



# World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

May 2022 | Issue #23

## European Championships in Manchester Promise to Be Groundbreaking



### Here "We train together, so it's about time we compete together" - GB world champion Bradley Sinden

*Para Taekwondo is set to mark another first by seeing Para athletes fight alongside their able-bodied counterparts in real-time when the Para Taekwondo and Taekwondo European Championships are held concurrently for the first time this month in Manchester, Great Britain.*

Para Taekwondo's stars will have an opportunity like none before when they step up to the mat at the European Para Taekwondo Championships this month as they'll be fighting side-by-side with their able-bodied teammates.

Record audiences for Para Taekwondo – both live and on TV through event broadcaster BBC – will add another element of excitement for the athletes. And it's not just the Para athletes that are pumped.

"The Olympics is all one ring, but at the Europeans – it's one hall and it's not just Olympic athletes. We also have Para athletes competing as well – the first time it's been fully integrated. So, fans will get to cheer on the whole team", Great Britain's former world champion and Olympic silver medalist **Bradley Sinden** told the

“We train together, so it’s about time we compete together”.

## Previews of Paris 2024?

The set-up has attracted some of the world’s top athletes, setting up early previews of what could end up being Paris 2024 podium battles.

The women’s -65 kg category looks particularly exciting, with a potential Paralympic final rematch between Denmark’s Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing** and Paralympic runner-up and home favourite **Beth Munro**. The pair met last month at the Pan American championships, with Gjessing again coming out on top. Throw in Turkey’s world champion **Secil Er** and Ukraine’s world championship bronze medalist **Yuliya Lypetska**, and four of the world’s Top 5 fighters will compete in Manchester.

Fans will also want to keep their eyes on the women’s +65 kg group, which could feature a trilogy fight between two of the greatest women Para fighters in the world – Great Britain’s 2017 world champion **Amy Truesdale** and Uzbekistan’s 2021 world champion **Guljonoy Naimova**. Truesdale won her world title at home in London and will be looking for ‘home mat advantage’ again as she tries to get past the world No. 1 after falling to her at the Tokyo 2020 semi-final and 2021 world championship final.

The event could also mark the emergence of Great Britain’s **Joseph Lane** in the men’s -80 kg category. Lane narrowly missed out on qualifying for Tokyo 2020 in an exhilarating Paralympic qualification tournament finale, before traveling to Tokyo (and putting on kilos!) to replace injured teammate **Matt Bush** in the Paralympic heavyweight division. The experience was invaluable for Lane, who made his first world championship final in 2021, falling to RTU’s **Magomedzagir Isaldibirov** to claim silver. A triumph at home would mark Lane’s first international gold medal and his first European title.

**Matt Bush**, the 2019 world champion is still out with injury.

## A Step Towards Equity

The event will mark one of the first examples in the Para sports world of Para athletes competing alongside their able-bodied counterparts.

Equity between able-bodied and Para athletes has long been a goal of the International Paralympic Committee and several Para sports have been featured at able-bodied world championships, including athletics - but only as a “demonstration event”.

Rarely are competitions held concurrently.

Often, Para competitions are organised together with able-bodied competitions, but Para tournaments tend to happen before or after the able-bodied competitions. The result of holding the competitions together will be more people seeing Para Taekwondo for the first time.

The Manchester 2022 organisers, through the guidance of Great Britain Taekwondo, led to the implementation. The plan is for the same set-up at the Grand Prix event in Manchester later this summer.

Having able-bodied and Para athletes compete concurrently is an idea taking root in several Para sports.

Next month at the Oceania Athletics Championships, Para athletics will for the first time hold Para competitions concurrently with able-bodied competitions.

“In a world first for International Athletics competitions”, reads a press release from Oceania Athletics, “Para athletes will compete for Oceania Championships medals at the same time [and] at the same venue [as able-bodied athletes]”.

That Para Taekwondo will be the first to do so clearly impresses the European Taekwondo Union, who recently restructured its European Para Taekwondo Union (EPTU).

“The EPTU will raise the visibility of Taekwondo as a Para sport in Europe and will encourage more youngsters in particular – but not only in this age group – to take up Taekwondo as a Para sport”, said Vice-President of the European Para Taekwondo Union **Dr. Susan Harris-Hummert**.

“Seeing Para Taekwondo events running alongside non-Para events at the upcoming European Championships in Manchester is a particular pleasure to us”.



