



World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

June 2022 | Issue #24

Memorable May Makes World Take Notice



Groundbreaking Firsts and Unbelievable Upsets show why Para Taekwondo is the World's Fastest-Growing Para Sport

Para Taekwondo's first fully integrated tournament, the launch of a prestigious new series for the world's top fighters, and the first-ever Asian Para Games qualification tournament - it was a big month for Para Taekwondo and a reminder of why the sport continues to grow at such a torrid pace.

Major Para Taekwondo stories dominated the global Para sports headlines in May as three important events drew the world's top fighters - and they didn't disappoint.

Stunning upsets and inspired performances showed both the enormous growth of talent and strategy in the sport and demonstrated that outside of a handful of fighters - or even fewer - there are no more "sure bets" at the top of any division.

Here's what you need to know.

European Championships Goes Fully Integrated

In a concept that had the entire world of Taekwondo buzzing, the 2022 European Championships fully

integrated its Para events with their able-bodied counterparts.

Teams in Manchester used the opportunity for full team photos and marketing videos, while Para finals were broadcasted live on Great Britain's national broadcaster BBC, and media from around the world highlighted Para fighters alongside their star Olympic teammates.

Hometown favourite **Beth Munro** stole the show, stunning Denmark's Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing** in the -65 kg semi-final before topping Turkey's reigning world champion Secil Er 16-11 to capture her first European championship on primetime television.

Teammate **Joe Lane** kept the party going for the hosts by claiming his first-ever European championship with an 8-3 win over Uzbekistan's **Asadbek Toshtemirov** in the -80 kg final.

Gjessing wasn't the only Paralympic champion to run into trouble. Mexico's **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** - who has only lost twice in the last four years - was pushed to Golden Point in the -70 kg final by Azerbaijan's **Imamaddin Khalilov** before coming out on top.

Uzbekistan's **Guljonoy Naimova** continued her torrid pace, cruising to the +65 kg European title while only conceding two points along the way.

For the full event review, please see the World Para Taekwondo recap [HERE](#).

Asia Para Games Field Nearly Set

Just days after Asian Para Games organisers in China announced the postponement of Hangzhou 2022 until sometime next year, some of Asia's best and up-and-coming fighters battled for some of the last remaining qualification spots for Para Taekwondo's debut at the event.

Iran's women's team continues to prove that they are becoming one of the world's most formidable by winning four of the five women's events. **Maryam Deroei** (-47 kg), **Sahar Ghanbari Komishani** (-52 kg), **Roza Ebrahimi** (-57 kg), and **Leila Mirzaee** (+65 kg) all won gold and earned qualification spots for Iran at Hangzhou 2022.

Uzbekistan was also sharp in Sharjah, winning two gold and qualifying an additional five fighters to Hangzhou 2022. **Kudratjon Haydarov** (-63 kg) and **Javokhir Alikulov** (-70 kg) won their categories, while **Faridakhon Habibullaeva** (-52 kg), **Aslbek Khusanov** (-70 kg), and **Asadbek Anvarov** (-80 kg) all earned their tickets to the Asian Para Games.

Kazakhstan (3), India (2), and Japan (2) also qualified multiple athletes for Hangzhou 2022 at the tournament in Sharjah, while Mongolia, the Philippines, and Thailand all qualified one fighter each.

Overall, Iran leads the way with 11 athletes qualified to compete for Asian Para Games glory. Other nations qualifying multiple athletes include Uzbekistan (10); Kazakhstan (8); China (6); India (5); Japan, Mongolia, and Thailand (4 each); Korea (3); and Nepal (2). Chinese Taipei and the Philippines have each qualified a single fighter.

For the full event review, please see the World Para Taekwondo recap [HERE](#).

Para Grand Prix Series Finally Launched

Years in the making, World Taekwondo finally launched its prestige event series for Para athletes - the Para Grand Prix.

With only athletes ranked in the Top 15 receiving invites to the invite-only G-6 event, 85 of the world's top fighters traveled to Sofia, Bulgaria for the historic launch of the event.

The quality was evident, with top fighters falling in the quarterfinals and talent and strategy apparent in virtually every semi-final and medal match.

Uzbekistan's **Guljonoy Naimova** continued her torrid pace, becoming the only athlete in the world to be a reigning Paralympic, World, and Grand Prix champion by beating Great Britain's former world champion **Amy Truesdale** in an entertaining +65 kg final.

