on 26 May.

The G-1 tournament will see up to 5 athletes per weight category punch their own tickets to China.

MEN K44		WOMEN K44	
Category	Qualification slots	Category	Qualification slots
-58kg	3	-47kg	2
-63kg	2	-52kg	4
-70kg	2	-57kg	4
-80kg	2	-65kg	5
+80kg	3	+65kg	3

All remaining qualification spots for Hangzhou 2022 will be awarded by bipartite committee.

All qualified athletes – whether through the world rankings, qualification tournament, or bipartite invitation – will be able to earn G-4 ranking points at the 2022 Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, China.

Note: Athletes earn a qualification spot for their nation, so can be replaced by a teammate in the event they are unable to compete.

The registration deadline for the qualification tournament in Sharjah, UAE is 17 May.

Please note that visa applications **MUST** be submitted **BEFORE** the tournament registration deadline. Visa applications must be received by 9 May.

For more information on the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Para Games, please click [HERE](#) or [HERE](#).



Hangzhou 2022 Asian Para Games

Veterans Shine at 2022 Pan American Games



Mexico Tops Table, Host Brazil Not Far Behind

While plenty of newcomers 'got their feet wet' in Brazil, Para Taekwondo's vets showed it can be a steep ladder to climb to join Para Taekwondo's elite.

What's old is new again.

Despite the extraordinary growth of Para Taekwondo, which saw several teams send a record number of athletes to the 2022 Pan American Championships in Brazil, experience proved its weight in gold in Rio.

Seven of the nine Pan American champions saw a return to the pinnacle of the continent, with familiar names and past champions reaching the podium in every division.

Mexico and Brazil again proved their mettle by finishing 1-2 in the medal standings, with Mexico winning four gold medals to top the standings.

After finishing on top of the Paralympic medal table, Brazil cemented its role as regional powerhouse by hosting its first Para Taekwondo tournament. The team celebrated by winning more medals than any other nation – 14 in total, including two gold.

Denmark, Great Britain, and USA also claimed Pan Am titles, while Argentina, Aruba, Chile, the Dominican Republic, France, Peru, and Serbia all saw athletes on the podium.

Veterans Dominate

Paralympians were front and centre in Rio and hometown favourite and Paralympic champion **Nathan Torquato** didn't disappoint. He made it back-to-back Pan Am titles after picking up a medal at his fourth straight Pan Am championship with a convincing run to the -63 kg championship.

In a repeat of the Paralympic final, Denmark's dominant **Lisa Gjessing** again topped Great Britain's **Beth Munro** in the -65 kg final. It's a piece of unfinished business for Gjessing, who missed the chance to claim her first Pan Am title last year after an uncharacteristic loss.

It was another all-Paralympian final in the -70 kg category, where Mexico's Paralympic champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** faced off against Argentina's bronze-medal winner **Juan Samorano**. Returning from surgery, Garcia Lopez won his second straight Pan Am title – and third in four tournaments – with a comfortable 13-2 win.

Other veterans to return to the top of the Pan Am region include Mexico's **Claudia Romero** and **Jessica Garcia**, who picked up their second and third titles, respectively, in the -47 kg and -52 kg divisions; the USA's **Evan Medell**, who added his fourth Pan Am title in +80 kg category; and Great Britain's **Amy Truesdale**, who, in a battle of former world champions, beat Brazil's **Debora Menezes** to win her first Pan Am title since 2018.

Up-and-Comers to Watch

Of course, there were plenty of newcomers in action, especially from host Brazil, who saw 14 medals from their 21 competitors.

Among the most exciting to watch was Mexico's **Luis Najero**'s electrifying win over Brazil's **Joel Gomes** in an enthralling -80 kg final. Najero broke free from a back-and-forth affair near the midway point of the fight but had to nurse 9 gam-jeoms through the final 90 seconds before claiming his first Pan Am gold medal.

In the -58 kg category, hometown favourite **Fabricio Marques** got past France's Paralympian **Bopha Kong** to deny the French veteran his fourth Pan Am title. It's a significant step up for the Brazilian, who won his first medal – a bronze – at last year's Pan Am championships.

Rio also marked another breakout performance for the Dominican Republican's **Geraldo Castro**, the Parapan Am Games runner-up. Once again, the talented Dominican ran into Paralympic champion Torquato and once again had to settle for silver – his nation's first medal at the Pan Am championships.

