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Eligible Impairment Types

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This document details the policy regarding eligible impairment types for the sport of Wheelchair Rugby.

General Provisions

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) *Policy on Eligible Impairments in the Paralympic Movement* defines ten eligible impairment types for athletes who participate in sport in the Paralympic Movement.

Under the provisions of the *2015 IPC Athlete Classification Code*, all International Federations governing Paralympic sports are required to clearly define which impairment types may be eligible for participation in the sports that they govern.

As the international governing body for the sport of Wheelchair Rugby, WWR has the authority and responsibility to determine which impairment types are eligible to participate in the sport.

Eligible Impairment Types

Athletes with any of the following impairment types may be eligible to participate in Wheelchair Rugby:

Impaired muscle power

Impairments in this category have in common that there is reduced force generated by the contraction of a muscle or muscle groups, such as muscles of one limb, one side of the body or the lower half of the body. Examples of conditions included in this category are paraplegia and quadriplegia, muscular dystrophy, post poliomyelitis and spina bifida.

Impaired passive range of movement

The range of movement in one or more joint is reduced in a systematic way, for example due to arthrogryposis. However, hypermobility of joints, joint instability, and acute conditions causing reduced range of movement, such as arthritis, are not considered eligible impairments.

Limb deficiency

There is a total or partial absence of bones or joints as a consequence of trauma (e.g. traumatic amputation), illness (e.g. bone cancer) or congenital limb deficiency (e.g. dysmelia)

Hypertonia

Hypertonia is a condition marked by an abnormal increase in muscle tension and a reduced ability of a muscle to stretch. Hypertonia may result from injury, illness, or conditions that involve damage to the central nervous system. When the condition occurs in children under the age of two, the term cerebral palsy is often used, but it also can be due to brain injury (e.g. stroke, trauma) or multiple sclerosis.

Ataxia

Ataxia is a neurological sign and symptom that consists of a lack of co-ordination of muscle movements. When the condition occurs in children under the age of two, the term cerebral palsy is often used, but it also can be due to brain injury (e.g. stroke, trauma) or multiple sclerosis.

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Athetosis

Athetosis can vary from mild to severe motor dysfunction. It is generally characterised by unbalanced, involuntary movements and a difficulty in maintaining a symmetrical posture. When the condition occurs in children under the age of two, the term cerebral palsy is often used, but it also can be due to brain injury (e.g. stroke, trauma).

The simple presence of an eligible impairment type does not mean that an individual will be eligible to participate in Wheelchair Rugby. The individual must also meet the minimum eligibility requirements as defined in the WWR Classification Rules, and must be evaluated and given an eligible WWR Sport Class and Status.

Ineligible Impairment Types

Athletes with the following impairment types are not eligible for Wheelchair Rugby, unless they also have one of the eligible impairment types:

Leg length difference

Due to congenital deficiency or trauma, bone shortening occurs in one leg.

Short stature

The standing height is reduced due to aberrant dimensions of bones of upper and lower limbs or trunk, for example due to Achondroplasia or growth hormone dysfunction.

Vision impairment

Vision is impacted by either an impairment of the eye structure, optical nerves or optical pathways, or visual cortex of the central brain.

Intellectual impairment

An intellectual impairment is characterised by a limitation in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills. This impairment originates before the age of 18.

In addition to the above, athletes with impairment types that are considered non-eligible impairments by the IPC are not eligible for Wheelchair Rugby. Examples of such non-eligible impairments include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Pain
- Hearing impairment
- Low muscle tone
- Hypermobility of joints
- Joint instability, e.g. unstable shoulder joint, recurrent dislocation of a joint
- Impaired muscle endurance
- Impaired motor reflex functions
- Impaired cardiovascular functions

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- Impaired respiratory functions
- Impaired metabolic functions
- Tics and mannerisms, stereotypes and motor perseveration

Classification Process

As part of the classification process, individuals may be asked to provide evidence that they possess one of the eligible impairment types. This may include evidence of any or all of the following:

- the Eligible Impairment;
- that the Eligible Impairment is Permanent; and/or
- an Underlying Health Condition that is the cause of the Eligible Impairment

Appeals

Appeals of a decision that an individual is not eligible to participate in Wheelchair Rugby because they do not possess an eligible impairment type will only be accepted if the appeal presents evidence that the individual actually possesses one of the eligible impairment types.

No appeal will be accepted on the basis that an athlete with only an ineligible impairment type should nevertheless be eligible for Wheelchair Rugby for reasons that do not relate to the actual presence of an eligible impairment type.

Transitional Provision

Any athlete who has an eligible WWR Sport Class and Status on January 1, 2018, and who does not possess one of the six eligible impairment types, will remain eligible to participate in the sport of Wheelchair Rugby with that sport class and status.

Any such athlete will still be subject to the WWR Classification Rules and may still be subject to appeal or ineligibility based on those rules.

This provision applies to only to competitions governed by WWR.