## The Grand Prix Series Could Be Your Ticket to Paris 2024



### Para Taekwondo's First Grand Prix Series Kicks Off Next Month in Sofia

It's showtime!

Are you ready for the next big thing in Para Taekwondo – because it's finally here!

After a few aborted attempts, Para Taekwondo is about to introduce its newest big-ticket event – the Grand Prix series.

Nine years after introducing the must-see event on the able-bodied side, Para Taekwondo athletes will now be able to strut their stuff and earn big ranking points as the race to Paris 2024 kicks off in earnest this summer.

**What is the Grand Prix Series?**

The Grand Prix series is World Taekwondo's premiere event series, where only each division's top fighters are invited – with the chance to earn big ranking points and prize money.

For the inaugural Para Taekwondo Grand Prix Series, cash prizes will not be awarded. Still, with three G-6 events in five months, success at the Grands Prix could go a long way to securing a ticket to Paris 2024.

The Top 16 fighters in each weight category are invited to participate in a made-for-TV-style competition. Fighters enter the arena to rock music by "ring walk" to battle in a single elimination-style tournament.

Grand Prix event champions will earn 60 ranking points, meaning up to 180 ranking points are up for grabs this summer.

The first event will take place on 6 June in Sofia, Bulgaria in a standalone event while able-bodied Taekwondoists compete at a Grand Prix in Rome.

Later Grand Prix events will take in Paris, France in September and Manchester, Great Britain in October alongside the able-bodied Grand Prix series.

### **How can I participate?**

Participation is by invite only. The Top 16 ranked fighters will be invited to participate.

Lower-ranked fighters will be invited in the event of any declined invitations.

Invitations are extended based on the global rankings two months in the advance of an event. Fighters must have been classified at an earlier event. In other words, classification is not available at Grand Prix events themselves.

Coaches must complete the Level III Coaching Certificate once the course becomes available. The Level III course should be available before Para Taekwondo's second Grand Prix event in Paris, meaning coaches at the first event in Sofia will simply require a Level II certificate.

### **Will there be a Grand Prix Finals?**

One of able-bodied Taekwondo's biggest events each year is the year-end, series-ending Grand Prix Final.

Currently, there is no planned Grand Prix Final event for Para Taekwondo in 2022. However, Para Taekwondo Committee Chair Chakir Chelbat has mentioned that he would like to see Para Taekwondo athletes compete in a year-end Grand Prix Final.

The able-bodied Grand Prix Final was originally slated for Wuxi, China, before organisers were forced to withdraw as hosts. Currently, a new Grand Prix Final host has yet to be named.

### **Is this a one-time event?**

No!

Para Taekwondo's Grand Prix series is scheduled to be an annual event – just as for able-bodied athletes.

The series was intended to kick-off before Tokyo 2020, but the COVID pandemic delayed the launch.

Information on Para Taekwondo's 2023 events will be announced later, but rest assured – the Grand Prix series will be back!



# Asian Games Postponed



## Joins Africa, Europe, and Pan America in Hosting Events in 2023

COVID-19 has struck again.

After dealing with the year-long postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, the Para Taekwondo world will have to wait another year before making its debut at the Asian Para Games after organisers announced the postponement of Hangzhou 2022.

“Following detailed discussions with all parties concerned, the Olympic Council of Asia [OCA] Executive Board today announced that it has decided to postpone the 19<sup>th</sup> Asian Games [and Asian Para Games]”, a statement posted on the Hangzhou 2022 website reads.

“Despite the challenges brought about by COVID-19 ... we remain confident that the Hangzhou Asia Games postponed [sic] will be a success with the joint efforts of all parties”.

Asia is a hotbed for Para Taekwondo. Not only was the sport created in Korea, but the region boasts two Paralympic champions - Uzbekistan's **Guljonoy Naimova** and Iran's **Asghar Azizi Aqdam** - as well as some of the sport's top up-and-coming talents, including Nepal's Asian Para Youth Games champion **Palesha Goverdhan**.

All Asian fighters will now have to wait another year before trying to become Para Taekwondo's first Asian Games champions.

The statement says that new dates will be announced “after further discussions between the OCA, Chinese Olympic Committee and HAGOC [Hangzhou Asian Games Organising Committee]”.

It is expected that the event will be postponed until 2023, while a decision on the new dates could come as early as this week.

