



World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

January 2023 | Issue #31

New Year Greetings From President Choue



"There is plenty to look forward to in 2023"

Happy New Year to all *Taekwondo*in around the world! I wish you all a safe and prosperous 2023.

This is an exciting year for World Taekwondo as we celebrate our Golden Jubilee! Since our founding on May 28, 1973, World Taekwondo has helped Taekwondo become one of the world's most inclusive and popular martial arts.

We've also become a leader in Para sport, developing Para Taekwondo into the world's fastest-growing Para

sport and offering unique opportunities to our Para athletes, including the introduction of Para Taekwondo to the Grand Prix Series in 2022.

In addition to World Taekwondo's Golden Jubilee celebrations, Para Taekwondo will also mark an outstanding achievement in 2023 when the 10th World Para Taekwondo Championships are held.

Para Taekwondo has seen rapid growth since the first World Para Taekwondo Championships in Baku, Azerbaijan in 2009, with none being bigger or more important than its introduction to the Paralympic Games at Tokyo 2020.

The sport's extraordinary growth was recognised when the International Paralympic Committee added four medal events to Paris 2024, allowing an additional 48 Para Taekwondo athletes the opportunity to shine at the Paralympic Games.

World Taekwondo has been committed to growing the sport since becoming the world's first international federation to independently introduce a variation for Para athletes.

Para Taekwondo was represented at the year-end Gala Awards, with athletes and coaches from Turkiye, Brazil, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine acknowledged for their outstanding efforts in 2022.

We are excited to include Para Taekwondo in our 50th Anniversary Gala as well, which will take place in, appropriately, the site of Para Taekwondo's inaugural World Championships – Baku, Azerbaijan. There is plenty to look forward to in the Para Taekwondo calendar in 2023.

In addition to the 10th World Para Taekwondo Championships and the return of the Para Grand Prix Series, three continents will feature Para Taekwondo at continental multi-sport events, including the Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, China; the European Para Championships in Rotterdam, Netherlands; and the Parapan Am Games in Santiago, Chile.

We are also excited by the return of the World Para Poomsae Championships in 2023. The sheer number of high-quality events and the opportunities they provide to our Para athletes is a matter in which I take great pride.

Finally, I would like to recognise the efforts World Taekwondo has put into assisting our refugee athletes – in both Taekwondo and Para Taekwondo.

Last year, World Taekwondo and the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation organised the first-ever Hope and Dreams Refugee Taekwondo Championships in Amman, Jordan for over 200 refugee youth and children.

We also supported Ukraine's Para Taekwondo team, which was forced to flee war at home. With the support of World Taekwondo, Ukraine's Para Taekwondo team found refuge with Denmark's Para Taekwondo programme and was able to travel to several events in 2022, with five different refugee athletes winning medals at prestigious tournaments. Ukrainian able-bodied athletes were also supported by other World Taekwondo member nations, including Italy.

Several other athletes that World Para Taekwondo supported also saw success in 2022. Ghana had its first African champion, Central African Republic had its first African championship medalist, and Nepal won its first international gold medal thanks to participation support from World Para Taekwondo.

Zakia Khodadadi, an Afghan refugee whose harrowing journey out of Afghanistan to compete at the Paralympic Games became the biggest story of Tokyo 2020, continued her remarkable career in Paris, France by teaching Taekwondo to other refugees. She also starred in 2022, winning a Para Grand Prix bronze medal.

The results are clear – Para Taekwondo offers athletes with impairments, refugees, and athletes across the world unprecedented opportunities to not only survive – but to thrive.

Our 50th anniversary theme is "Peace in Mind, Taekwondo at Heart" – a message that I believe will resonate throughout the Para Taekwondo community.

I want to thank our Member National Associations and authorities for the commitment they continue to make to supporting our Para Taekwondo events and to developing elite Para athletes across the globe.

I believe that 2023 will be an outstanding year, full of opportunities for every *Taekwondo*n, as we strive to provide opportunities for every athlete that wishes to participate in Taekwondo.

Best wishes for a safe, healthy, and happy 2023!

