



ParaVolley
PAN AMERICA

PARAVOLLEY PAN AMERICA SEMIANNUAL NEWSLETTER

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GROWING TOGETHER

The first half of 2026 has been one of the most significant periods in the recent history of ParaVolley Pan America.

Throughout the Americas, athletes, coaches, referees, classifiers and volunteers have continued working together to strengthen Sitting Volleyball at every level. From new development initiatives and technical education programs to historic international competitions, our region continues to build a stronger and more connected ParaVolley community.

Under the leadership of President Joe Campbell and Vice President Laura Cometto, ParaVolley Pan America has continued advancing strategic initiatives aimed at expanding opportunities for athletes while strengthening technical excellence across the continent.

The coordination of these efforts has been supported by General Manager Gigi Prieto, whose work continues to ensure the smooth operation of the organization, while Development Director Genitunny Reyes has remained committed to fostering the growth of national programs throughout the Americas.

Together with Sport Director Cristiana Figueira, Medical Commissioner Saro Keresteciyan, Coaches Commissioner Fernando Lages Guimarães, Referee Commissioner Neal Konowalyk, Athletes' Representatives Nicky Nieves and Bryce Foster, and Communications & Social Media Manager Carolina Mitriani, the ParaVolley Pan America Board continues working toward a common goal: creating more opportunities for athletes and strengthening the future of Sitting Volleyball across the region.

Our attention is already turning toward the next major milestone, the Lima 2027 Parapan American Games.



VALLEDUPAR 2026

A HISTORIC MILESTONE FOR SITTING VOLLEYBALL IN SOUTH AMERICA

History was made in Valledupar, Colombia, as Sitting Volleyball made its official debut at the South American Para Games, marking a landmark moment for the sport across the continent.

For the first time, South American athletes had the opportunity to compete for Parasuramericanos medals in Sitting Volleyball, reflecting years of collaborative work among National Paralympic Committees, National Federations, World ParaVolley and ParaVolley Pan America.

The men's tournament featured six nations—Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela—while four countries competed in the women's competition: Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Venezuela. Beyond the medals, Valledupar represented a major step forward for the development of the sport throughout South America.

BOLIVIA'S INTERNATIONAL DEBUT

One of the most inspiring moments of the Games came with Bolivia's first-ever international Sitting Volleyball competition. The country's participation reflects years of development efforts and demonstrates the continued expansion of ParaVolley throughout the continent.

For many Bolivian athletes, Valledupar represented their first opportunity to wear the national jersey at an international event, creating memories that will inspire future generations.



VALLEDUPAR 2026

BUILDING A LASTING LEGACY

Valledupar 2026 was far more than a successful competition. One of the event's greatest achievements was that 100% of participating athletes held an international sport classification and were confirmed as eligible under World ParaVolley regulations. This milestone reflects the outstanding work carried out by the Medical and Classification teams, ensuring the highest standards of fairness and integrity throughout the competition.

The Games also became an important milestone for referee development across South America. Several Colombian referees completed educational activities before and during the event and gained valuable experience by officiating alongside experienced World ParaVolley International Technical Officials. Their participation represents an important investment in the future of officiating within the region and leaves a meaningful technical legacy for future international competitions.

The event further strengthened collaboration among National Federations while demonstrating the growing organizational capacity of South America to host major international Sitting Volleyball competitions.



HANGZHOU 2026

THE AMERICAS SHINE ON THE WORLD STAGE

Following the historic debut of Sitting Volleyball at the South American Para Games, the world's top teams gathered in Hangzhou, China, for the 2026 World ParaVolley Sitting Volleyball World Championships.

The Americas were represented by Brazil, Canada and the United States in both the men's and women's tournaments, with all six teams advancing through a highly competitive championship that once again showcased the region's continued growth on the international stage.

The tournament produced outstanding results for the Americas, highlighted by the United States capturing the Women's World Championship title, Brazil earning the silver medal, and Canada finishing fourth, placing three continental teams among the world's top four.

