



SCOTTISH DISABILITY
SPORT

Scottish Disability Sport

Eligible Athletes and Players for Performance Disability Sport – Information Digest

Introduction

Since the hosting of the first Paralympic Games at Stoke Mandeville in 1948, to coincide with the London Olympic Games, and the formation of Scottish Disability Sport (SDS) in 1962, disability sport has come a long way. The modern “Parallel Olympics” or Summer and Winter Paralympic Games, are currently held in the same stadia with the same support infrastructure as the Olympic Games. Performance athletes and players with impairments face the same challenges, access the same support structures and reap the same rewards as their Olympic peers. There has never been a better time to be involved in disability sport. SDS and its partners urge eligible participants of all ages and abilities with a disability to “get into sports”. SDS staff and coaches are always available to signpost, encourage and inspire children, young people and adults to consider disability sport as a way of life, or simply a leisure pursuit. Great Paralympians from Scotland may have excelled on the world stage for five decades, but the movement is always searching for new, quality performers to follow their lead.

Impairment Group 1

There are many sports for ambulant physically disabled sports participants. Scotland has a tradition of success in performance indoor and outdoor **bowls** and local bowls clubs have a reputation for promoting inclusion through sport. Scotland’s leading physically disabled bowlers are rated number two in the world, and the sport’s classification systems provide options for bowlers with arm and leg impairments, balance difficulties and delivery challenges to enjoy quality competitive sport.

The Scottish FA/SDS partnership has created a structure for **7-a-side football** that has become a model for team sports. Players of all ages with cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and stroke are encouraged to participate in the “beautiful game” as part of a wider development programme. Players with talent have access to Scottish FA/SDS national squad training and international

competitions organised by CPISRA at home and overseas. The sport's robust classification system provides players with functional challenges in their upper and lower extremities a place in the starting line-up.

Oscar Pistorius has taken track **athletics** to a new level of high performance. The double below knee amputee's PB of 45.07secs would have been good enough for fifth place at the Beijing Olympic Games. Advances in prosthetics have opened up many options for amputee athletes and players in indoor, outdoor and water based sports. An absent limb is an impairment, but rarely a barrier to the individual committed to sports.

SDS has a long history of success in disability performance **swimming** development. Scotland's swimming Paralympians past and present have been hugely successful over many years. GB Paralympian Sean Fraser has a lower limb impairment that restricts his function in specific strokes but not his ability to explode from the blocks or perform a dynamic turn. Swimmer attitude, personal determination and quality coaching have provided him with the tools to excel at the Commonwealth Games. The SDS ability based swimming classification system has offered generations of ambulant swimmers with arm, leg and trunk impairments, the opportunity of pan disability competition with a chance of success.

Badminton offers singles and doubles play for ambulant players. Alan Oliver's cerebral palsy restricts his function on one side of his body but not his ability to serve efficiently and effectively and execute a powerful smash. Alan also bats and bowls exceptionally well in **cricket** and **skis** to a very high level. This outstanding all round athlete has now turned his hand to coaching.

Traditional sports offer many varied opportunities for ambulant physically disabled people and in addition there is a whole range of opportunities in winter and water based sports. **Climbing, water skiing and orienteering** are just three inclusive sports that offer challenge, adventure, risk and activity in the great outdoors.

Impairment Group 2

Power and manual wheelchair users have access to a wide range of wheelchair sports. The indoor sport of boccia involves players with severe

mobility difficulties who often have high support needs. The world's leading players demonstrate high levels of accuracy, concentration, discipline and tactical awareness. The game is embedded within the Paralympic programme and international competitions are played on every continent.

Track and Field for wheelchair users is a foundation sport of the Paralympic movement. Since 1948 wheelchairs have become lighter, faster, more manoeuvrable and discipline specific as designers have introduced new materials and designs and athletes have become more skilful and stronger. The throwing frame of the present day bears little resemblance to a wheelchair. The sport's rule makers constantly strive to stay one step ahead of athletes and coaches who attempt to maximise throwing potential.

Wheelchair basketball and rugby are the top spectator sports of every Paralympic Games. Each player is classified according to their level of impairment and each team has to have a mixture of classified players on the court at any one time. A player with severely restricted movement will be balanced by others who are less restricted. Team profiles are set and the skill of the coach is to use his players productively within the rules and restrictions of the sport.

Wheelchair tennis players demonstrate exceptional wheelchair management skills and a two bounce concession is all that differentiates their game from the one played by Andy Murray. Players significantly involved in all four limbs compete against one another and the open class is there for all players who meet the minimum disability criteria for the sport. Wheelchair tennis is played in international arenas all over the world. The Tennis Scotland/SDS partnership is a model of good practice and Gordon Reid and Kevin Simpson have put Scotland on the international map in the sport.