The Asian Games are just the latest sporting event to be canceled or postponed in China, following the 2021 World Taekwondo Championships in Wuxi, the World University Games in Chengdu, and the Asian Youth Games in Shantou.

## Para Taekwondo Could Feature at Four Continental Multi-Sport Events in 2023

The postponement will add another major event to an already packed Para Taekwondo calendar in 2023.

In addition to the Asian Para Games – Africa, Europe, and Pan America all plan to hold continental multi-sport Para events.

Also on the Para Taekwondo calendar for 2023 are the Grand Prix series, continental championships, and the 2023 World Championships.

## 2023 African Para Games – Accra, Ghana

The Asian Para Games aren't the first continental multisport event that COVID has disrupted.

Para Taekwondo was supposed to make its debut at the first African Para Games in Rabat, Morocco in 2020, but the COVID pandemic forced the cancelation of the event. It's now Ghana's turn to host, having been selected as host back in 2018.

Currently, there are no dates set for the event – on the able-bodied or Para side – although the Ghanaian government has assured of its capacity to host. A new stadium is being built in the capital of Accra to accommodate some events.

While the sport programme has yet to be confirmed, it is expected that over 1,200 athletes will compete in Africa's seven most popular Para sports, including Para Taekwondo.

IPC President **Andrew Parsons** visited the country in January to discuss the preparations.

"I'm here for the development of Paralympic sports in Ghana and Africa", he said during his visit. "We do believe that Ghana can be the driver for the growth of Paralympic sports on the continent, especially with Ghana having the opportunity to host the Africa [Para] Games".

For more information on the 2023 African Para Games, please visit the official 2023 African Games website [HERE](#).

## 2023 Asian Para Games – Hangzhou, China

Unlike in Africa, where the 2020 African Para Games were wiped out due to COVID, China has only postponed the event from 2022 to 2023. Official new dates have yet to be announced.

Over 4,000 athletes are expected to compete in 22 Para sports. Para Taekwondo will be on the programme for the first time.

For more information, please visit the official Hangzhou 2022 website [HERE](#).

## 2023 European Para Games – Rotterdam, Netherlands

Launched in 2014, the European Games will see its third event take place in Poland next summer. For the first time, European Para athletes will have their own standalone continental multi-sport event experience.

The city of Rotterdam in the Netherlands was announced as host of the inaugural European Para Games next summer. The event will take place from 8-20 August and will see up to 10 Para sports host championships or events. Para Taekwondo has not yet been confirmed.

"I think that Para sports in Europe deserves an equivalent to events in Asia and Pan America", said President of the Netherlands National Paralympic Committee **Raymon Blondel**. "The European Games do not [yet] have a Para edition and that's why we are thrilled to cooperate with the European Paralympic Committee, who gave us the possibility to work on a separate 'European Para Games'".

For more information, please check out the press release [HERE](#).

## 2023 Parapan Am Games – Santiago, Chile

Para Taekwondo will be returning to where it got its start at continental multi-sport championships when it returns to Pan America in 2023.

The inaugural event in 2019 served as the coming-out party for some of Para Taekwondo's biggest stars, including Paralympic champions Juan Diego Garcia Lopez (Mexico), Nathan Torquato (Brazil), and Angelica Espinoza (Peru).

The 2023 Parapan Am Games will take place in Santiago, Chile from 17-26 November.

The event expects to draw over 6,000 athletes to compete in 38 Para sports. Para Taekwondo is confirmed to be on the programme.

"For Chile, these Games will be crucial for raising awareness of Para sports in our country", said Chilean National Paralympic Committee President **Ricardo Elizalde**. "For the first time ever, the host city contract for both the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games was signed together and we are really proud of it".

For more, please visit the official Santiago 2023 website [HERE](#).

## "Our Team is Resilient" - Usman Dildar on Asian Para Games Postponement



*Sharjah, UAE is ready and excited to host the Asian Para Games Qualification tournament - even after the announcement that the 2022 Asian Para Games have been postponed.*

While admitting that these are “difficult times” after learning of the postponement of the 2022 Asian Para Games, Para Taekwondo Committee Vice-Chair **Usman Dildar** is confident World Taekwondo can roll with the punches.

“We are used to it”, he told World Para Taekwondo. “Our team is resilient with these things and works like a family”.