In the men's competition, Brazil finished fourth, narrowly missing the podium after another strong international campaign, while the United States placed fifth and Canada concluded the tournament in fifteenth place.

These performances reaffirm the strength of Sitting Volleyball across the Americas and reflect the continued investment being made by National Federations, coaches, athletes and technical staff throughout the region.

FINAL STANDINGS – AMERICAS

Men's Competition

 Brazil – 4th Place

After advancing to the semifinals, Brazil once again demonstrated why it remains one of the world's elite Sitting Volleyball programs, finishing just outside the medals.

 United States – 5th Place

The United States continued its rebuilding process with another solid performance, closing the tournament among the world's top five.

 Canada – 15th Place

Canada gained valuable experience against the world's strongest teams while continuing to develop a young squad for future international competitions.



HANGZHOU 2026

Women's Competition

  United States – World Champions

The United States successfully defended its position among the world's elite by capturing the 2026 World Championship title, reaffirming its status as one of the most dominant programs in international Sitting Volleyball.

  Brazil – Silver Medal

Brazil delivered another outstanding performance, reaching the World Championship Final and claiming the silver medal after an exceptional tournament.

  Canada – Fourth Place

Canada narrowly missed the podium but achieved another excellent international result, finishing among the world's top four women's teams.

A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR LIMA 2027

The performances in Hangzhou highlighted not only the competitiveness of the region's traditional powerhouses, but also the continued progress being made across the continent through investment in athlete development, coaching education, technical officials and international competition. ParaVolley Pan America congratulates all athletes, coaches, officials and National Federations who proudly represented the Americas on the world stage and looks forward to building on these achievements in the years ahead.



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL CONTINUE STRENGTHENING HIGH PERFORMANCE

International collaboration remains one of the strongest tools for developing Sitting Volleyball across the Americas. For the second consecutive year, the Argentina Men's National Team participated in a high-performance training camp alongside SESI São Paulo, one of Brazil's premier volleyball organizations.

The camp also included participation in a round of the Paulista Championship, providing Argentine athletes and coaches with valuable international experience against elite competition.

ParaVolley Pan America's Vice President, Laura Cometto, highlighted the importance of these exchanges as opportunities to accelerate athlete development, share coaching methodologies and strengthen relationships between National Federations. The initiative demonstrates how cooperation between countries continues to raise the competitive level of the entire region.

BRAZIL CONTINUES TO LEAD DEVELOPMENT

Brazil remains one of the driving forces behind the growth of Sitting Volleyball in the Americas.

Among this semester's highlights, Club Athletico Paulistano captured its tenth Brazilian national title, reinforcing its position as one of the continent's most successful Sitting Volleyball programs.

Meanwhile, Coaches Commissioner Fernando Lages Guimarães continues expanding development initiatives throughout Brazil.

A new partnership with educational institutions will bring monthly Sitting Volleyball promotion activities to schools, creating new opportunities to introduce the sport to young people and identify future athletes. Fernando has also emphasized the importance of strengthening coach education across the Americas, encouraging greater technical preparation for coaches working in developing national programs.

STRENGTHENING NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Development also continues through stronger cooperation within National Federations.

In Colombia, the Purple Foundation has begun fostering partnerships between clubs from different regions of the country, encouraging collaboration and the exchange of knowledge to support the continued growth of Sitting Volleyball at the national level.

Initiatives such as these reflect ParaVolley Pan America's commitment to helping National Federations build sustainable development structures while expanding access to the sport throughout the Americas.

GROWING ON THE BEACH

Development efforts throughout the Americas continue to extend beyond Sitting Volleyball, with Beach ParaVolley gaining momentum across the region.

The United States successfully hosted a Beach ParaVolley tournament, providing athletes with additional competition opportunities while demonstrating the country's commitment to supporting the growth of both ParaVolley disciplines.