Mexico's **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** also collected the hat trick of prestige events. The reigning Paralympic champion added a -70 kg Grand Prix title to his 2019 world crown by beating Azerbaijan's **Imamaddin Khalilov** in a rematch of the European Championships final.

France's **Djelika Diallo** provided the upset of the tournament by stunning Great Britain's newly-crowned European champion **Beth Munro** with a last-second kick to win the first -65 kg Grand Prix title in dramatic fashion.

Turkey continued to show its elite status in the sport by winning six medals, including Grand Prix titles for **Meryem Cavdar** (-52 kg), **Ali Can Ozcan** (-58 kg), and **Mahmut Bozteke** (-63 kg).



Integration Makes for Marketing Goldmine



Here Team Concept Comes Through as Para and Able-Body Athletes Train, Interview, and Bond Together

It was a unique experience that still has participants buzzing – both Para and able-body. Competing at the same event, at the same time, on the same courts, made for some memorable marketing opportunities. Many teams took the chance to photograph the athletes together. Others produced sleek marketing videos. Many did interviews together. And most media included Para fighters in the same articles as able-body athletes.

Here's a sampling of some of the press:

Italy put together a video of the Para and able body athletes training together, including Olympic champion **Vito Dell'Aquila** and World Para Taekwondo championship runner-up **Antonino Bossolo**, that you can watch [HERE](#). The federation also had an integrated post-event article that you can see [HERE](#).

Spain photographed the athletes together, including Para's **Dalia Santiago**, for a pre-tournament promotional post that you can view [HERE](#), while Spanish media Mundo Deportivo covered all Spanish athletes in an article you can read [HERE](#).



Great Britain's BBC spoke with Olympic champion **Jade Jones** and Para bronze medalist **Keira Forsythe**, which you can view [HERE](#).

Poland's Poinformowani.pl Sports covered both able-body and Para athletes in a story you can find [HERE](#).

Israeli media covered Para world champion **Asaf Yasur** alongside his able-body teammates – whom he trains with regularly – in an article you can read [HERE](#).

Plenty of teams, including the displaced athletes from **Ukraine**, used the experience to bond, including full team meals and special events.

Many athletes expressed their desire to see this format adopted for more tournaments in the future.



Para Poomsae to Take Centre Stage at Two Virtus Regional Events



2022 VIRTUS AMERICAS GAMES

SAO PAULO, BRAZIL
18-23 SEPTEMBER
Brazilian Paralympic Centre



Para Poomsae is back – and in a big way!

Virtus will hold two regional games this autumn – the inaugural Virtus Pan American Regional Games in Sao Paulo, Brazil from 18-23 September and the first Virtus Oceania Asia Regional Games from 5-11 November in Queensland, Australia.

Para Poomsae has been confirmed for both events.

The Virtus Games are the most prestigious multi-sports events for athletes with intellectual impairments. Athletes can compete in one of three classes:

- II1 – Athletes with an intellectual impairment
- II2 – Athletes with an intellectual impairment + a significant additional impairment
- II3 – A trial group for athletes with autism that do not qualify for the other two groups

Para Poomsae made its debut at the 2019 Virtus Global Games in Brisbane, Australia. The next Virtus Global Games will take place next year in Vichy, France.

For more information on the 2023 Virtus Global Games, please click [HERE](#).

Virtus Pan American Regional Games 18-23 September in Sao Paolo, Brazil

Up to 1000 athletes from 16 countries will travel to Sao Paolo, Brazil to compete in at least six sports at the inaugural Virtus Pan American Regional Games this 18-23 September.

While the sports programme has yet to be finalised, currently Athletics, Basketball, Futsal, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, and Swimming have been confirmed.

The events will take place at Brazil's Paralympic Training Centre, offering athletes with intellectual impairments to experience the same stage as Paralympians.

“Our vision for this event is to shine a light on athletes from every part of the Americas region”, said Brazilian Confederation of Sports for the Intellectual Disabled President **Adilson Pereira Ramos**, “where even a young man or woman from a small town can become a national athlete on the world stage”.