For a replay of the event coverage on YouTube, please click [HERE](#).



Para Taekwondo Committee Chair on Historic Year



"2022 is a Historical Moment for Us"

World Para Taekwondo Committee Chair Chakir Chelbat on why 2022 is a watershed moment in Para Taekwondo history and what MNAs can do to help.

The Para Taekwondo schedule is in full swing, but if you ask Para Taekwondo Committee Chair Chakir Chelbat – the best is yet to come.

In an interview with World Taekwondo, Chelbat was excited to announce the first Para Taekwondo Grand Prix series in the sport's history.

"It's a historical moment for us", he told World Taekwondo. "Thanks to the World Taekwondo leadership, our K44 athletes will be able to compete in 10 medal events alongside their Olympic counterparts."

The Grand Prix series has been part of the able-bodied calendar since 2013. A prestige, invitation-only series of 3-4 annual events, participants enter by "ring walk" to blaring music – like pay-per-view professional boxing events.

Efforts to introduce Para Taekwondo to the series were interrupted by the COVID pandemic. Not any longer. The 2022 Para Taekwondo Grand Prix series will see three events, with a potential late-year Grand Prix Final.

The tentative schedule is as follows:

June 6 in Sofia, Bulgaria

September 2-5 in Paris, France

October 20-23 in Manchester, Great Britain

"We hope that MNAs put their efforts to send teams if their athletes are invited", said Chelbat. "Let's put our hands together and rock this 2022 series!"

Calling on MNA Support

Chelbat also spoke about introducing a new Level III Para Taekwondo Coach's certificate – which will be required for every coach at the Grand Prix series.

The first course will be offered before the Grand Prix series begins and will be related to the Grand Prix series, the Grand Prix Finals, the World Championships, and the Paralympic Games. The course will cover different methods, classification, wellness, biology, and psychology.

"It'll cover how coaches should work at high-level events", explained Chelbat.

Chelbat also stressed the importance for MNAs to make sure that athletes and coaches are getting up-to-date information.

"Please read the World Para Taekwondo newsletter and emails and make sure to spread the message. Be sure that your registrations and Medical Diagnostic Forms are submitted on time", he said.

"Help us to together move the sport forward."

Introducing the New Classification Committee Chair



Last year, World Taekwondo passed guidelines to bring Para Taekwondo to every impairment class recognised by the IPC and appointed Dr. Hadwah Abdelmatloub Moawad as the new Chair of the Classification Committee. Dr. Moawad sat down with World Taekwondo to explain the Committee's new approach to classification and her vision for the future.

About Dr. Hadwah Matloub Moawad

Dr. Moawad is a Saudi national that studied in Great Britain and lives and works in Saudi Arabia.

A fifth Dan black belt in Taekwondo, the former Poomsae champion has a Ph.D. in Orthodontics, with subspecialties in both Craniofacial Deformities and Genetics from the University College London and has headed World Taekwondo's Classification and Taekwondo for All Committees since 2021.

The change in leadership of Para Taekwondo's Classification Committee has brought along a shift in strategy. To facilitate World Taekwondo's goal of bringing Para Taekwondo to all impairment groups, Moawad says the committee plans to train more classifiers – and research how best to include everyone.

"We're here to include [athletes], not to exclude – but we have to be fair", she said. "Observation is the best form of research".

Classification Update

Moawad has spent the first few months establishing a baseline of Para Taekwondo classification – number of Para athletes per MNA, male and female ratio, number of classifiers, statistics of impairment types, etc. – as well as creating an easier understanding of the impairment groups and Sport Classes, where Moawad created colour-coded icons for each.



She also started a master list of currently non-eligible athletes.

"We need to see if we can create a new K (Kyorugi) sports class [for currently non-eligible athletes]", she said, citing an example of athletes with cerebral palsy (CP). "For example, how do we medically classify CP athletes, who have a wide range [of impairments] – spasticity, intellectual impairments, involuntary muscle movements – how do we assess them fairly?"

Moawad discussed how the classification process is working for each impairment group, giving emphasis to the new classifications outlined by World Taekwondo last year.

She stressed the need for more opportunities for Para Poomsae athletes to compete while noting that some classification groups require more study.

For example, she observed that there were very few championships for which P30 [neuromuscular impairments] athletes can compete while pointing out that the technical standardisation of education for officials for various sport classes as well as the criteria for assistive devices of wheelchair athletes (P50) has not yet been defined.

