

MEMORANDUM

To: IPC Membership
From: Peter Van de Vliet, IPC Medical & Scientific Director
Date: 15 December 2009
Re: Re-Inclusion of Athletes with Intellectual Impairment in Paralympic Sports

In November 2009, the IPC General Assembly voted in favour of the re-inclusion of Athletes with Intellectual Impairment in the London 2012 Paralympic Games and beyond. The decision is based upon receipt of the progress report that was submitted by the joint IPC – INAS-FID Working Group that was established in 2007.

This Working Group was mandated by the IPC Governing Board and the INAS-FID Executive Committee to develop an action plan on the basis of:

- a conceptual framework for the development of a sport-specific eligibility criteria system;
- the provisions of the IPC Classification Code to ensure a sport-specific classification system.

The joint IPC – INAS-FID Working Group met on several occasions and provided updates of their work to both the IPC Governing Board and the INAS-FID Executive Committee. The action plan was approved by the IPC Governing Board in March 2009 and the INAS-FID General Assembly in April 2009.

The action plan also formed the basis of the meetings with researchers that have been attracted to support the development of the sport-specific testing (see further). Throughout the process, the model and approach also has been presented to representatives of the different sports targeted for immediate inclusion (see further).

What was the purpose of a ‘conceptual framework’ and ‘action plan’?

Classification under the IPC Classification Code is a system that sets eligibility criteria and ensures that an athlete’s impairment is relevant to sport performance, minimizing the impact of the impairment on the outcome of competition. Additionally, the methods used to assess impairments under this definition of Classification should be reliable and preferably based on research



indicating the relative impact of the impairment on the core activities of the sport.

The above criteria guided the development of a framework for 'Classification' of athletes with an Intellectual Impairment by the IPC-INAS-FID (International Sports Federation for Persons with an Intellectual Disability) Working Group.

Athletes with an Intellectual Impairment are challenged by limitations in the cognitive or intellectual functioning area, and therefore an assessment of cognition in relationship to sport demands is needed to set criteria for inclusion in Paralympic Sport. Derived from different theoretical models in educational and clinical psychology, the key components of cognition or intellectual functioning that likely have sport specific applications include: reasoning, working memory and learning, visual-spatial perception, reaction time and processing speed, attention and concentration, and executive function. These components can jointly be referred to as 'sports intelligence'.

Which sports foresee participation opportunities for Athletes with Intellectual Impairment?

The decision of the IPC General Assembly confirms that events for Athletes with Intellectual Impairment will be included in the London 2012 Paralympic Games programme. The following sports foresee for such inclusion:

- IPC Swimming (IPC)
- IPC Athletics (IPC)
- Table Tennis (ITTF)
- Rowing (FISA)

The final decision on inclusion is the responsibility of the International Federation that has jurisdiction over the sport on the Paralympic Games programme. This decision, including the identification of the medal events and the applicable qualification standards for the London 2012 Paralympic Games, is due no later than Autumn 2010 (early 2011 for IPC Athletics). Inclusion will be implemented in a progressive way, starting with a limited number of events.

The inclusion of Athletes with an Intellectual Impairment will be **in addition** to the programme currently worked out for the other impairment groups. The inclusion of Athletes with Intellectual Impairments will NOT lead to a reduction of the number of participating athletes in other impairment groups.

Sports other than those listed above that seek for inclusion of Athletes with Intellectual Impairment should liaise with the Working Group to seek guidance on the process and should extend their classification system on the basis of the above model.



How do Athletes that seek participation proceed through the administration – classification procedure?

