An overview of Rowing Classification & What it takes to be an Elite Para Rower

7th October 2020
Engaging Individuals with a Disability in Rowing
Worcester College for the Blind
Sightless Soldiers
Recreation (1916) First World War | BFI
SIGHTLESS SOLDIERS
RECREATION

After working at useful trades
during the day, blind soldiers from
St. Dunstan’s Hostel, enjoying a row
on the Regent’s Park lake, with a
lady as coxswain.
General Classification Overview

The Beginnings

- Dr Ludwig Guttmann - Stoke Mandeville Games 1948 - 1959

- Classification based on Medical Diagnosis, not Functional Ability

- Functional/Sport Specific Classification System began in the 1980’s and by 1992 all Paralympic Sports use a Functional Model

- Current exceptions:
“FISA recognises and accepts that the respective classifications encompass a range of disabilities and that there will be rowers with disabilities which may be greater than the minimum and who may therefore be at a disadvantage competing in their respective sport class”

“Places Para-Rowers in groupings with other rowers of similar ability to provide competition as fair as possible”

Dr Michael Riding, Chief Medical Officer IPC, 2001
Gender Equity
The PR3 Sport Class includes athletes with a verifiable and permanent disability who meet the minimum disability (loss of 10 points in one limb or 15 points in two limbs) or an IBSA class of B1, B2 or B3 and are able to use a sliding seat with their legs, trunk and arms to perform the rowing stroke.
The PR3 Mix2x Class includes athletes who have either a loss of 20 points in one limb or an IBSA class of B1 or B2 and able to use a sliding seat with their legs, trunk and arms to perform the rowing stroke.
The PR2 sport class includes athletes who have functional use of the trunk movement and who are unable to use the sliding seat to propel the boat because of significantly weakened function or mobility of the lower limbs.
The PR1 class is for rowers who have no or minimal trunk function. A PR1 class rower is able to apply force predominantly using the arms and/or shoulders. These rowers will also likely have decreased sitting balance.
Prerequisites for Classification

- Submission of FISA medical diagnostics form
- Signed Letter from medical doctor confirming medical diagnosis with supporting diagnostic tests (X-rays, MRI, EMG reports)
- Signed consent form from athlete before classification process
- Declaration of medical conditions during athlete interview

PREREQUISITES FOR CLASSIFICATION
Permanent Impairment

‘As well as being one of the seven eligible impairments listed, the impairment should be considered permanent - meaning it’s unlikely to be resolved and it's principal effects are lifelong’
Classification Process

Permanent Verifiable Health Condition → Eligible Impairment → Minimum Impairment Criteria Met → Functional Ability to Perform Rowing Stroke → Sport Class
Process for Classification of Visually Impaired Athletes

Completion of VI diagnostics form and evidence of eligibility through impaired acuity and/or field vision

Medical Evidence: confirm 1 of the 5 IBSA ‘Eye Conditions’

Eligible Eye Conditions
1. Anterior disease
2. Macular disease
3. Peripheral retina disease
4. Optic Nerve disease
5. Cortical/Neurological disease

Ophthalmologist or Optometrist to determine that athlete meets minimum eligibility -

Acuity < 6/60 [1.00 LogMAR]
or
Field < 20 degrees

Athlete assigned Sport Class: B1, B2, B3, N/E
Process for Classification of Physically Impaired Athletes

Medical Evidence: of a permanent and verifiable health condition

Eligibility: confirm 1 of the 7 IPC/FISA eligible impairments

Classification Medical Evaluation: Meets minimum eligibility: Loss of points (AFROM, Strength, Coordination Deficit)

Water Observation: Place athlete in sport class: PR3, PR2, PR1

Classification Technical Evaluation: Assessment of functional ability to perform rowing stroke
Certain athletes with impairments that significantly impact their daily life may not be eligible for Paralympic sport. Athletes who don’t meet the eligibility criteria should be encouraged to continue to compete in sport while also supported to understand why they are not on a Paralympic pathway.
Para-Rowing Classifiers

- Medical Classifiers: Medical Doctor, Physiotherapist
- Technical Classifiers: Rowing Coach, Former Rower

- Appointed by FISA at the recommendation of the FISA Classification Advisory Panel (CAP)
- Experience with Para-Rowing Preferred but not essential
- Medical and Technical
Medical
All athletes will be classified with and without prosthetics or orthotics. Rowsers may not change sport class based on prosthetic/orthotic use. Sports Class will be issued based on “best functional ability”.
Technical Land and Water Evaluation
Thank you!