Moawad also stressed World Taekwondo's relationships with other international organisations to help set classification criteria.

She also spoke about WT's partnership with Virtus, the leading organisation for athletes with intellectual impairments, specifically highlighting athletes with autism.

"World Taekwondo is looking at setting up specific autism classifications with Virtus", she said. "Hopefully, we can see Autistic Taekwondo athletes competing at a world-class level".

Education Update

Moawad emphasised that a priority for the Classification Committee is to increase the number of classifiers worldwide. The plan to accomplish this is by streamlining structured education.

She stressed that World Taekwondo had used the gap between competitions necessitated by COVID to reassess its approach to education.

“With the goal of building your classifiers, we’ve structured the classifiers’ paths”, she said. “Level 1 and 2 are still national and international, but Level 4, for example, is for sport classes with assisted devices”.

She encouraged classifiers that haven’t taken a course in a while to retake Level 1 – at no cost – for a refresher.

She also worked with the committee to ease the process of moving from a national classifier to an international status.

“It used to be that you’d have to go to two national championships before getting to Level 2 – but it was unfair to classifiers from countries that had no national championships”, she explained. “So, now you simply need to go to two international championships with more than 20 athletes to classify”.

The goal is to increase the pool of qualified international classifiers, which will minimise the costs for tournament hosting committees (who cover classification costs), and ease the classification process, which should lead to more athletes and Para Taekwondo’s continued growth.

“With the new courses, hopefully, we can increase the number of classifiers per continent and per MNA as well”, she said.

“We really want to invest in all aspects of Para Taekwondo classification”.



Education



Upcoming Courses - Registration Open Now!!

Para LVL 1 Classifier - World Para Taekwondo National Classifier Certification Course [Level I] (English)

- Course Date: May 15; Registration Deadline: May 9

Para LVL 2 Classifier - World Para Taekwondo National Classifier Certification Course [Level I] (English)

- Course Dates: May 16; Registration Deadline: May 9

NEW! Para Taekwondo ONLINE International Coach Certification [Level III] (English)

- Course Dates: TBA; Registration Deadline: TBA

Calendar



- European Open Para Taekwondo Championships (G4/G2) - May 19-22 - Manchester, Great Britain
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- 2022 Asian Para Games Qualification (G1) - May 26, 2022 - Sharjah, UAE
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level I required for all coaches)
- Pan Am Series (G2) - May 27, 2022 - Fort Worth, USA
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- 2022 Grand Prix Series (G6) - June 6, 2022 - Sofia, Bulgaria (TBC)
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level III required for all coaches)

- Asian Para Taekwondo Open Championships (G2) - August 26 - Ulaanbaator, Mongolia
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

Around the World

Refugee:

Denmark Welcomes Ukrainian Athletes Fleeing from War

Eager to assist Ukrainian athletes fleeing from war, Aarhus Elite Sports has welcomed several elite Ukrainian athletes to train alongside Paralympic champion Lisa Gjessing – including Ukraine’s entire Para Taekwondo team. The first athletes to arrive include six-time world champion Vika Marchuk and 2021 world championship bronze medalist Yuliya Lypetska, as well as Para athletes from Para Athletics and Para Badminton. The programme will accommodate Ukraine’s entire Para Taekwondo team and anticipates their safe arrival later this month. The Ukrainian team will train with the Danish Taekwondo Federation ahead of May’s European Championships in Manchester and throughout summer – until it is safe to return home.



“For us, it’s just fantastic for us to be a part of”, said Danish Para Taekwondo coach Bjarne Johansen, “If it makes the situation better for them – we’re in”.



36 gold, since 1992.

“We celebrate the glory Para sports have given Nigeria”, said Nigerian Sports Minister Sunday Dare at the Opening Ceremony, “And [look to] create a system where we can usher in the next generation of talents into the mainstream”.