Dildar spoke about how the organisation is used to COVID-necessitated event postponements, mentioning the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics and the European and Asian Paralympic Qualification tournaments as examples.

These experiences left the team prepared for the Asian Para Games announcement.

The first order of business? Hosting the Asian Para Games Qualification tournament on 26 May in Sharjah, UAE.

### **“We couldn’t have found a better place” – Dildar on the Asian Para Games Qualification tournament in Sharjah, UAE**

Sharjah is an ideal location to host the qualification tournament, according to Dildar. Over 40 athletes are already registered for the event, including Para Taekwondoists from Iraq, for the first time.

“UAE is in a very good strategic location”, he said. “It’s easy to get to, has a major hub airport nearby in Dubai as well as its own international airport, and the authorities really look after people”.

He was ebullient in his praise for the city and organisers.

“Sharjah is set up for people with impairments”, he said. “The facilities are amazing, there are quality hotels at good prices, and the venue is near the beach”.

He was also impressed with the event organisation.

“The local authorities are very supportive – up to and including **Her Highness Sheikha Jameela al-Qasimi**, [a vice-chair of World Taekwondo’s ‘Taekwondo for All’ committee] whose assistance has been vital”, he

said.

“We couldn’t have found a better place”.

He also mentioned how he expects a wonderful event when China does end up hosting the Asian Para Games.

“China has been proactive”, he said. “They are well prepared and will do very well”.

### **“This is something truly unique” – Dildar on the European Championships**

Dildar made a special point to comment on how excited he is to see Para Taekwondo athletes compete alongside their able-bodied counterparts at this month’s European Championships in Manchester, Great Britain.

“This is something truly unique”, he said of the move. “All credit goes to Great Britain Taekwondo for providing the same exposure to our Para athletes”.

He also pointed out how he hopes this is only the beginning.

“This is very good exposure for Para Taekwondo – it shows how our sport is equitable”, he said. “We need to promote this at other events ... the October Grand Prix [also in Manchester] will have the same thing”.

## Education



### **Upcoming Courses - Registration Open Now!!**

**NEW! Para Taekwondo ONLINE International Coach Certification [Level III] (English)**

- Course Dates: TBA; Registration Deadline: TBA

## Calendar



- European Open Para Taekwondo Championships (G4/G2) - May 19-22 - Manchester, Great Britain  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- 2022 Asian Para Games Qualification (G1) - May 26, 2022 - Sharjah, UAE  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level I required for all coaches)
- Sofia 2022 World Para Taekwondo Grand Prix Series (G6) - June 6, 2022 - Sofia, Bulgaria  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level III required for all coaches)
- Paris 2022 World Para Taekwondo Grand Prix Series (G6) - September 5, 2022 - Paris, France  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level III required for all coaches)
- Sao Paulo Para Taekwondo Open (Pan Am Series III) (G2) - September 15, 2022 - Sao Paulo, Brazil  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- 1st VIRTUS Pan American Regional Games (P20) - September 18-23, 2022 - Sao Paulo, Brazil  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- Colombia Open (G2) - October 15, 2022 - Bogota, Colombia  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- Manchester 2022 World Para Taekwondo Grand Prix Series (G6) - Oct.20, 2022 - Manchester, Great Britain  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level III required for all coaches)
- Open Bicentenario del Peru (G2) - November 3, 2022 - Lima, Peru  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

---

## Around the World

Refugee:

## Ukrainian Athletes Share Their Stories with Denmark

After fleeing for safety from the war in Ukraine, Ukraine's Para Taekwondo team is sharing their stories with members of the Danish community of Aarhus. The team attended a Liberation Day event on 4 May in which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen gave speeches on big screens to audiences in Copenhagen and Aarhus. Team members have shared their stories at several events in Aarhus, including at basketball games, sports trainings, and at local schools. Six-time world champion and Paralympian **Vika Marchuk** and teammate **Roman Ivanyuk** visited the Grade 7 class at Elise Smith School on 12 May to share their stories of growing up in Ukraine, competing in Para Taekwondo, and escaping the war in Ukraine.



"Both of them did an awesome job", said Danish Para Taekwondo coach **Bjarne Johansen**. "I'm very proud of them".

For more on the Liberation Day event, please click [HERE](#).



