



Louise Ashcroft
Medical Director
World ParaVolley
medicaldirector@worldparavolley.org

May 20, 2017

Member Nations World ParaVolley

Dear World ParaVolley Member Nation:

The International Paralympic Committee released the new Athlete Classification Code in 2015. As a signatory to the IPC Classification Code and its associated International Standards, World ParaVolley is obliged to apply the Code and to review its own rules and processes to ensure that they are code-compliant.

A Review Panel was established in 2016 and completed a Review with input from experts, including international athletes, a sport scientist with doctoral qualifications, coaching experts and internationally accredited classifiers with more than 10-15 years of classifying experience. In addition, the panel sought input from member nations, coaches of National Teams, and Athletes through the stakeholder survey.

The initial Stakeholder Survey was developed and distributed, and the results collated and circulated to the Panel. Along with this a literature review was undertaken of research in the areas of sport biomechanics for Sitting Volleyball, and a review of other sport classification systems and Best Practice models.

The initial proposed classification rule changes were outlined in the Classification Review Interim Paper, which was presented to the World ParaVolley Board and approved in principle in January 2017. Targeted consultations were held with key stakeholders, including the IPC, coaches commission, and athletes commission.

A Second Round of Stakeholder Feedback was collected with a focus on the proposed changes in the classification rules and implementation. A Revised Draft of the Classification Rules was developed. The Board approved the Rules April 30 with the implementation date moved to January 1, 2018.

The following provides an overview of the changes to be introduced in January 2018:

Changes at a Glance:

A. General:

The majority of the Articles in the World ParaVolley Classification Rules directly derive from the IPC model rules, which are compliant with the IPC Classification Code and International Standards. World ParaVolley acknowledges and thanks the IPC for providing the model rules to serve as the basis of the World ParaVolley Classification Rules Document for implementation in 2018.



The rules ensure that World ParaVolley has a good, complete and well-rounded set of rules for its classification program, including significant administrative and operational descriptions in management of Athlete Evaluation, as well as other areas of Classification.



Additionally, the Articles pertaining to Protests outline clearly the Scope of Protests and parties that are permitted to make a Protest and include direction on National Protests.

Throughout this process it has become very evident that more research is required in several areas, including reliability and validity of evaluation measurements, sport biomechanics for Sitting Volleyball and the activity limitations that the impairments have on the many skills in this sport. Thus, the sport-specific changes accepted in this Review have resulted partly from mandatory requirements from the IPC, as well as from expert consensus and stakeholder feedback, rather than from peer-reviewed published research.

The main changes are as follows:

1. Joint instabilities are no longer an Eligible Impairment under IPC rules. These include knee instabilities, ankle instabilities, shoulder instabilities, and any other conditions that result in hypermobility, such as Ehler Danlos Syndrome.

2. Changed Minimum Impairment Criteria

Eligible Impairment	Criteria Under Current Rules	Criteria Under Rules as of January 2018
Upper Limb Amputation	All 5 fingers (digits) on one hand; Between MCP joint and CM joint ½ one side; between CM joint and RC ½ one side Thumbs both hands or Seven or more fingers at MCP joints (2 hands)	Criteria lowered to include any four digits on one hand at the MCP joints, the thumb and two adjacent fingers on one hand, the thumbs on both hands, or the index and long fingers on both hands.
Upper Limb Dismelia	33% Shortening	Criteria lowered to 25% shortening
Impaired muscle power one upper limb	Combined loss of 20 muscle points	Criteria lowered to a combined loss of 15 muscle points, or loss of 3 muscle points in shoulder flexion, or loss of 3 muscle points in elbow extension.
Impaired muscle power one or both lower limb(s)	5 muscle point loss	Criteria increased to 7 muscle point loss
Impaired Passive ROM	No more that 15 degrees arc of movement for combined plantar/dorsiflexion	Criteria increased to Stiff (ankylosed) ankle (< 5 degree arc of motion)
All other Minimum Impairment Criteria are Unchanged		