Sincerely yours,

Chungwon Choue

Chungwon Choue
President
World Taekwondo



Calling All Athletes: Para Taekwondo Wants You



Para Taekwondo offers unprecedented opportunities for its athletes – from prestigious awards and financial prizes to travel to exotic locales and competing at the Paralympic Games. No matter what your goals in sport are – Para Taekwondo has you covered.

So, you want to go to the Paralympics. You want to hear the roar of the crowd. To feel the adrenaline of a once-in-a-lifetime ‘ring walk’. The glory of standing on the Paralympic podium.

Well, Para Taekwondo wants to send you there.

With one year remaining to qualify directly to Paris 2024 through the world rankings – and sidestep the nerve-racking, winner-take-all continental Paralympic qualification events – Para Taekwondo is expecting a wave of new arrivals.

With more tournaments than ever – meaning more ranking points on offer than ever – this could be your last, best chance to earn your own spot at the Paralympic Games.

It doesn’t matter if you’ve never tried Taekwondo. Heck, you don’t even need to have tried a martial art before.

Just ask Great Britain’s European champion **Beth Munro**, who won a Paralympic silver medal less than two years after picking up the sport.

And she’s not the only one to see immediate success.



Easy to Learn

One of the great draws to Taekwondo is that it's easy to learn the basics.

"Kicking and blocking is easy, but it's the fitness and tactics that take work", said Ukraine's **Vlad Nechai**, who won a European championship bronze medal in 2019 mere months after picking up the sport.

"I saw a post on Instagram and contacted Invasport [a regional Para sport organisation in Ukraine]", he told World Taekwondo. "They told me there was a national championship in a couple of weeks and recommended I give Taekwondo a try".

He did – and he lost every fight at that tournament, something his teammates don't let him forget. But he stuck with it and won European bronze a few months later. The next year, in 2022, Nechai beat Great Britain's European champion **Joe Lane** on his way to a Para Grand Prix bronze medal.

Each year seems to bring a handful of athletes that come out of nowhere and rise to the top of the division.

In 2019, it was China's **Yujie Li**, who won her first world championship and went undefeated until losing to Denmark's future Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing** at the last event of the year.

Munro came out of nowhere in 2021 to win the European Paralympic Qualification tournament – her first international event – before winning her memorable Paralympic silver.

In 2022, it was Uzbekistan's **Asad Toshtemirov** and Brazil's **Carolina Moura** who used repeated Para Grand Prix success to catapult them to No. 2 and No. 3 in the world rankings, respectively.

With the Top 6 in every weight category in January 2024 earning automatic qualification to the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, who will be 2023's Li, Munro, Toshtemirov, or Moura?

Paris 2024 Qualification

Think you're already too far behind to make up the necessary world rankings points to qualify for Paris 2024? Think again.

Every major event in Para Taekwondo promises to be held in 2023. There are the G14 World Championships, three G6 Grand Prix Series events and the G10 Grand Prix Finals, and major, multisport games in Asia, Europe, and Pan America.

There are also G4/G2 championships on each continent, the G2 President's Cup Series on each continent, and up to a dozen or more regional G1 events.

That means lots of world rankings points up for grabs.

A new fighter could go home with over 500 world ranking points by winning each major event in 2023 – enough to be the world No. 1 in nearly every weight category.

(This article is continued...)

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



Speedy Start to Season With 3 February Events



Para Taekwondo's busiest year yet kicks off in February – with multiple events in Istanbul, Turkey, and Cairo, Egypt – as the race to qualify for Paris 2024 heats up.

Athletes looking to close the gap in the world rankings – or keep hard-charging opponents from doing just that – will have three events in February to help shake off the holiday rust.

A G2 President's Cup will be held in Turkey, while a pair of G1 events will take place in Istanbul and Cairo, giving athletes the chance to win up to 40 points in the quest to qualify for Paris 2024. Here's what you need to know.

President's Cup - Europe (G2) - February 4-5 - Istanbul, Turkiye

Para Taekwondo's 2023 calendar kicks off in style with the first event in the 2023 President's Cup Series. Each continental union will host a single President's Cup event in 2023, offering up to 20 world rankings points to athletes all over the world. The first event takes place in Istanbul, Turkey in February – directly ahead of the Turkish Open.