### Africa:

#### Para Taekwondo Growing in Popularity in Kenya

Just months after bringing home a record four medals at the 2022 African Championships, Kenya will send seven athletes – its largest team yet – to the 2022 European Championships in Manchester, Great Britain. Kenya won four medals at the African

Championships in Niger, highlighted by **Lena Gitonga's** silver medal in the -65 kg category. Kenyan media delighted in the team's success, with stories on several outlets, including on Citizen TV Kenya and Mount University Kenya – an epicentre of Para sports activity in the country – who highlighted African championship bronze medalist **Joseph Owino**.

"I am grateful for this win", Owino told Mount University Kenya press, "I'm aiming for gold in my next match to secure my spot at the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris, France".

To see the clip on Citizen TV Kenya, please click [HERE](#). To read the story on Owino, please click [HERE](#).

### Asia:

#### Iran's National Team Opens Training Camp Without Paralympic Medalists

Iran's national Para Taekwondo team started the second stage of its training camp ahead of this summer's Asian Para Games Qualification tournament in the United Arab Emirates with a record amount of female athletes – but two of its most famous Para Taekwondoists were absent. Reigning Paralympic champion **Asghar Azizi Aqdam** and reigning World champion **Mehdi Pourrahnama** are not participating due to changes in administration. Recently, the Iran Taekwondo Federation named **Morteza Soltani** and **Atefeh Keshavarz** head coaches of the men's and women's Para teams, respectively (see [HERE](#)). The first training camp took place in Chalous and ended on 5 May, with the teams moving to Tehran for stage two of the camp. No team has already qualified more athletes for the Asian Para Games than Iran, who have



earned positions in 7 of 10 weight categories. In addition to Pourrahnama and Azizi Aqdam, **Alireza Bakht, Romina Chamsouraki, Fatemeh Dodangeh, Hamed Haghshenas,** and **Saeid Sadeghianpour** have already qualified. In total, 10 women and 8 men are attending the training camp – but not Paralympic heroes Azizi Aqdam and Pourrahnama.

“Before the Tokyo Paralympics, Para Taekwondo was like a fragile sampling; but afterward it was just beginning to bear fruit and we were going to compete in the Grand Prix and Asian Games ... I don't know what happened to take such a big risk to change the staff”, Pourrahnama told Tasnim News. “Through this interview, I will announce the termination of my cooperation with the [Iranian] Taekwondo Federation”.

“I do not know why the President of the [Iranian] Taekwondo Federation, who is a Taekwondo champion himself, made such decision ... without consulting us or even asking for our opinion – this is very difficult for us”, Azizi Aqdam told the Islamic Republic New Agency. “The result of which was the farewell of me and Mehdi Pourrahnama – silver medalist of the Tokyo Paralympic Games – from the national team camp”.

“It is not right for an athlete to be interviewed and say that I am not a soldier”, Iranian Taekwondo Federation President **Hadi Saei** said about the situation in an interview with Varzesh Seh sports news agency. “A national athlete is exactly a soldier and is considered a soldier by appearing under the national flag. It is an honour for every athlete to be part of the national and military team of the country”.

For more on Iran's national team training camp, please click [HERE](#). For Saei's full interview, please click [HERE](#). For Pourrahnama's full interview, please click [HERE](#). For Azizi Aqdam's full interview, please click [HERE](#).



## Korean Paralympic Medalist Speaks to Students on Day of the Disabled

Korean Para Taekwondo star **Jeonghun Joo** – who thrilled the nation by winning bronze at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games – lent his celebrity to a star-studded lineup that visited hard of hearing students at the Samsung Seoul School on 21 April – the Day of the Disabled in Korea. The event was organised to support students who are

still stuck inside due to COVID regulations to show how sport can help to overcome difficulties and inspire them to become professional athletes. Joo, Korea's Para Taekwondo team captain, previously attended the school. Also on hand was **Dae-ho Lim**, a three-time Deaflympics champion, who addressed the students through sign language.

“To mark the Day of the Disabled, deaf athletes directly participated in the sports sharing event to inspire pride in overcoming physical limitations and present a meaningful time to students”, said organiser Han Young-ho. “We plan to carry out several talent sharing activities to put it into practice”.

For more, please click [HERE](#).