3. Changed Sport Class Profiles

Amputation/ Dysmelia	Sport Class "D" (VS1) criteria in 2018 will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - amputation of all five digits (4 fingers and a thumb) at MCP joints on one hand or more proximal amputation, - amputation of eight digits across both hands, or - amputation of first three digits across both hands.
	Dysmelia with upper limb shortening of 33% will move to a "D" (VS1) Class under new rules (under current rules is 50%)
Impaired muscle Power	Loss of combined 25 muscle points in one upper limb, or loss of combined 20 muscle points in the shoulder will be "D" (VS1) Class in the new rules (under current rules is combined loss of 30 muscle points in upper limb)
	Loss of 16 or more muscle points in one or both lower limbs will be "D" (VS1) Class (under current rules is 11 muscle point loss)
Impaired Passive ROM	Stiff (ankylosed) ankle changes from a sport class of "D" to "MD" (VS2)
	Wrist stiff (ankylosed) in a position between neutral (in line with the forearm) and towards the palm now moves into "D" class (VS1)
Leg length Difference	Leg length difference of 33% or more will be a "D" (VS1) Class under new rules (is 12% or more under current rules)
Other sport class profiles are Unchanged	

All coaches and athletes are encouraged to refer to the full version of the World ParaVolley Rules that will be implemented as of January 2018 (full version attached to this email and available on the World ParaVolley website).

World ParaVolley acknowledges that the changes in the rules will have a significant impact on some individuals, and are committed to implementing communication strategies and transition policies that allow athletes to be informed and teams to be minimally disrupted.

To that end, the Zonal Competitions in 2017 will be an opportunity to provide a World ParaVolley classification program that will include:

- a) Classification of New & Review Athletes under the Current Rules for Competitions in 2017;
- b) Review of the World ParaVolley MasterList to update Athlete Data as it pertains to the current Eligible Impairments and Minimum Impairment Criteria for ALL athletes;
- c) Classification opportunities to evaluate Athletes and provide them with information that would include:
 - i) Review of Medical Documentation (Medical Diagnostic Form with additional supporting documentation as required) to advise Athletes if they have an Eligible Impairment following implementation of the new rules January 2018;
 - ii) Athlete Evaluation to determine if their Eligible Impairment meets the Minimum Impairment Criteria; and what Sport Class the Athlete will be after January 1, 2018.



ALL athletes are encouraged to participate in this Athlete Evaluation process in order to assist their teams to prepare for competitions in 2018, and to ensure individual athletes are well informed about the changes that may affect them



personally. The process that is offered in 2017 will be mandatory in 2018, and therefore completing the process in 2017 will simplify classification activities for teams in 2018. Requests to complete Medical Diagnostic Forms for ALL athletes will be forthcoming prior to Zonal Championships in 2017. Please complete them carefully and forward them to the Head of Classification within the specified time period. Some athletes will only be required to provide the Medical Diagnostics Form. Other athletes may be asked to provide more supporting documentation.

World ParaVolley is committed to providing every opportunity for teams to become more informed about the new rules in. To that end, a presentation & Question & Answer Forum will be arranged with EVERY team (with an interpreter) at Zonal Championships in 2017. World ParaVolley welcomes any questions or concerns to be directed to the Medical Director at medicaldirector@worldparavolley.org.

World ParaVolley will also be featuring intermittent social media posts throughout 2017 for clarification of information and in response to questions we receive.

World ParaVolley would like to thank the stakeholders for their participation in this process. It has provided the foundation for what will be required in the areas of classification research for World ParaVolley in the next four to eight years in order to develop evidence-based sport class profiles. Areas identified for further research include the following:

- intra-rater and interrater reliability for classification measurements
- sport biomechanics and relevant ROM for all skills in sitting volleyball
- more detailed investigation into measures for impairments of hypertonia, ataxia and athetosis

The Review Panel has forwarded these research directives to the Research Commission of World ParaVolley for further discussion and development.

Additionally, World ParaVolley thanks the IPC for its invaluable input and support of this process, and will endeavor to further improve Classification for the sport disciplines of World ParaVolley for the Paralympic Movement. We also thank you in advance for forwarding this information to all of your ParaVolley coaches, representatives, and athletes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. Ashcroft".

Louise Ashcroft
Medical Director
World ParaVolley

medicaldirector@worldparavolley.org