Meanwhile, Colombia reached an important milestone by organizing its first Beach ParaVolley gathering, introducing athletes and coaches to the discipline and laying the groundwork for future national initiatives.

These activities represent important steps toward expanding Beach ParaVolley throughout the Americas and creating new opportunities for participation, athlete development and international collaboration.



LOOKING AHEAD TO LIMA 2027

Following the successful conclusion of the Hangzhou 2026 World Championships, ParaVolley Pan America now turns its full attention to the next major milestone for the region: the Lima 2027 Parapan American Games.

The Games will take place from 20–29 August 2027 in Lima and Callao, Peru, bringing together more than 2,200 Para athletes from over 30 countries competing across 18 sports.

The Sitting Volleyball competition will be held from 25–29 August 2027 and will feature twelve national teams, six men's and six women's.

The announcement marks a historic milestone for the sport in the Americas, as for the first time in Parapan American Games history, the women's tournament will feature the same number of teams as the men's competition, reflecting ParaVolley Pan America's continued commitment to expanding opportunities and promoting gender equality throughout the region.

The competition will be staged at the Polideportivo Villa El Salvador, one of Lima's premier multi-sport venues, which previously hosted Sitting Volleyball during the Lima 2019 Parapan American Games. Preparations are already underway in close collaboration with the Lima 2027 Organizing Committee, World ParaVolley and National Federations across the continent.

Under the leadership of Sport Director Cristiana Figueira, who will serve as Technical Delegate, ParaVolley Pan America remains committed to delivering another world-class competition while continuing to strengthen opportunities for athletes throughout the Americas.

As the countdown to Lima 2027 officially begins, the achievements of Valledupar 2026 and Hangzhou 2026 provide a strong foundation for what promises to be another historic chapter in the continued growth of Sitting Volleyball across the Americas.



BUILDING EXCELLENCE

Strengthening Coaches Across the Americas - Coach education continues to be one of ParaVolley Pan America's highest priorities.

Throughout the semester, Coaches Commissioner Fernando Lages Guimarães (Brazil) continued leading initiatives aimed at strengthening the technical knowledge of coaches throughout the region, emphasizing that the long-term success of national programs depends on well-prepared coaching staffs.

Fernando highlighted the importance of raising the standards for future Level I coaching courses, encouraging National Federations to identify candidates with previous volleyball experience and a strong technical foundation before entering the certification pathway.

"Developing athletes begins with developing coaches," Fernando noted in his report, reinforcing the importance of continuous education and mentorship throughout the Americas.

His recommendations were supported by Vice President Laura Cometto, who emphasized that many emerging programs begin under the leadership of Physical Education teachers with extensive knowledge of disability sport but limited volleyball experience. As programs mature, strengthening volleyball-specific technical expertise becomes essential to ensure continued athlete development and long-term competitive success.

Together, these efforts reflect ParaVolley Pan America's commitment to building a sustainable coaching structure capable of supporting the next generation of athletes across the continent.

DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF REFEREES - Education also remained a key priority for the Referee Commission.

Under the leadership of Referee Commissioner Neal Konowalyk (Canada), ParaVolley Pan America continued supporting referee development opportunities throughout the region, combining classroom instruction with practical experience during international competitions.

One of the greatest achievements of the semester came during the South American Para Games Valledupar 2026, where several Colombian referees received technical training and worked alongside experienced World ParaVolley International Technical Officials.

This hands-on experience provided local officials with valuable exposure to elite international competition and represents an important legacy for future events throughout South America. By investing in referee education today, ParaVolley Pan America continues building a stronger technical foundation for tomorrow.

BUILDING EXCELLENCE

MEDICAL AND CLASSIFICATION - Ensuring Fair Competition

The work carried out by the Medical Commission once again played a fundamental role in guaranteeing fair and transparent competition throughout the region.