The RCCC and SDS are proud to have played a significant role in leading **wheelchair curling** to a new level and of the success enjoyed by Scottish and British teams since the first international staged in Sursee in Switzerland. The introduction of the extensor cue has offered players with limited mobility and power the opportunity to participate and excel in the sport. Wheelchair curling was introduced to the Winter Paralympic Games in Torino and has been

embraced enthusiastically by clubs in membership of the RCCC throughout Scotland.

Impairment Group 3

Visually impaired and blind athletes and players are classified according to their level of sight. Visual acuity or visual field are assessed by medical classifier specialists. Scots Aileen McGlynn and Neil Fachie, with their respective pilots, have become a world force in track tandem cycling and have demonstrated exceptional skills and fearlessness in velodromes all over the world. The mainstream cycling governing bodies in the UK promote inclusive performance development and leading mainstream cyclists have taken to the tandem to offer the essential pilot support essential to create a world championship team.

Blind and visually impaired **bowlers** demonstrate exceptional levels of patience, precision and accuracy both indoors and outdoors. The “clock face” system is used by a “caller” to communicate how the bowls lie at the “head” and the string or front coaching are methods used at the mat to assist a visually impaired or blind bowler at the point of delivery. Class B1 is for blind bowlers and classes B2 and B3 are for visually impaired bowlers.

SDS is proud of the members of the Clegg family who excel across a range of sports. Libby is a world class **track athlete** who runs with an athlete guide and James is top **swimmer** who relies on a coach to tap him on the head when it's time to execute a turn or finish a race. The classification system is consistent across all sports for blind and visually impaired athletes and players.

Impairment Group 4

Appropriate medical personnel determine if an athlete or player satisfies the minimum disability criteria for deaf sports. Performance deaf sportsmen and women are not eligible to compete in the Paralympic Games but have an equivalent competition called the Deaflympics.

Communication is the major challenge faced by any deaf performance athlete or player across all sports. The relationship between coach and athlete is critical to any successful partnership and **swimmers** Jack McComish and Lucy Walkup have developed strategies with their coaches that have taken them to

the highest levels within their sport and GB representative honours. Communication is about giving and receiving information and only by working through challenges have they built up the trust necessary to mould them into champions.

Team games like **football and rugby** are played extensively by deaf players. Communication between players can be challenging in the intense action that is competitive team sport. Players lose much of the experience of spectator appreciation and officials are very skilled at controlling games in an appropriate manner. Many deaf athletes and players excel in mainstream sport at the highest level. The majority welcome and appreciate the opportunity to train and compete in an environment that recognises the challenges they face living in a non-hearing world.

Impairment Group 5

The involvement of **athletes with a learning disability** in the Paralympic Games in London in 2012 will end a period of exclusion for the largest community of disabled sportsmen and women from the highest level of disability sport. Robust classification procedures are now in place which address critical factors such as age of onset of impairment, level of intellectual disability and impairment impact on sport.

It is a welcome turnaround for Scots such as Craig Rodgie and Scott Quinn who head the **swimming** rankings in the S14 class in 2011 and have broken through into Team GB at the right time. Each swimmer trains and competes in the mainstream and disability swimming world, emphasising the important role played by sport in fostering the principles of inclusion. Both swimmers were introduced to competitive swimming in Scotland through the SDS time banding system which was created and introduced to the SDS senior and junior swimming programme in 1976. Swimmers are identified by their swimming ability or time, then placed in a class or band where they compete against swimmers of similar ability with an equal chance of success. SDS introduced a similar system to **track and field** in the early 80s and increased levels of participation considerably. Each system has survived to the present day with minimal alteration.

Equestrian sports demonstrate clearly the potential for sport to include athletes with severe and complex needs when appropriate support systems are in place. The RDA as the governing body, has over many years perfected volunteer and coach training. The RDA and partners have ensured the sports are fully accessible with the introduction of sophisticated systems for assisting riders with severe balance and mobility difficulties. The hugely positive relationship that develops between horse and rider confirms the benefits of involvement in sport for children, athletes and players with severe learning disabilities.

Special Olympics is an international movement that offers multi sports opportunities to children, athletes and players of all levels of ability with a learning disability. Engagement in major events at home and overseas is a major attraction of the Special Olympics programme but some Scottish areas promote the SO ethos within their local programmes. For over 30 years SDS and SOGB have worked together and the beneficiaries have been the athletes, players and coaches who have experienced a smooth transition from one programme to the other. The commitment of each organisation to the sporting development of children, athletes and players with a learning disability is very “special” in Scotland.

Summary

This digest has attempted to identify the athletes and players who are eligible to participate in disability sport. It charts some of the history of SDS involvement with the growth of disability sport at home and overseas and identifies some of the sports popularised by athletes and players with different impairments. The principles of inclusion through sport are evident throughout. The regular appearance of great Scottish athletes and players and coaches epitomise why SDS is proud of its history and current position, but will never be complacent about its future going forward.

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