Africa:

Nigeria Holds First National Para Games

Demonstrating the growth of Para sports in the country – and the government’s commitment to growing the movement – Nigeria hosted its first National Para Games from 9-15 April. Held in Abuja, the event attracted hundreds of athletes to compete in 15 sports, including Para Taekwondo. Nigeria’s Para Taekwondo team is led by **Samson Ukpera**, the former African champ won bronze at this year’s African championships in Niger. Nigeria has seen plenty of success at the Paralympic Games, with its athletes winning 70 medals, including

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

Asia:

Iranian Hurricane Launches Taekwondo Podcast

Few Para Taekwondo fighters are famed for their analysis as much as Iran's five-time world champion **Mehdi Pourrahnama**. The Paralympic runner-up dives deep into the world of Taekwondo strategy in his new podcast series 'TKD with Madhi'. One of less than a handful of fighters that have participated in every major Para Taekwondo event since the sport's founding, the Iranian Hurricane looks at the 2019 Grand Prix Final between Korea's Dae Hoon Lee and Great Britain's Bradley Sinden to delve into the analytical side of the sport. After dropping the Paralympic final to then-reigning world champion and rival Juan Diego Garcia Lopez (MEX), Pourrahnama told World Taekwondo that he learned things from his opponent that he'd use in the future. When asked what he learned, he famously replied "If I told you, then I'd have to kill you".



Pourrahnama made good on his word by beating his Paralympic nemesis 3-0 to regain his world title at the 2021 World Championship.

To view the episode, or to subscribe to the series, please click [HERE](#).



Nepal Aims for First-Ever Asian Para Games Medals

Nearly a year after she was a kick away from capturing Nepal's first-ever Paralympic medal – and just months after claiming the country's first gold medal at the Asian Youth Para Games – Nepal's **Palesha Goverdhan** will look to capture the country's first-ever Asian Para Games hardware when Para Taekwondo makes its Asian Para Games debut this October. She'll be joined by teammate **Srijana Ghising** – and perhaps more after the conclusion of

next month's Asian Games Qualification tournament – in the quest to become Nepalese sport pioneers. Nepal has sent athletes to all three previous editions of the Asian Para Games but has yet to come home with a medal.

"We hope for a gold medal at the Asian Para Games", coach **Kaviraj Negi Lama** told Online Khabar, "And we'll prepare accordingly".

For more, please read the full article [HERE](#).

Uzbekistan Draws Big Numbers to National Training Camp

Led by reigning Paralympic and World champion **Guljonoy Naimova**, Uzbekistan continues its march to becoming a Para Taekwondo powerhouse by hosting a national training camp ahead of important summer competitions. The team has already secured five spots at Para Taekwondo's debut at this October's Asian Para Games, with **Sanjarbek Muhtorov** (-58 kg) and **Asadbek Toshtemirov** (-80 kg) joining Paralympians **Ziyodakhon Isakova** (-47 kg), **Zukhriddin Tokhirov** (-63 kg), and Naimova (+65 kg) in China. With 17 athletes and four coaches attending the training camp at the Barkamol Sports Camp in Tashkent, the team will be looking to qualify even more at next month's qualification tournament in Sharjah, UAE. More than just a warm-up, the team will head to next month's European championships hoping to prevent its European competitors from claiming the full ranking points in their weight categories.



“Our goal is to take the top places in these competitions”, said Para Taekwondo coach **Bobur Kuziev**, “and to achieve the desired result”.

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



Europe:

Azerbaijan Team Trains with Uzbekistan

In what's becoming a common pre-tournament ritual in Para Taekwondo, teams are holding joint training camps ahead of major events. This worked well for Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan last year, ahead of the last-chance European Paralympic Qualification tournament that saw the teams combine to qualify six of a possible eight fighters. Azerbaijan liked the results so

much, they're doing it again. This time, the five-member Azeri team headed to Tashkent, Uzbekistan to train with reigning Paralympic and World champion **Guljonoy Naimova** and the Uzbek team ahead of next month's European championships. Azerbaijan will be looking for its first gold at the European championships since **Aynur Mammadova** at Bari 2019. Keep your eye on rising star **Sabir Zeynalov**, who will be looking for his first European championship medal after capturing bronze at the Istanbul 2021 World Championships.

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

Denmark's Paralympic Champion Becomes Anti-Bullying Ambassador

Denmark's Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing** is using her celebrity to help end bullying by signing on as an Ambassador for Stoop.nu's 'Stoop Now' anti-bullying campaign. Hot off her first Pan American championship, the Para Taekwondo legend has teamed up with other celebrities like MMA star Soren Bak, TV personality Bubber, and Holbaek Mayor Christina Krzyrosiak Hansen to support children and youth in the fight against bullying.

"It's an honour to be part of such an important project", Gjessing said on social media at the time of the announcement. "I'm looking forward to the upcoming collaboration".



For more, please check out the project website [HERE](#).