Turkish Open (G1) - February 6-7 - Istanbul, Turkey

Athletes in Istanbul for the President's Cup, and those who choose not to register for the earlier event, will have the opportunity to earn up to 10 world rankings points at the first G1 event of the year – the Turkish Open.

Starring the world's Top Male and Female Fighters – Turkiye's own Mahmut Bozteke and Meryem Cavdar – as well as several hometown Paralympians and World Champions, it's a high-octane way to get 2023 started.

Egypt Open (G1) - February 16 - Cairo, Egypt

Egyptian team captain and Paralympian Salma Ali – the top Para Taekwondo fighter in Africa – is set to star

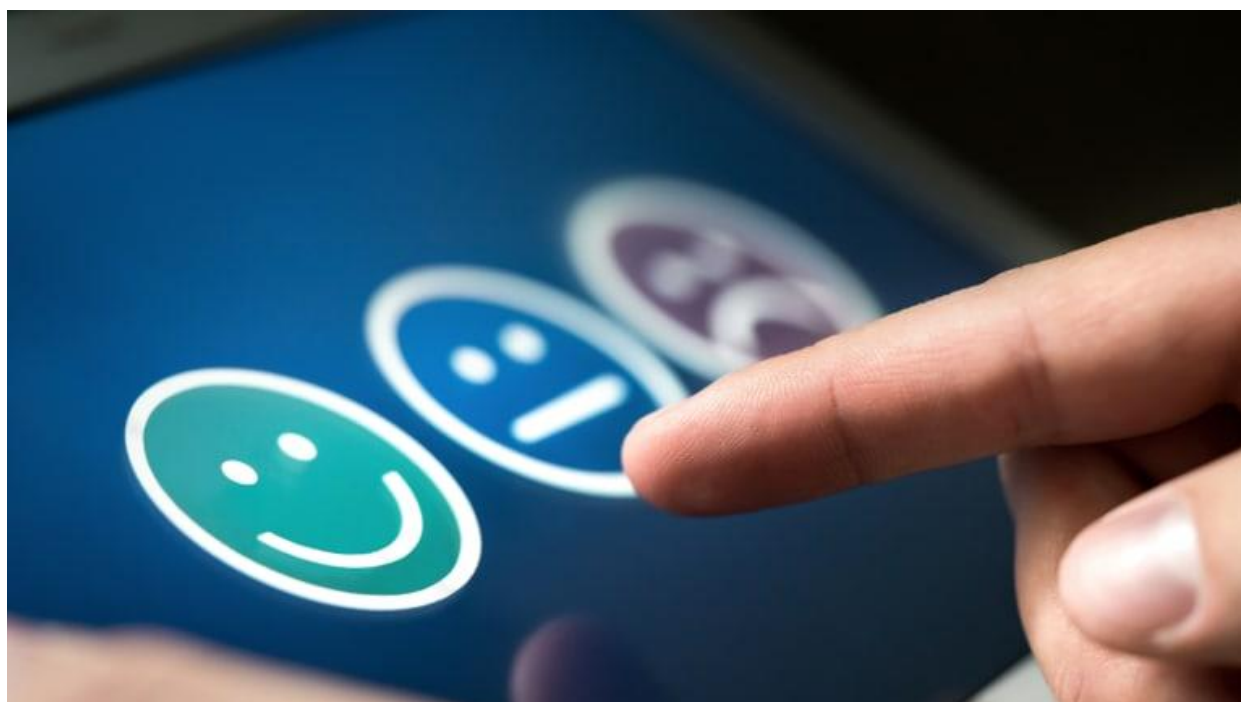
at the first G1 event on the calendar in Africa.

Athletes can earn up to 10 world rankings points by winning gold at the first Egypt Open in Cairo on 16 February.

To register, please find the event on Simply Compete by clicking [HERE](#).



Newsletter Survey



Do you regularly read the World Para Taekwondo newsletter?

We're looking for you!

World Para Taekwondo launched its newsletter 2.5 years ago – just months into the global COVID-19 pandemic. In our ongoing commitment to providing high-quality information, we want to make sure the newsletter is as relevant as possible.