## Uzbek Fighters Get Paid for Worlds Success

The Government of Uzbekistan rewarded several Uzbek Para Taekwondo athletes for their successes at the 2021 World Championships in Istanbul, Turkey. A special awards ceremony was held at the Uzbek Ministry of Sports Development and attracted high-ranking officials from the Asian Paralympic Committee, Uzbekistan National Paralympic Committee, and the Presidential Administration. Three athletes and their coaches received cash awards for their successes, including reigning Paralympic and world champion **Guljonoy Naimova**, Paralympian and world championship bronze medalist **Ziyoda Isakova**, and world championship bronze medalist **Lutfullo Qodirov**.



For more information, please click [HERE](#).



## Europe:

### Team Captain Abuzarli Featured on Good Morning Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan team captain and Paralympian **Abulfəz Abuzərli** was featured on an episode of Good Morning Azerbaijan last month. The crew followed the fighter to a recent training, where they interviewed the Paralympian for a nearly four-minute feature.

Azerbaijan has long been a leader in the sport, hosting the first Para Taekwondo world championships and qualifying more fighters than any other nation except Turkey for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. Abuzərli fell in the bronze medal semi-final to eventual bronze medal winner **Jeonghun Joo** of Korea. He continued his strong run of form by winning bronze at the President's Cup – Europe earlier this year. Abuzərli will lead five Azeri athletes at this month's European Championships in Manchester, Great Britain.

"Never give up", Abuzərli said while sharing the clip on social media, "Road to Paris 2024".

To see the interview (in Azeri), please click [HERE](#). To see a video on the Azeri team, please click [HERE](#).

### Croatia's Mikulic Named Top Para Athlete in Hometown

The accolades keep rolling in for Croatia's Paralympic and World Championship runner-up **Ivan Mikulic**. Months after being named Croatia's Top Para Athlete for the second time, Mikulic was named the Top Male Para Athlete in the City of Split last month. Mikulic was edged in a thrilling Paralympic final by Iran's **Asghar Azizi Aqdam**, before losing a heartbreaking World Championship title to Iran's **Hamed Haghshenas** on superiority. Lucija Breskovic – a Paralympian judoka – was named Split's Top Female Para Athlete.

For more, please click [HERE](#).



### Denmark's Gjessing Wins Award for Inspiring Others

Years of hard work and dedication by Danish Paralympic champion and Para Taekwondo legend **Lisa Gjessing** are beginning to pay off – both on the mat and off. The Danish superstar added another award to her sterling trophy case by being named Denmark's 'Optimist of the Year' in the Sports category. Denmark's Optimist Awards "pay tribute to Danes who defy adversity in an inspiring way" and singled out Gjessing for "losing her forearm to cancer, resuming her sport, and winning gold at the Paralympic Games". The awards were presented at a swanky show on 23 April that featured special performances by Danish stars like Sunny Cagara, Anna David, and Amin Jensen.



"There is not a second of a doubt that I have only achieved Paralympic success because I am surrounded by a lot of optimists", said Gjessing afterwards. "My family, my coaching team, and the team that believed that WE could do it".

For more information, please click [HERE](#).

### Georgia Sending Largest-Ever Team to European Championships

One year after kicking off a boom in Para Taekwondo popularity in Georgia by setting records for most points scored and largest margin of victory, **Sandro Megrelishvili** will be one of eight Georgian athletes competing at the European championships in Manchester, Great Britain. More than just an increase in popularity and participation, Georgia has seen its fair share of success on the international stage this year. **Giorgi Khizanishvili** won gold at the President's Cup – Europe in Bulgaria, while teammates Megrelishvili, **David Makadze**, and **Lia Chachibaia** all won bronze medals. The eight athletes from Georgia's record-large team will be fighting to win Georgia's first-ever medal at the European Championships.



For more, check out the Georgian Paralympic Committee Facebook page [HERE](#).



## Great Britain's Munro Up For Athlete of the Year in Wales

Great Britain's Paralympic silver medalist **Beth Munro** is in the running to be named Athlete of the Year on 24 June by Disability Sports Wales after her incredible breakthrough year in 2021. Unknown to the international community before earning her ticket to Tokyo 2020 by winning the European Paralympic Qualification tournament last May, Munro provided some of the biggest upsets at Tokyo 2020 – including over China's former world champion **Yujie Li** – on her way to an inspiring

silver medal. The Welsh fighter has continued her success, winning silver at last month's Pan American championships in Brazil. Munro was also appointed as World Taekwondo's athlete representative to the IPC on "Athlete Matters" last month by WT President **Dr. Chungwon Choue**. She will serve in the position until the end of 2022.