1. Step 1. Eligibility Criteria

- 1.1. An athlete who wants to enter in Paralympic Sport in a class for Athletes with an Intellectual Impairment needs to submit the 'Eligibility Application' to INAS-FID, using the documents provided by INAS-FID (available from www.inas-fid.org).
- 1.2. The 'Eligibility Application' needs to be submitted to INAS-FID (contact details under *'Whom to contact for further questions?'*), through the national INAS-FID Member. Counter signing by the National Paralympic Committee is NOT needed.
- 1.3. Upon receipt, INAS-FID will review the application as follows:
 - 1.3.1. The application should include prove of diagnosis of 'Intellectual Impairment' as defined by the internationally accepted authorities:
 - 1.3.1.1. IQ-measure 75 or below;
 - 1.3.1.2. Limitations in Adaptive Behaviour; and
 - 1.3.1.3. Age of onset < 18 years.
 - 1.3.2. Evidence on the IQ-measure (see point 1.1.1.1) shall be submitted using test results from a test instrument that is included in the closed list of IQ-tests accepted by INAS-FID.
 - 1.3.3. Evidence on the Adaptive Behaviour shall be submitted through means of an internationally recognized and professionally administered questionnaire or survey (norm-referenced for the population of the country of origin). In countries where no such test exists, assessment may be on the basis of clinical observations by certified psychologists.
 - 1.3.4. Evidence on the Age requirement shall be submitted by providing a declaration of a certified psychologist or by proof of assessments (1.3.2 and 1.3.3) taking place before the age of 18.
- 1.4. The verification process is conducted by an INAS-FID 'International Eligibility Committee', which has at least three members. This International expert panel will review the content of all submissions and advice INAS-FID to either accept the documentation in support of the Athlete eligibility; either dismisses awaiting completion of the files or clarification on the open issues.
- 1.5. Following the verification process, INAS-FID will issue a letter to the National Member that has jurisdiction over the Athlete, stating:



- 1.5.1. The athlete is found 'Eligible' and is allowed to proceed to step 2 of the assessment process (see point 2). A copy of this letter will be transferred to the International Federation that has the governance on the sport for which the athlete registers; or
- 1.5.2. The athlete is found 'Ineligible' and therefore not allowed to proceed to step 2 of the process
- 1.6. INAS-FID will publish, and update on a regular basis, the INAS-FID Classification Master List. This List includes the names of all athletes who successfully passed Step 1 of the classification process.
- 2. Step 2. On-site verification process (testing) Sports Intelligence**
 - 2.1. After successful completion of step 1 (see point 1.5.1) the athlete will proceed to on-site testing at forthcoming occasion by a classification panel, appointed by the International Federation responsible for that sport.
 - 2.2. Parallel to this assessment pathway, the athlete needs to be duly entered into competition for that sport in accordance with the rules and regulations of the International Federation (e.g. registered or licensed).
 - 2.3. The on-site testing will focus on the assessment of cognitive domain factors, relevant to that particular sport. This may include the assessment of reasoning, reaction time, visual-spatial abilities and working memory, jointly referred to as 'sports intelligence'.
 - 2.4. Details of this sport-specific testing will be outlined in the Classification Handbook that applies for that particular sport.
 - 2.5. The test score will be evaluated against sport-specific minimal disability scores and the athlete will be allocated the sport class that applies to ID athletes in a particular sport. Failure to meet the sport-specific minimal disability scores will lead to allocation of sport class 'Ineligibility to Compete'. The sport-specific minimal disability scores may be revisited at regular intervals to strengthen the fairness of the system.
 - 2.6. In case of objection against the decision of the classification panel, the athlete will be entitled to protest in accordance with the sport classification rules and the IPC Classification Code International Standard for Protest and Appeals.
 - 2.7. Details on the rules and regulations that apply per sport will be an integral part of the sport classification rules.



3. Step 3. Observation in Competition.

- 3.1. The assessment of performance parameters (overall sport proficiency, physical profile, technical and tactical skills, environmental characteristics) may complement the athlete assessment, if the sport-specific classification rules allow for such assessment.
- 3.2. Inconsistencies between the on-site testing and the observation in competition may allow for protest submission in accordance with the sport classification rules.

Where are we today (December 2009)?

The IPC General Assembly acknowledged that certain elements of the classification process have not yet been completed. Whilst changes to the primary eligibility check are complete and in operation ('Step 1'), the test procedures for sport-specific classification (point 2.3) are currently under development.

Consequently, also the development of sport-specific minimal disability scores (point 2.5) will require further analysis of research data collected from Summer 2009 onwards. No later than the date of the start of the London 2012 Paralympic Games qualification period in the relevant sports, sport-specific minimal disability scores for the London 2012 Paralympic Games will be published.

Until the project is finalized, the inclusion of Athletes with Intellectual Impairment in dedicated events will be on the basis of a research project ('testing'). This implies that we are not able to make participation in the testing mandatory. We however appreciate your full support to the project.

Awaiting finalization of the project, events for athletes with an Intellectual Impairment will be ensured under conditions set by the respective IF, temporary sport-specific minimal disability scores may apply and sport class status 'Review' will be allocated to each athlete that participates in events for Athletes with an Intellectual Impairment.

What should National Federations currently do?

National INAS-FID member organizations should work closely with their NPCs and National Sports Federations (e.g., for Table Tennis and Rowing) to establish mutual co-operation to facilitate the administrative pathways for re-inclusion of Athletes with Intellectual Impairments in Paralympic sports.