Questions!
Physical Parameters

**Age range:** 16-40

- **Height** >180cm
- **Arm Span** >180cm
- **Weight** 70-110kg

- **Seated height** >90cm
- **Seated height** >85cm

- **Height** >170cm
- **Arm Span** >170cm
- **Weight** 60-80kg

Existing athletes with experience at National/International level may have a greater chance of long-term success.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport Class</th>
<th>Competitive Disability</th>
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| **PR3** \n(Previously known as LTA – Legs Trunk Arms) | Restricted ankle/wrist movement (e.g. fused ankle, club foot)  
Three finger amputation on one hand  
B3/B2 visual impairment  
Below knee amputee with residual stump longer than half of original tibia length  
Erb’s Palsy |
| **PR2** \n(Previously known as TA – Trunk Arms) | Significantly reduced knee flexion (e.g. fused knee, deformation of hip/knee area)  
Bilateral lower limb amputee (one above knee, one below)  
Incomplete spinal cord lesion |
| **PR1** \n(Previously known as AS – Arms Shoulder) | Incomplete spinal cord lesion  
Complete T12 spinal cord lesion  
Bilateral above knee amputee |
Technical & Tactical Skills

RACE STRATEGIES & PREPARATION

SPEED-WORK

LAND-BASED EXERCISES

WATER-BASED CONFIDENCE DRILLS

WATER-BASED CORE SKILLS
Psychological Profile

Psychological Characteristic

Motivation & Drive

What this looks like (Observable behaviour)

✓ Independent and organized
✓ Asks questions
✓ Demonstrates positivity and ‘energy’

Working well with others

✓ Capable of giving and receiving feedback
✓ Demonstrates leadership
✓ Demonstrates a level of enjoyment
✓ High standards and holds self and others to account
Lifestyle & Logistical Considerations

**Appropriate** and **measured** interventions/support at each level of development.

- Location & training facilities
- Education requirements
- Equipment needs
- Access to coaching
- Occupation status
- Access to support services
Progression Framework & Criteria

- **TALENT IDENTIFICATION**
  - Shows potential
  - Classifies
  - Talented

- **CLASSIFICATION & TESTING**
  - Consistent performances and commitment
  - Shows commitment & progression

- **CONFIRMATION PHASE**
  - ELITE
  - PHASE 3
  - PHASE 2
  - PHASE 1

- **PHASE 1**
  - CLUB/OTHER SPORT

- **PHASE 2**
  - CLUB/OTHER SPORT

- **PHASE 3**
  - CLUB/OTHER SPORT
Monitoring & Reviewing

**What?**
Performance data, training logs, etc...

**How?**
Training app, shared folders, database

**When?**
Annual, seasonal, quarterly, smaller?

**By Whom?**
Coach, support staff, performance managers, head coach

**Where?**
All relevant locations

**FLEXIBILITY**
Case Study - Athlete 1

2017

JULY
IDENTIFICATION via national T.I.D. event

NOVEMBER
CONFIRMATION via submission of performance test

DECEMBER
PHASE 1 via performance test and classification paperwork

2018

JANUARY
PHASE 2 including international classification error, further performance testing and additional programme support

MAY – JUNE
PHASE 3 including partial re-location and greater time investment

JULY – AUGUST
PHASE 4 including WC crew selection, full relocation, full access to support services and National training centre

SEPTEMBER
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP GOLD MEDAL IN BOAT CLASS
Thank you!