

# VSA MEET HANDBOOK

## PART TWO

### CHAMPIONSHIP MEETS

(Updated April 2015)

## Article 202.5

### Eligibility of Graduating Seniors

(Extended)

#### Special Olympic Athletes

#### Excerpt from Article 2 - Eligibility

##### **Article 2.01 A**

Every person with an intellectual disability who is at least eight years of age is eligible to participate in Special Olympics.

*For the purpose of the VSA championship meets, swimmers must qualify for the VSA Championship. Special Olympic athlete graduating seniors, however, are eligible to compete in the VSA Championship regardless if they have achieved a qualifying standard and regardless of their age.*

##### **Article 2.01 D**

A person is considered to have an intellectual disability for purposes of determining his or her eligibility to participate in Special Olympics if that person satisfies any one of the following requirements:

The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability as determined by their localities; or the person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligent quotient or "IQ" testing or other measures which are generally accepted within the professional community in that Accredited Program's nation as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; or the person has a closely related developmental disability

# **Layman's Guide to Paralympic Classification**

## **1. What is Classification?**

Classification provides a structure for competition. Athletes competing in Paralympic sports have an impairment that leads to a competitive disadvantage in sport. Consequently, a system has to be put in place to minimize the impact of impairments on sport performance and to ensure the success of an athlete is determined by skill, fitness, power, endurance, tactical ability and mental focus. This system is called classification. Classification determines who is eligible to compete in a Paralympic sport and it groups the eligible athletes in sport classes according to their activity limitation in a certain sport.

## **2. Ten eligible impairments**

The Paralympic Movement offers sport opportunities for athletes with physical, visual and intellectual impairments and these can be divided into 10 eligible impairment types.

There are eight different types of physical impairments in the Paralympic Movement:

- Impaired muscle power: With impairments in this category, the force generated by muscles, such as the muscles of one limb, one side of the body or the lower half of the body is reduced, e.g. due to spinal-cord injury, spina bifida or polio.
- Impaired passive range of movement: Range of movement in one or more joints is reduced in a systematic way. Acute conditions such as arthritis are not included.
- Loss of limb or limb deficiency: There is a total or partial absence of bones or joints as a consequence of amputation due to illness or trauma or congenital limb deficiency (e.g. dysmelia).
- Leg-length difference: Significant bone shortening occurs in one leg due to congenital deficiency or trauma.
- Short stature: Standing height is reduced due to shortened legs, arms and trunk, which are due to a musculoskeletal deficit of bone or cartilage structures.
- Hypertonia: Hypertonia is marked by an abnormal increase in muscle tension and reduced ability of a muscle to stretch. Hypertonia may result from injury, disease, or conditions which involve damage to the central nervous system (e.g. cerebral palsy). Page 2 of 20

- Ataxia: Ataxia is an impairment that consists of a lack of co-ordination of muscle movements (e.g. cerebral palsy, Friedreich's ataxia).
- Athetosis: Athetosis is generally characterized by unbalanced, involuntary movements and a difficulty maintaining a symmetrical posture (e.g. cerebral palsy, choreoathetosis).

In addition to athletes with physical impairment, athletes with a visual or intellectual impairment are also included in the Paralympic Movement.

Visual impairment: Visual Impairment occurs when there is damage to one or more of the components of the vision system, which can include:

- Impairment of the eye structure/receptors
- Impairment of the optic nerve/optic pathways
- Impairment of the visual cortex

Intellectual Impairment: Athletes with an intellectual impairment are limited in regards to intellectual functions and their adaptive behaviour, which is diagnosed before the age of 18 years.

## **Swimming**

**Physical Impairment:** Yes

**Visual Impairment:** Yes

**Intellectual impairment:** Yes

## **Sport Classes**

The sport class names in Swimming consist of a prefix "S," "SM," or "SB" and a number. The prefixes stand for the strokes and the number indicates the sport classes. The prefixes stand for:

- S: Freestyle, Butterfly and Backstroke events
- SM: Individual Medley
- SB: Breaststroke Sport

## Classes S1 - S10: Physical impairment

There are ten different sport classes for athletes with physical impairment, numbered 1-10. A lower number indicates a more severe activity limitation than a higher number.

You will notice that athletes with different impairments compete against each other. The impact of their impairment on swim performance, however, is similar.

The following gives a few examples for impairments described in each sport class profile:

**S1 SB1 SM1** Swimmers in this sport class have a significant loss of muscle power or control in legs, arms and hands. Some athletes also have limited trunk control, as it may occur with tetraplegia. These impairments may be caused by spinal-cord injuries or polio. Swimmers in this class usually use a wheelchair in daily life.

**S2 SB1 SM2** Swimmers in this sport class are able to use their arms with no use of their hands, legs or trunk or have severe coordination problems in 4 limbs. As in sport class S1 SB1 SM1, athletes mostly only compete in backstroke events.

**S3 SB2 SM3** This sport class includes athletes with amputations of all four limbs. Swimmers with reasonable arm strokes but no use of their legs or trunk and swimmers with severe coordination problems in all limbs are also included in this sport class.

**S4 SB3 SM4** Swimmers who can use their arms and have minimal weakness in their hands, but cannot use their trunk or legs. Athletes with amputations of three limbs also swim in this sport class. Page 15 of 20

**S5 SB4 SM5** Swimmers with short stature and an additional impairment, with loss of control over one side of their body (hemiplegia) or with paraplegia compete in this sport class.

**S6 SB5 SM6** This sport class includes swimmers with short stature, amputations of both arms or moderate coordination problems on one side of their body.

**S7 SB6 SM7** This profile is designated for athletes with one leg and one arm amputation on opposite sides, double leg amputations or a paralysis of one arm and one leg on the same side. Moreover, swimmers with full control over arms and trunk and some leg function can compete in this class.

**S8 SB7 SM8** Swimmers who have lost either both hands or one arm are eligible to compete in this sport class. Also, athletes with severe restrictions in the joints of the lower limbs could compete in this sport class.

**S9 SB8 SM9** Athletes in this sport class swim with joint restrictions in one leg, double below-the-knee amputations or an amputation of one leg.

**S10 SB9 SM10** This class describes the minimal impairments of eligible swimmers with physical impairment. Eligible impairments would be the loss of a hand or both feet and a significantly limited function of one hip joint.

**Sport Classes 11-13: Visual Impairment**

Swimmers with visual impairment compete in the sport classes 11-13, with 11 meaning a complete or nearly complete loss of sight and 13 describing the minimum eligible visual impairment. Athletes in sport class 11 compete with blackened goggles.

Sport Classes 14: Intellectual impairment Swimmers with intellectual impairment who also meet the sport-specific criteria compete in sport class 14.