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

Virtus Oceania Asia Regional Games 5-11 November in Queensland, Australia

Up to 1000 athletes from 25 countries will travel to Queensland, Australia to compete in 11 sports at the first Virtus Oceania Asia Regional Games this 5-11 November.

The eleven sports on offer at Queensland 2022 include Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Cycling, Judo, Rowing, Sailing, Swimming, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Tennis, and Triathlon.

“We’re really pleased to be working with Sport Inclusion Australia”, said Australia Taekwondo’s CEO **Heather Garriock**, “to develop pathways for Taekwondo athletes with an intellectual impairment to compete in this event”.

For more information, please visit the event website [HERE](#).



Education



Upcoming Courses - Registration Open Now!!

Para Taekwondo ONLINE International Coach Certification [Level I] (English)

- Course Dates: [July 19-21, 2022](#) Registration Deadline: [July 14, 2022](#)

Para Taekwondo ONLINE International Coach Certification [Level II] (English)

- Course Dates: [August 14-16, 2022](#) Registration Deadline: [August 9, 2022](#)

World Para Taekwondo National Classifier Certification Course [Level I] (English)

- Location: Ho Chi Min City, Vietnam
- Course Date: August 18, 2022 ; Registration Deadline: August 12, 2022

World Para Taekwondo International Classifier Certification Course [Level II] (English)

- Location: Ho Chi Min City, Vietnam
- Course Date: August 19-20, 2022 ; Registration Deadline: August 12, 2022



*Para Taekwondo Classification Committee Chair **Hadwah Abdelmatloub Moawad** (Saudi Arabia), committee members **Ashanti Ramirez Montes de Oca** (Mexico) and **Manuel Barros** (Spain), Para Taekwondo Assistant Manager **Thomas Page**, and educator **Ala Rashad Abdulsamh** (USA) held Level I and II Classifier Certification courses for 11 participants from 8 countries in Manchester, Great Britain on 15-16 May during the European Para Taekwondo Championships.*



Calendar



- Asian Open Para Taekwondo Championships (G4/G2) - August 23 - Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- Paris 2022 World Para Taekwondo Grand Prix Series (G6) - September 5, 2022 - Paris, France
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II 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)
- WT President's Cup Oceania (G2) - September 30, 2022 - Papeete, French Polynesia
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- Oceania Para Taekwondo Open Championships (G4/G2) - October 1, 2022 - Papeete, French Polynesia
(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 II 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)
- 1st VIRTUS Oceania-Asia Regional Games (P20) - November 5-11, 2022 - Queensland, Australia
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

Around the World

Refugee:

Ukraine's Marchuk Performs for Danish Queen

It's not every day that you get to perform for a queen – especially when your country doesn't have one and is currently at war. The once-in-a-lifetime opportunity came to Ukraine's six-time world champion **Vika Marchuk**, who fled the war in Ukraine and is training alongside Denmark's Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing**. Two of the sport's biggest stars were asked to perform for Denmark's Queen Margrethe II as part of the Golden Jubilee events held in Aarhus to celebrate the monarch's 50-year reign.



"It was a very great honour today to be allowed to show HM Queen Margrethe a little about what Taekwondo is and how we work in it", said Gjessing afterwards. "It was so nice to show a friendly match with Vika Marchuk – one of our 10 training partners from Ukraine, who we helped get to Denmark and train with daily".

For more, please click [HERE](#). To see Queen Margrethe's arrival, please click [HERE](#).



IPC President Calls Khodadadi's Tokyo 2020 Arrival Its "Most Important Moment"

Zakia Khodadadi's remarkable story keeps getting better. After capturing the world's hearts through her brave and dangerous escape from Taliban-held Afghanistan just to compete at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, Khodadadi continues to prove that she's one of the world's best. At the first Para Grand Prix, Khodadadi got the better of her Paralympic nemesis, Ukraine's six-time world champion **Vika Marchuk**, on the way to a bronze medal. Now training in France, alongside former world champion **Bopha Kong**, Khodadadi has won medals at two straight international events. Her success has

delighted IPC President **Andrew Parsons**, who gushed when asked about her in a recent interview with Spain's as.com.

"An Afghan athlete with a disability fleeing from the Taliban regime and competing in the Paralympic Games – for me, personally, it was the most important moment of that event", he told the newspaper. "Our first objective was to protect them – not [only] physically, but mentally, so that they could enjoy that moment. That sent a message to the world".

