



## World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

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### Cameroon, Kenya, Niger athletes make history in Dakar



### Morocco secure three quota spots at African qualifier



*The season-opening qualifying event was marked by excitement, ground-breaking records and dreams as new nations qualified for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. Altogether athletes claimed 10 quota spots in Dakar, Senegal*

Earlier this month, athletes from Cameroon, Kenya and Niger made history as they qualified for Paris 2024 Paralympics, taking gold medals at the season-opening African Qualification event for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

It was a first for these nations to secure slots for the Games after Para Taekwondo made its Paralympic debut at Tokyo 2020 Games.

Overall, Morocco topped the medals table with six medals that had three gold followed by Cameroon and Kenya with two gold medals each.

Altogether six countries - that also included Egypt, Niger and the hosts Senegal - clinched the 10 gold medals at stake at the continental qualifying event and qualified for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

Referees from 26 different nations officiated in the event with 13 new athletes classified.

We congratulate the qualified athletes who are listed here: **Ide Oumarou DJABIROU** (NiG), **Ayoub ADOUICH** (MAR), **Abdel Rahman MAHMOUD** (EGY), **Rachid ISMAILI** (MAR), **Idrissa KEITA** (SEN), **Guileine CHEMOGNE** (CMR), **Neema Stency OBONYO** (KEN), **Julieta Lemuge MOIPO** (KEN), **Marie Antoinette DASSI** (CMR), **Rajae AKERMACH** (MAR).

A total of 30 countries from four continents have now qualified - Africa (6), Asia (9), Europe (10), Pan Am (5) – and one Affiliated Individual Nation have qualified for the Paris 2024, which will host the Para Taekwondo events for the second time in the history of the Games.

A total of 61 slots have been allocated through the World Para Taekwondo Paralympic rankings and host nation allocation methods.

There are more chances for the athletes to qualify as the process for the Continental Qualification pathway and the bi-partite invitation pathway to reach the games are yet to begin.

## Technical delegate Chelbat highlights positive outcome

World Taekwondo official and Technical delegate **Chakir Chelbat** highlighted the positives of the African Qualification event, which was also the first event of new season.

"It was a successful event with the gold medallists taking the Paralympic slots for their countries. I am very happy to see new African nations making it to the Paralympics which underlines the fact that the sport is growing in the region. We are also very thankful to the Senegal Taekwondo Federation for providing such great facilities including the huge venue.

"There were times when things got little difficult, but thanks to World Taekwondo team, technical officials and referees who did an amazing job. There was transparency in all the competitions, and we are very happy with the outcome.

"I would like to also extend my great thanks and gratitude to World Taekwondo leader Dr. (Chungwon) Choue for his guidance and wise leadership, because of which Para Taekwondo is growing and moving forward. Besides, I would also like to thank my colleagues in World Para Taekwondo Committee!

"My best wishes to the qualified athletes who will represent their nations at Paris 2024," said Chelbat, who has been also appointed as the Technical Delegate for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.



## Iran top podium as fighters aim for Paris 2024 Paralympics qualification



*Fighters displayed strong technique and skills as they prepare for the all-important Asian Qualification event for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games*

The (Para) 2024 WT President's Cup - Asia that took place in Tehran recently was marked by thrilling and inspiring encounters, while there were a few upsets too indicating the road to Paris 2024 won't be an easy one.

I.R. Iran athletes including **Amir Mohammad HAGHIGHATSHENAS** (Men's K44 -70kg), **Saeid SADEGHIANPOUR** (Men's K44 -63kg) put up impressive shows to clinch seven of the 10 gold medals at stake at the championships.

Republic of Korea's **Jeonghun Joo** (Men's K44 - 80kg), Thailand's **Khwansuda PHUANGKITCHA** (Women's K44 -47kg) and Individual Neutral Athlete **Elena Savinskaya** (Women's K44 -65kg) were the other gold medallists in Tehran.

In a shocking result, HAGHIGHATSHENAS defeated the reigning World and European champion **Imamaddin KHALILOV** from Azerbaijan 16-1 for the gold medal at home.