"What an honour to have been nominated as a finalist with these amazing people for Athlete of the Year", Munro announced on social media.

For more information, please visit [HERE](#). For more on Munro's incredible story, please click [HERE](#).

## World Championship Runner-Up Bossolo Interviewed by Italian Paralympic Project

Italy's **Antonino Bossolo** appeared on an episode of the 'Encounters with National Sports Federations' project last month for a 30-minute interview with project coordinator Dr. Maria Luisa Barbarulo and journalist Fabio Bandiera. Initiated by the Italian Ministry of Education, with the support of the Italian Paralympic Committee and different national sports federations, the series aims to promote physical activity and sports to primary school-aged children with disabilities. Bossolo recounted his experience at Tokyo 2020, where he famously knocked off Mongolia's (then) four-time world champion **Bolor-Erdene Ganbat** before being edged by Brazil's Paralympic champion **Nathan Torquato** in a tense semi-final. Bossolo fared even better at last year's world championships, where he made it to the final before losing to rival Ganbat. Bossolo was the third in the 'Waiting for Paris 2024' series, and he also speaks about his weekly routine at the Olympic Prep Centre and how he fell in love with Taekwondo.



To view the episode (in Italian), please click [HERE](#).

## Netherlands Actively Looking to Recruit Para Taekwondo Athletes



Despite not having any Para Taekwondo athletes that compete on the international circuit, the Netherlands Taekwondo Federation (TBN) has made recruiting Para athletes to the sport a priority in 2022. The move comes as part of the federation's Diversity and Inclusion Charter, which aims to increase the participation of women, youth, and those with impairments. The drive is being spearheaded by **Fred Buitenhuis**, the Chair of TBN and Vice-Chair of the European Para Taekwondo Union. He says that TBN will look to recruit athletes from other sports to participate in Para Taekwondo and

adds that he hopes to see Para Taekwondo on the programme for the European Para Games event to be held in Rotterdam in 2023.

"How great would it be if top Dutch Para athletes participate in this? That's not happening yet", he said in a statement. "Para Taekwondo recently performed fantastically during the [Paralympic] Games in Japan, which led to many international compliments. So, it's really our sport that offers opportunities for athletes with ambition.

To read Buitenhuis' statement, please click [HERE](#). For information on TBN's Diversity and Inclusion Charter, please click [HERE](#).

## Poland Fighter Wins Invictus Games Gold

Just weeks before competing in the 2022 European Championships in Manchester, Great Britain, Polish Para Taekwondo fighter **Tomasz Rozniatowski** stood on top of the podium at the Invictus Games in the Hague, Netherlands as part of Poland's gold medal-winning Sitting Volleyball team. The Invictus Games is a major multinational, multi-sports event designed for wounded and injured members of the military. A Senior Corporal in the Polish Army, Rozniatowski had his arm amputated after his convoy hit a landmine while serving in Afghanistan. The multi-sport star also competed in Swimming, Athletics (Running), and Indoor Rowing. He also wrote and produced a song with famous Polish rapper 'Doniu' that you can view [HERE](#).



"I'm getting ready for the next competition [in] Para Taekwondo", he told EuroSport after winning his Invictus Games medal. "In February, I won a bronze at the President's Cup – Europe, so I am very driven in terms of sports".

For more on Rozniatowski, please click [HERE](#).



## Spanish Coach Wins Local 'Best Coach' Award

Spanish Para Taekwondo National Team Coach **Rafa Alcázar** will be named Best Coach at the Murcian Sports Gala Awards on 17 May. Postponed from December due to concerns over COVID, the award marks his efforts in 2021, where he led the Spanish team at the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo, Japan. A pioneer of Para Taekwondo in Spain, Alcázar has won the award several times over the last decade. In addition to

coaching the national team and his local Korya Club, which he founded in Murcia in 1999, Alcázar also serves as the monitoring coordinator for the Spanish Paralympic Committee.

For more, please click [HERE](#).