Poland Para Taekwondo Pioneer Moves to MMA

Polish Para Taekwondo pioneer **Przemyslaw Wieczorek** has taken his Taekwondo training to a whole new level in retirement, competing in what was billed as 'the first MMA competition for Para athletes in Europe'. Wieczorek won four straight silver medals at the world championships from 2013 to 2017 and won a number of European championship medals as well,

including a memorable silver at home in Warsaw in 2016. The big Pole faced off against Bartosz Klimek in a kicks-only MMA fight for the SCF (Solo Combat Federation) in a fundraising match for charity.

"I only discovered life when I lost my hands [at 20 years old]", Wieczorek said in a statement. "When I had them, I lived day to day. It was only after losing them that I started training, studying, and working on a family life".

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

Pan Am:

Brazil Impresses as First-Time Host of Pan Am Championships

It's been a rapid rise to the top for Brazil, but the country is beginning to reap the rewards. From no medals at the 2017 world championships to top of the table at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, the Brazilian Taekwondo Federation has set up a programme that is the envy of many in the Para Taekwondo world and strutted its stuff as the



first-time host of the Pan Am Championships. Just weeks after completing a tryout to see which athletes would make the official national Para Taekwondo team, the nation sent 21 competitors to its home championship. 14 athletes brought back medals, highlighted by Paralympic and Parapan Am champion **Nathan Torquato's** second straight gold medal and teammate **Fabricio Marques'** first gold medal, for which he was named Top Athlete. National team coach **Rodrigo Ferla** was also recognised with a coaching award.

"It still hasn't sunk in – I only understood a little better when I got on the podium", said Marques after receiving his medal. "I am very happy with the gold I won and with the award for Top Athlete – it's a great joy!"

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



Mexico Repeats as Pan Am Champions

They've done it again! Mexico remains on top of Pan American Para Taekwondo after winning seven medals – including four gold – from its eight fighters. The team's veterans really impressed, with **Claudia Romero** (2), **Jessica Garcia** (3), and Paralympic champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** (3) all adding another Pan Am title to their growing collections. Showing that the team's strength is in training, **Luis Najera** won his first Pan Am championship after winning bronze at home in Cancun last year. In addition to the four gold medals, **Fernanda Contreras**, **Alberto Lopez**, and **Ivan Torres** all claimed bronze for 'El Tri', earning Mexico head coach **Jannet Alegria** honours as Top Coach.

"I feel very pleased with the result", said first-time champion Najera, "The gold is something I've been looking for for a long time!"

For more information, please click [HERE](#) and to see Najera's post-match comments, click [HERE](#).

Para Taekwondo Premiers at Puerto Rico Open

Para Taekwondo made its debut at the 2022 Puerto Rico Open from 1-3 April, where Para athletes participated in the Poomsae competition. The event featured Kyorugi and Poomsae competitions for both able-bodied and Para athletes in a variety of divisions, including cadet, junior, senior, and pairs. Puerto Rico's national Poomsae champion **Xiomara Ivette Robles Garcia** took home gold at her home tournament. "I can only tell you to work and fight for your dreams", she said on social media after winning her medal. "There is no greater satisfaction than watching this – helping in the training of these children and young people ... living in the body, soul of what I've been dreaming of and seeing that every process in my career was worth it".



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



Other:

Daedo Sponsors Great Britain, Italian Taekwondo

Global martial arts brand Daedo signed a sponsorship agreement with two federations – Great Britain and Italy – last month, and signed a personal sponsorship agreement with Italian Olympic champion **Vito Dell'Aquila**. Based in Barcelona, Daedo already holds sponsorship arrangements with each of the five continental associations and several other national federations. It is also a sponsor of World Taekwondo and provides the Protector Scoring System (PSS) featured at all major international competitions. Italy and Great Britain have seen major successes in both Olympic and Para Taekwondo, including by Para Taekwondo world champions **Amy Truesdale** and **Matt Bush** (GBR) and Para Taekwondo world championship

runners-up **Joe Lane** (GBR) and **Antonino Bossolo** (ITA).

“We are delighted to announce this partnership ... that will ensure GB athletes have access to the very best protective equipment and competition wear”, said GB Taekwondo CEO Paul Buxton. “This partnership supports our ambition to provide athletes with the very best opportunity to develop and realise their talents on the international stage”.

For more, please read the announcements [HERE](#) or [HERE](#).

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