



Chapter 1.3 - IPC Classification Code: Models of best practice, sport class changes following first appearance

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International Paralympic Committee

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Introduction

This document is developed as Model of Best Practice under the IPC Classification Code, art. 2.4).

During Competition Period, the sport class of athletes may change after observation in competition, protests after observation in competition or protests under exceptional circumstances. A presumption is, however, that the number of such sport class changes in competition should be limited as much as possible by a thorough physical and technical assessment.

For sport class changes in competition in each of these three scenarios, the Sport rules or Classification rules should clarify

- If the athlete's results from the first appearance event stand or not, if the first appearance event is a final, and
- In which sport class the athlete is considered for the final, if the first appearance event is a heat.

The IPC Classification Committee puts forward the below recommendation on how sport class changes in competition in individual sports should take effect and how this impacts on medals and result recognition.

Recommendation

The Classification Committee recommends different approaches for changes to a lower sport class and for changes to a higher sport class:

If an athlete's sport class changes to a sport class that indicates a greater level of activity limitation ("lower sport class"), then the athlete's results and medals won during the first appearance event should be recognised by the sport. It is preferred that the athlete after first appearance enters in events in his or her revised sport class. If this is not possible, the sport can



also permit an athlete to enter semi-finals and finals in the initial sport class, if the athlete qualifies for those.

If an athlete's sport class changes to a sport class that indicates a lower level of activity limitation ("higher sport class") during competition, then the athlete's results and medals won during the first appearance event should not be recognised as achieved in the athlete's initial sport class. However, if it is possible for a sport to recognise the athlete's competition results in the revised sport class, then this is a preferred approach. Athletes should only be permitted to enter events in the revised sport class.

These approaches should be applied if the athlete changes sport class after first appearance, after a Protest during competition and after a Protest under Exceptional Circumstances.

Discussion

The Classification Committee aimed at finding a solution that appears the fairest to all athletes involved, thus to the athlete changing sport class and to the competitors of this athlete in the first appearance event.

Change to higher sport class

If an athlete's sport class changes to a higher sport class after the first appearance event, then it appears that the athlete's activity limitation was less severe than that of his or her competitors. The Committee is in view that this would constitute an unfair disadvantage for the athlete's competitors, which is why the athlete's results should not be recognised in the athlete's initial sport class and why the athlete should only enter the final in the revised, higher sport class.

The change to a higher sport class also includes the change to sport class Not Eligible (NE).

Change to lower sport class

If an athlete's sport class changes to a lower sport class after the first appearance event, then the athlete's activity limitation appears more severe than that of his or her competitors. In this situation, the athlete's competitors had an advantage in the event.



If the athlete, despite his or her disadvantage wins a medal in the first appearance event, then the sport should acknowledge the immense success of the athlete by rewarding a medal to the athlete.

Where possible, the sport should enter the athlete in the final of the respective event in the revised, lower sport class. This, however, might not be possible in all sports and under all circumstances.

If it is not possible to enter the athlete in the event in the revised, lower sport class, and the athlete qualified for the final or semi-final in the first appearance event in the initial sport class, then the sport should permit the athlete to start in the final of the respective event in the initial, higher sport class. For any other events, the athlete would only be permitted to compete in the revised sport class, of course.

Considerations

Considerations regarding classification decisions

As sport class changes during competition significantly impact on the competition, sport class decisions should be reached after thorough physical and technical assessment wherever possible, in order to render sport class changes in competition more unlikely. Observation in competition should only be considered, when a classification decision cannot be reached after the physical and technical assessment.

Classification panels should be advised to allocate the higher sport class to athletes who appear to be borderline between two sport classes after the physical and technical assessment. This will limit the risk of the athlete's competitors having a disadvantage in the first appearance event.

Consideration on Intentional Misrepresentation

The Classification Committee is aware that a sport class change in competition can be due to the intentional misrepresentation of abilities by the athlete during the physical and technical assessment. Such cases are followed by separate investigations on intentional misrepresentation as defined in the classification rules of the sport.



Considerations for medal ceremonies

The following is to be considered if the first appearance event is a final or an event for which medals are awarded.

If an athlete is not to be rewarded a medal after a first appearance event due to a sport class change, medal ceremonies should be postponed rather than awarding the athlete a medal and asking the athlete to return the medal afterwards.

In the case that the above occurs as a result of a protest or a protest under exceptional circumstances, these need to be handled with absolute priority. The decision on a change in sport class is only made after this reassessment. This means that medal ceremonies have to be postponed awaiting protest resolution and the allocation of a final sport class decision.