We ask all readers to take 5 minutes of your time to fill out this short survey to ensure the World Para Taekwondo newsletter stays as relevant as always.

>>> [CLICK HERE TO TAKE THE SURVEY](#) <<<

And as always – thank you for reading!



Education



Upcoming Courses

- World Para Taekwondo International Classifier Course Level I, Online - February 3-4, 2023
- World Para Taekwondo International Classifier Course Level II, Cairo, Egypt - February 12-13, 2023
- World Para Taekwondo International Classifier Course Level I, Online - March 9-10, 2023
- World Para Taekwondo International Classifier Course Level II, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - March 18-19, 2023

Registrations Open!

Calendar



2023

(Provisional calendar subject to change)

- **2023 WT President's Cup Europe (G2) - February 4-5 - Istanbul Turkey**
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level I required for all coaches)
- **2023 Turkish Para Taekwondo Open (G1) - February 6-7 - Istanbul, Turkey**
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level I required for all coaches)
- **2023 Egypt Para Taekwondo Open (G1) - February 16 - Cairo, Egypt**
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level I required for all coaches)
- **Qualification Tournament for 2023 Parapan American Games (G1) - March 22 - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level I required for all coaches)
- **2023 10th World Para Taekwondo Championships (G14) - 2023**

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

- Rome 2023 World Para Taekwondo Grand Prix (G6) - June 9-11 - Rome, Italy

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

- Virtus Global Games (TBC) - June 9-10 - Vichy, France

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

- 2023 European Para Taekwondo Open Championships (G2) - June 30 - Montargis, France

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

For the full, updated 2023 calendar, please click [HERE](#).

Around the World



Africa:

Egypt Releases Flashy Ad Campaign Ahead of Egypt Open

The Egyptian Taekwondo Federation launched an action-packed one-minute video as part of its advertising campaign to promote the first Egypt Open. The ad features highlights of some of Para Taekwondo's biggest stars competing at some of the sport's biggest events

alongside aerial footage of Cairo's Great Pyramids. The video also has several clips of national team captain **Salma Ali**, who solidified her claim as the Top Para Taekwondo athlete in Africa by becoming the only African athlete to win a medal at the 2022 Para Grand Prix Finals in Riyadh – a bronze in -52 kg.

"The 1st Egypt Open Para Taekwondo G1 [will take place] for the first time in Egypt – at The Club Plus in the New Administrative Capital [on the] 16th of February", ETF said in a statement.

To watch the clip, please click [HERE](#).

Asia:

Japan's Awatari Takes Leading Role in Employment Equity

Japan's Para Taekwondo pioneer **Kenta Awatari** has taken his skill set and applied it at the workplace, where he serves as Vice-President of JGC Parallel Technologies – a company specifically designed to help employers hire people with impairments. In a New Year's message to mark the company's one-year anniversary, Awatari and company President Jun Narukawa cited the achievement of hiring 15 employees last year along the way to becoming "the No. 1 company in Japan where everyone can work on equal footing" by 2025. The company explores ways to include people with impairments in work environments, including new roles and revamped office space. According to its mission, the company hopes to "realise a society where all people, regardless of whether they have disabilities or not, can work on equal footing, demonstrating their social significance while demonstrating their technologies".

"[We want] everyone to be able to work equally, regardless of whether they have a disability or not", the pair said in the message, "Rather than overcoming your weaknesses, [let's look at] how to work by making the most of what you are good at and what you like."

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



World Champ Ganbat Featured on Mongolian TV

Mongolia's five-time reigning world champion **Bolor-Erdene Ganbat** was featured by Mongolian TV station [livetv.mn](#) in an 11-minute segment where he speaks about how he achieves his goals. Among the most successful fighters in Para Taekwondo history, Ganbat was recently recognised by the Mongolian government for his achievements with the prestigious Merited Master of Sport Award. Ganbat first picked up the sport in 2008 after watching martial arts movies starring Jackie Chan and Jet Li. He then went on to become the most decorated Para Taekwondoin in history at the World Championships, where he still sports a perfect 20-0 record. On how he achieves his

goals:

"Since 2014, I've written down and drawn my goals on paper", he told the TV station, "Writing down my goals and objectives in a notebook helps code them into my brain".