In women's event, local fighter **Fatemeh DODANGEH** surprised Asian Para Games silver medallist **Surenjav ULAMBAYAR** from Mongolia in Women's K44 -52kg final to win her second title at the championships.

Meanwhile, Thailand's PHUANGKITCHA went on to win the gold in Women's K44 - 47kg after Mexico's star athlete Claudia Romero fell in the semi-finals. Romero was also named the Para Athlete of the Year 2023 at the World Taekwondo Gala Awards in Manchester, UK, last December.



## Top names for European, Asian qualifiers



Thrilling contests are on the cards as athletes get ready for the European Qualification Tournament for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games in Sofia, Bulgaria followed by the Asian Qualification Tournament for the Games in Tai'an City, China.

The qualification events in Bulgaria and China will follow the African Qualification Tournament, which was a big success with new nations making the cut for Paralympics for the very first time.

The European Qualification event is just a week away and the excitement is building up with 35 athletes registered for the event.

With some top names including world champions - Israel's **Asaf Yasur** and Italian **Antonino Bossolo** - registering for the event as support for their team's athletes, it will be interesting to see how athletes from the World Refugee Team fare. Names like **Hadi Hassanzada**, an Afghani refugee living in Austria, will be in action in Sofia vying for a chance to qualify for the Paralympics. Accompanying him will be **Zakia Khudadadi**, who fled Afghanistan in 2021 and trains in Paris now. Khudadadi clinched a gold medal at the European Para Championships 2023 in Rotterdam.

Ten days later, the Asian Qualification Tournament will kick off with some of the regular names including **Palesha Goverdhan**, who won the historic bronze medal for Nepal at the 2022 Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, in action.

Countries who have registered athletes for Tai'an event are Afghanistan, China, Chinese Taipei, India, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand and Uzbekistan who will be back in action ready to secure a place at the Paralympics.



## Calendar



## 2024

- European Qualification for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games (G1), Sofia, Bulgaria, Mar. 8, 2024

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

- Asian Qualification for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games (G1), Tai'an City, China, March 17, 2024

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

### - REGISTRATIONS CLOSED -

- 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 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)

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

## Around the World

### USA's Medell wants to be 'unstoppable' in Paris 2024

USA's Para Taekwondo star **Evan Medell** claimed the bronze medal at Tokyo 2020, but that wasn't enough. He had to walk off the mat in frustration - he broke his leg in his semi-final bout against Croatia's **Ivan Mikulic**. Thus, the dream to win the Paralympic gold is yet to be accomplished.

"I just couldn't leave things like that in Tokyo. I want to have the ending that I feel in my heart. I was disappointed after my first Paralympic experience. I knew I could go on after Tokyo and I knew I could get even better. The broken foot was a freak thing, and there was nothing I could do about it," Medell was quoted as saying to Team USA.



"I don't even know how I fought through after the injury, except that it was the Paralympics and I wasn't going to stop if I didn't have to. This time, in Paris, I want to be even more ready and prepared to do the mission. I want to be unstoppable," he added.

Medell, who grew up with brachial plexus palsy, a paralysis that affects the arm, began competing internationally in 2015 and quickly rose to the top of the sport. After winning the Paralympic bronze medal at +75 kg, Medell was forced to find a new class when his category was replaced by +70kg for the Paris quadrennial. He decided to move up to +80kg.

Now fighting top competitors who can have nearly 40 pounds and 4-5 inches of height on him, Medell sees his physical advantage coming from his speed and preparation.

"Honestly, it's not going to affect me, it hasn't so far," said Medell, who stands 6-feet tall and weighs around 185 pounds. "I've always been ranked in at the top 3-4, so it made sense to try for it. I think the change got rid of the people on the borderline, who weren't big enough to hang in the class. It just looks like people got bigger around, me, really. I can handle it."

Medell qualified for Paris by taking the gold medal in that class at the 2023 Parapan American Games last November in Santiago, Chile. He said felt confident during the whole competition, breezing to the final. Medell's gold in Santiago meant he defended his crown from the 2019 Parapan Am Games in Lima, Peru.

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World Taekwondo | [worldtaekwondo.org](http://worldtaekwondo.org) | [para\\_tkd@worldtaekwondo.org](mailto:para_tkd@worldtaekwondo.org)