National INAS-FID member organizations are responsible for 'Step 1' of the process. This procedure should be initiated at earliest convenience. The collection of all evidence as well as the review by INAS-FID may take some



time, and athletes will not be able to proceed to 'Step 2' without the needed approval.

National Federations (e.g., NPCs, National members of ITTF and FISA) need to duly register athletes they target for inclusion in future Competitions and Events. This registration goes under the provisions set by the respective International Federations:

International Paralympic Committee (IPC) for IPC Athletics and IPC Swimming

International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) for Table Tennis

International Rowing Federation (FISA) for Rowing

Whom to contact for further questions?

For detailed information on the eligibility and sport-specific procedures:

- general eligibility information: www.inas-fid.org.
- IPC Athletics: www.ipc-athletics.paralympic.org
- IPC Swimming: www.ipc-swimming.org
- ITTF: www.ittf.com (section Para-TT)
- FISA: www.worldrowing.com

For further general questions and or clarification on the process and procedures:

- INAS-FID Secretariat, inas-fid@mencap.org.uk
- IPC Medical & Scientific Director, peter.vandevliet@paralympic.org
(contact for the IPC – INAS-FID Working Group)

Updates on the processes will be provided as available in the next period.

General Background Information

- 2000** • Violation of the eligibility process and procedures for Athletes with Intellectual Impairments during the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games.
- 2001** • INAS-FID suspended from IPC Membership by the IPC Executive Committee.
 - IPC General Assembly imposed the following criteria to be met in order for INAS-FID to be reinstated as an IPC Member: **Confirmation of impact intellectual disability on sport performance, determination of 'minimum handicap' and sport specific criteria and Implementation of protest procedures.**
- 2002** • No events held for athletes with an intellectual disability at the Salt Lake 2002 Paralympic Winter Games.
 - The IPC Executive Committee found that INAS-FID had not



met the conditions established by the IPC General Assembly and athletes with an intellectual disability were not included on the ATHENS 2004 Paralympic Games event programme.

- 2003**
 - The IPC Executive Committee approved the establishment of a joint IPC/INAS-FID Eligibility Verification Committee.
 - The IPC Executive Committee agreed that a limited number of exhibition events for athletes with an intellectual disability would be included in the ATHENS 2004 Paralympic Games.
- 2004**
 - Exhibition events held for athletes with an intellectual disability at the ATHENS 2004 Paralympic Games in Basketball and Table Tennis.
 - INAS-FID's Membership to the IPC was reaffirmed by the IPC Executive Committee.
 - The IPC Extraordinary General Assembly found that INAS-FID had not met the established criteria.
 - The IPC Extraordinary General Assembly approved that the IPC should 'actively direct' the development of 'mutually acceptable eligibility and verification systems'.
- 2005**
 - The General Group was established and comprehensive research conducted in the field of athletes with an intellectual disability.
 - Following a presentation of provisional findings of research the IPC General Assembly acknowledged that progress has been made but that sport specific criteria had not been achieved.
 - The IPC General Assembly requested that the IPC Governing Board decides by June 2006 on the status of athletes with an intellectual disability in IPC sanctioned competitions.
- 2006**
 - Research report was presented to IPC Governing Board.
 - The current status of the general eligibility system for athletes with an intellectual disability does not provide for sufficient confidence to allow athletes with an intellectual disability to participate in the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games.
- 2007**
 - An IPC/INAS-FID Working Group, with representatives from the governance and management of both the IPC and INAS-FID, as well as sports scientists appointed by both parties, was given the mandate by the IPC Governing Board and INAS-FID Executive Committee "to appraise the present position,



consider the options and make recommendations that, taken together, may ensure the re-inclusion of athletes with intellectual disability in the London 2012 Paralympic Games and beyond.”

- 2008**
- A group of researchers started the development of ID Classification systems for Athletics, Swimming, Table Tennis and Basketball under the above model. Representatives of the sports assisted this work and brought particular sport-specific expertise and reflections to the discussions and proposals.
- 2009**
- A large-scale research project to assess the tools and procedures developed was conducted at the 2009 INAS-FID Global Games in Liberec, Czech Republic, in July. The research project was conducted by 35 researchers representing five partnering universities and centres. It aimed to test the standardization of instruments and test instructions, but also to assess the relationship between the tests and the demands of the sports.
 - The IPC General Assembly decided on re-inclusion of Athletes with Intellectual Impairments in the London 2012 Paralympic Games and beyond.