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

Europe:

Azerbaijan's Stars Dominate National Championships

There were plenty of familiar faces atop the podium at Azerbaijan's National Para Taekwondo Championships last month. After months of competing with the world's best at the Para Grand Prix Series, Azerbaijan's stars returned home to prove they are still the best in their own land. Para Grand Prix Finals champion **Sabir Zeynalov** continued his impressive run by getting past **Amin Aliyev** in the -58 kg final, while Paris 2024 medal threat **Imamaddin Khalilov** beat **Samir Aliyev** to capture the -70 kg gold. Team captain **Abulfaz Abuzarli** and Paralympian **Royal Fataliyeva** also went home with gold, showing that Azerbaijan's up-and-coming generation still has some work before catching up to the national team members.



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



New Stars Shine at Turkiye's National Championships

Less than a month before hosting the Turkish Open and President's Cup – Europe events, Turkey hosted its National Para Taekwondo Championships in Konya on 18 January. Giving most of its top stars a rest ahead of a busy 2023 calendar, new athletes dominated the top of the medal podiums, demonstrating the depth of talent the three-time World Para Taekwondo Championships hosts offer. The tournament offered 16 weight categories, including six for K41 athletes. Turkiye's new K44 national champions include **Mikael Akay**

(-58 kg), **Mehmet Donmez** (-63 kg), **Yusuf Yunacti** (-70 kg), **Emre Bulgur** (-80 kg), **Recep Ozdemir** (+80 kg), **Busra Emire** (-47 kg), **Serife Tuncay** (-52 kg), **Damla Nur Hanife** (-57 kg), **Lutfiye Ozdag** (-65 kg), and **Nisa Nur Gurses** (+65 kg).

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

Pan Am:

Brazil's Torquato Named Top Athlete by Regional Organisation

Brazil's **Nathan Torquato** was among the athletes honoured by FUPES (Santos Pro Sports Foundation) on 12 January. Held at the Municipal Theatre in Santos, Torquato was named Top Taekwondo Athlete by the organisation for his performance in last season's competitions. The Paralympic champion was a fixture on the Para Grand Prix Series podiums, winning 3 silvers and a bronze in the four events. That kind of consistency allowed Torquato to start 2023 at No. 1 in the world rankings as he tries to defend his Paralympic title at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. The regional celebrity was also featured in an exclusive interview with Brazil's Globo.com this month, where he spoke about his preparation ahead of the 2023 season.



“Today I am a study parameter for [my] opponents – which I think is really cool. It makes the ‘game’ more fun and motivates me to train more”, he told the magazine. “They arrive with my game studied, so it is necessary to change and always improve.”

For more on Torquato’s award, please click [HERE](#). To read the full interview, please click [HERE](#).



Mexico's Para Team Featured in Multiple Media Features

After a successful 2022 that saw four Mexican athletes win medals at the Para Grand Prix Series, Mexican media is taking note. Up-and-coming superstar **Luis Najera** appeared on the cover of Mexican sports magazine *Olimpo Deportivo* last month in a story on his progress towards qualifying for Paris 2024. Several media outlets, including Michoacan’s *Quadratin*, covered **Claudia Romero**’s rise to No. 1 in the world rankings. The International Paralympic Committee and World Taekwondo profiled Mexico’s Paralympic champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** after he was named the Pan American Taekwondo Union’s Top Athlete of 2022 – ahead of able-bodied competitors, while Mexican national team coach **Janet Allegría** was named Best International Coach by Mundo Taekwondo ahead of eight other candidates.

“The objective for the season is to gain qualification to the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games”, Najera told *Olimpo Deportivo*, showing his emphasis on Paris 2024 over Santiago 2023, “I hope to represent Mexico at the Paralympic Games”.

To read the article on Najera, click [HERE](#). To read the article on Romero, click [HERE](#). For Garcia Lopez’s articles by the IPC and World Taekwondo, click [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). For more on Allegría, click [HERE](#).

Sign up for the World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

World Taekwondo | worldtaekwondo.org | para_tkd@worldtaekwondo.org