**Pan Am:**

## Pan Am and Deaflympics Host Brazil Sees Spike in Para Taekwondo Popularity

Para Taekwondo's popularity in Brazil continues to spike as major events are drawn to the country and athletes are featured in major national media. Following the Pan American Championships in Rio, where host Brazil finished second overall, the Deaflympics were held in Caxias Do Sul from 1-15 May. Participating for the fourth time, with events in both Kyorugi and Poomsae, Iran topped the table with 11 medals, including four gold. At the same time, Brazilian stars of last month's Pan Am Championships saw major media outlets highlighting their successes. Paralympic and Pan Am champion **Nathan Torquato** was featured by national broadcaster Agencia Brasil, while Pan Am runner-up **Christiane Neves** was featured by newspaper Agora RN.



"Starting the year on the podium is exciting", Neves told the newspaper. "And this medal is even more important because it guarantees me 20 points for the world ranking, which can help me get closer to a spot for the 2024 Paralympic Games".

To read Neves' interview, please click [HERE](#). For the Agencia Brasil story, please click [HERE](#). For the Para Taekwondo results from the 2022 Deaflympics, please click [HERE](#).



## Colombia Hosts Para Poomsae Tournament

Some of the Americas' top Para Poomsae athletes were in Colombia for the annual Armed Forces Cup – one of the region's most anticipated Taekwondo events of the year. Athletes from Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela joined their Colombian counterparts for the event held in the Colombian capital of Bogota from 5-8 May. The event attracted several dignitaries, including members of the Colombian government and armed forces, as well as Colombia Taekwondo Federation Chair **Dr. Luis Forero**. The event marked one of the world's first in-person Para Poomsae events since the arrival of the COVID pandemic.

"A lot of mental and physical strength overflows here", said tournament organisers online. "People with different abilities practicing Taekwondo and competing in an area of total respect and safety for the athletes".

To see highlights from the Para Poomsae competition, please click [HERE](#).

## Mexico Cements Its Powerhouse Status with New Facility, Key Sponsor

Hot on the heels of claiming top spot at last month's Pan American Championships in Brazil, Mexico opened a new Para Taekwondo facility in Queretaro and announced a collaboration with the Teleton Foundation – the largest child and youth rehab system in the world. "The purpose of this agreement is to find a



way to detect and collaborate so that this discipline grows", said Mexican Taekwondo Federation President **Raymundo Gonzalez Pinedo**. "Working as human beings and transforming their lives leaves us with enormous satisfaction". On hand for the occasion were Paralympic and Pan Am champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez**, Pan Am champion **Jessica Garcia**, national Para team coach **Jannet Alegria** – named Best Coach at the Pan Am championships, and Mexico's Para Taekwondo Coordinator **Veronica Santana**.

“We will start with the state of Mexico, then with Puebla, Guanajuato, and Chiapas; then it will be an honour for the association presidents to join in each of their states”, she announced. “We are the first country in the world that takes Para Taekwondo to another level”.

Located at the Autonomous University of Queretaro’s Faculty of Philosophy, the adapted sports facility will also host athletes from 3x3 Basketball, Goalball, and Para Swimming. The university hopes the new facility will increase its student population with impairments, which currently has just 1%.

“Today our enrollment is small”, admitted coordinator Fernando Noria Gonzalez, “But we are making an effort so that more and more students with disabilities have classroom access”.

For more on the partnership with Teleton Foundation, click [HERE](#). For more on Mexico’s new Para Taekwondo facility, click [HERE](#). For media coverage of Mexico’s Para Taekwondo athletes, click [HERE](#). For an interview with Pan Am Top Coach Alegria, click [HERE](#).



## USA Paralympians Visit White House to Meet American President

USA Olympians and Paralympians were invited to the White House on 4 May to celebrate their successes at the 2020 and 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Games. USA Paralympians **Evan Medell** – who won bronze at Tokyo 2020 and **Brianna Salinaro** were on hand to tour the White House and hear a speech from American President Joe Biden. “I was saying to a couple of the Paralympians – you inspire people”, said Biden. “There are people that you’ll never meet who witnessed how hard you competed, trained, and pushed yourself. And you helped them believe in themselves. You’ve helped them believe that they can do things that ‘Maybe, maybe – just maybe I can”.

“It was really cool to meet athletes from other disciplines and to get to go to the White House”, said Medell. “I was able to get a photo with my favourite Olympian – John Shuster – a curler for USA curling”.

“It was such an honour to represent Team USA at the Tokyo Games”, said Salinaro. “It was so cool to spend time with the Winter, Summer, and both Paralympic teams!”

For more, please click [HERE](#).

Sign up for the World Para Taekwondo Newsletter