Led by Medical Commissioner Saro Keresteciyan (Canada), the commission continued supporting classification processes while promoting the highest international standards of athlete eligibility. A significant milestone was achieved during Valledupar 2026, where 100% of participating athletes competed with a valid international sport classification, ensuring that every athlete met World ParaVolley eligibility requirements.

This accomplishment reflects months of preparation involving classifiers, medical personnel and National Federations working together to provide an equitable competitive environment for all athletes.

The successful classification program also contributed to the long-term development of Sitting Volleyball in South America, leaving an important legacy for future regional competitions.

COMMUNICATIONS - Connecting the Americas

Communication continues to play an increasingly important role in supporting the growth and visibility of Sitting Volleyball throughout the continent.

Led by Communications & Social Media Manager Carolina Mitriani (Argentina), ParaVolley Pan America continued expanding its digital presence while providing timely coverage of competitions, athlete stories and development initiatives.

Throughout the semester, communication efforts focused on strengthening relationships with National Federations, increasing engagement across social media platforms and delivering multilingual content to reach audiences throughout the Americas.

The organization also continued producing newsletters, event coverage, interviews and promotional materials designed to highlight the achievements of athletes, coaches, referees and volunteers who contribute daily to the growth of ParaVolley. By telling these stories, ParaVolley Pan America continues building a stronger and more connected community while increasing awareness of the sport across the continent.



ATHLETES' VOICE

One of the most important developments for ParaVolley Pan America this semester was the expansion of athlete representation within the organization's Board of Directors.

We are pleased to welcome Bryce Foster (Canada) as our new Athletes' Representative, joining Nicky Nieves (United States) in ensuring that the voices of athletes continue to play an active role in the future of Sitting Volleyball across the Americas.

Together, Bryce and Nicky will serve as a bridge between athletes and the Board, encouraging open communication, supporting athlete-centered initiatives and helping shape the continued growth of our sport throughout the continent.

MEET OUR ATHLETES' REPRESENTATIVES

Bryce Foster (Canada)

Bryce Foster has emerged as one of Canada's leading Sitting Volleyball athletes.

Born in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Bryce underwent numerous surgeries during childhood due to a congenital clubfoot condition before making the life-changing decision to undergo a below-the-knee amputation of his right leg at the age of 12.

His introduction to Sitting Volleyball came unexpectedly in 2019, when Canadian National Team Head Coach Jeff Smith discovered him playing standing volleyball during a high school competition. His transition to the sport was immediate, earning him a place on Canada's national team later that same year.

Since then, Bryce has represented Canada at major international events, including the Lima 2019 Parapan American Games, where the team captured the bronze medal, and the 2026 Sitting Volleyball World Championship. Recognized for his athleticism, leadership and commitment to the sport, Bryce now begins a new chapter as one of ParaVolley Pan America's Athletes' Representatives.



ATHLETES' VOICE

Nicky Nieves (United States)

Nicky Nieves is widely regarded as one of the most accomplished and respected athletes in the history of Sitting Volleyball.

Born in Kissimmee, Florida, without her left hand, Nicky has become one of the defining players of the United States Women's National Team. As a middle blocker, she has helped lead Team USA to multiple international titles, including Paralympic gold medals at Rio 2016 and Paris 2024, as well as the 2026 Sitting Volleyball World Championship title.

Her leadership extends far beyond the court. At the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, she was selected by her teammates as the United States flag bearer during the Opening Ceremony, recognizing not only her athletic achievements but also her dedication to inclusion and leadership.

As an Athletes' Representative on the ParaVolley Pan America Board, Nicky continues advocating for athletes across the Americas, ensuring that their perspectives remain central to the organization's work.

Together, Bryce Foster and Nicky Nieves represent the present and future of athlete leadership within ParaVolley Pan America, reinforcing the organization's commitment to placing athletes at the heart of every decision.



IN MEMORIAM

In Memory of Lázaro Beltrán

It is with deep sadness and heavy hearts that we share the passing of Lázaro Beltrán, a true legend of Cuban sport and a proud member of the U.S. Paralympic Sitting Volleyball Team.

Lázaro was so much more than an athlete—he was a teacher, coach, devoted father, loyal friend, and a man who deeply loved his family. He inspired everyone who had the privilege of knowing him. His kindness, passion, and love for the game touched countless lives, leaving a legacy that will never fade. As a professor and coach, Lázaro dedicated his life to guiding and motivating others, always leading with humility, strength, and compassion. He believed in people, lifted others up, and gave his all to every team and every student he mentored.

Lázaro served as a member of the ParaVolley Pan America Board of Directors from February 2018 until May 2025. As the PVPA Coaches Commissioner, he positively impacted the lives of many throughout the Pan American Zone. His smile, warmth, and sense of humor were contagious, and his presence will be profoundly missed by all who knew him.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Lázaro's family for sharing him with the ParaVolley community and for the time and dedication he devoted to supporting both ParaVolley Pan America and World ParaVolley.

On behalf of the ParaVolley Pan America Board of Directors, we extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends, and loved ones. May they find strength, peace, and comfort during this difficult time.



IN MEMORIAM

In Memory of Diego Leonardo Villalba

It is with deep sadness and heavy hearts that we share the passing of Diego Leonardo Villalba, a dedicated member of Argentina's Sitting Volleyball National Team.

Diego was part of the generation of athletes that helped drive the international growth of Argentina's Sitting Volleyball program. He contributed to the team's preparation for the first ParaVolley America Cup and was a member of the squad that earned the bronze medal at the 2025 SESC Para Cup and a fourth-place finish at the 2025 ParaVolley Pan America Zonal Championships in Denver, USA.

Diego's commitment to his teammates, his passion for Sitting Volleyball, and his dedication to representing Argentina made him a respected member of the ParaVolley community. His determination on and off the court inspired those who had the privilege of playing alongside him. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Diego's family for sharing him with the ParaVolley community and for supporting him throughout his journey in our sport.

On behalf of the ParaVolley Pan America Board of Directors, we extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends, teammates, the Argentine ParaVolley community, and everyone whose lives he touched. May they find strength, peace, and comfort during this difficult time.



LOOKING AHEAD

The achievements of the past months demonstrate that the continued growth of Sitting Volleyball in the Americas is the result of collaboration, dedication and a shared vision.

Historic milestones such as the debut of Sitting Volleyball at the South American Para Games, the outstanding performances at the World Championships in Hangzhou, the expansion of coach and referee education, the strengthening of classification programs and the development of new national initiatives all reflect the remarkable progress being made across our region.

As ParaVolley Pan America enters the one-year countdown to the Lima 2027 Parapan American Games, we remain committed to creating more opportunities for athletes, supporting National Federations and strengthening every aspect of our sport.

Together, we continue building a stronger, more inclusive and more connected ParaVolley community throughout the Americas.



PARA VOLLEY PAN AMERICA BOARD

Contact the PVPA Board

If you need to contact any member of the ParaVolley Pan America Board of Directors, please visit the [PVPA website](#).

Once there, move your cursor over the "About" tab and select "Board" to access the contact information for each Board member.

We encourage National Federations, athletes, coaches, referees, classifiers and members of the ParaVolley community to connect with us as we continue working together to grow Sitting Volleyball throughout the Americas.

CONNECT WITH OUR LEADERSHIP

President

Joe Campbell (USA)

Medical Commissioner

Saro Keresteciyan (Canada)

Vice President

Laura Cometto (Argentina)

Coaches Commissioner

Fernando Lages Guimarães (Brazil)

General Manager

Gigi Prieto (USA)

Referee Commissioner

Neal Konowalyk (Canada)

Sport Director

Cristiana Figueira (Brazil)

Athletes' Representatives

Nicky Nieves (USA)

Bryce Foster (Canada)

Development Director

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Communications & Social Media

Carolina Mitriani (Argentina)



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