"Special thanks to the French Taekwondo Federation, French Sport, and my kind technical team and coaches", Khodadadi said after winning bronze at the Para Grand Prix. "They work sincerely for me and provide me with sports trips and treat me like one of their own athletes".

To read Parson's full interview, please click [HERE](#).

Africa:

Ghana Federation President Named to New Commonwealth Games Committee

The Commonwealth Games kicks off this summer in Birmingham, Great Britain and will feature several Para events alongside the able-bodied programme. Para Taekwondo will not be featured – something that World Taekwondo is determined to change ahead of the 2026

event in Victoria, Australia. World Taekwondo recently named a committee tasked with getting Taekwondo and Para Taekwondo on the 2026 programme and named Ghana Taekwondo Federation President **Frederick Lartey Otu** to the committee. Otu served as a technical delegate at the 2022 African Para Championships in Niger and also serves on the African Taekwondo Union council, Ghana Olympic Committee, and Commonwealth Games Association of Ghana.



“For me, it is recognition by World Taekwondo about the good works of Taekwondo in Ghana”, he told Times Sports. “I think it has taken too long for Taekwondo to become an official sport at the [Commonwealth] Games”.

For more, please read the AllAfrica.com article [HERE](#).



Asia:

Bronze for Bahrain's Asian Para Youth Games Champion

Bahrain's big **Ali Qarainees** won't be able to defend his Asian Para Youth Games title at next year's 2022 Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, China – but he went down trying. Six months after claiming the youth title at home, Qarainees impressed the home crowd by stunning India's top-seeded **Vishal** in the +80 kg quarterfinal. His hopes of qualifying for the 2022 Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, China fell just short after losing to Uzbekistan's **Asadbek Anvarov** 36-10 in the semi-final. Bahrain can still apply for a Bipartite Invitation to Hangzhou 2022 for Qarainees, as one will be awarded in the +80 kg category.

To watch Qarainees' nail-biting quarterfinal win, please click [HERE](#).

India's Paswan Honoured After Hangzhou 2022 Qualification

Indian Taekwondo and regional officials congratulated India's **Ranjan Kumar Paswan** after he secured his spot at Hangzhou 2022 by winning silver at the Asian Para Games Qualification tournament in Sharjah, UAE last month. Ranked No. 5 in Asia and seeded No. 2 at the tournament, Paswan edged Mongolia's **Bolorskh Davaasuren** and teammate **Rampal Na** before falling to Uzbekistan's top-seeded **Kudratjon Haydarov** in the -63 kg final.



Paswan becomes the fifth athlete from India to qualify for Hangzhou 2022, alongside **Aruna** (-47 kg), **Muskan Muskan** (-52 kg), **Mohit Singh** (-58 kg), and **Veena Arora** (+65 kg). A special ceremony was held for Paswan at Deoria Stadium, attended by coach **Girish Singh**, District Taekwondo Association officer **Jitendra Pratap Singh**, and local politicians.

“Disability is not a curse”, said Singh at the ceremony. “If Ranjan Kumar [Paswan] had considered disability a curse, he would not be at this stage today”.

For more, please read the full story in the Navbarrah Times by clicking [HERE](#).

Japan Earns Break After Hard-Fought Tournaments

Japan's Para Taekwondo athletes return home after a strong month that saw the team qualify two fighters for the 2022 Asian Para Games and win its first Para Grand Prix



medal. **Mitsuya Tanaka** won gold at the Asian Para Games Qualification tournament in Sharjah, UAE after teammate **Kenta Awatari** withdrew. Teammate and Paralympian **Shunsuke Kudo** then won bronze at the Para Grand Prix in Sofia, Bulgaria after falling to Mexico's reigning world champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** in the -70 kg semi-final. Teammate **Chikara Ito** fell 15-12 in a bruising +80 kg quarter-final with Kazakhstan's **Nyshan Omirali**, while Awatari ran into Azerbaijan's rising star **Sabir Zeynalov** in the -58 kg quarterfinal.

"This tournament is a high-level competition with [only] Top 15-ranked athletes – and once again I felt the world wall. I was able to find a lot of things to improve and grow – next time I

will take a medal", said Awatari after his Para Grand Prix loss. "I'm a little tired ... so I'm going to relax in Japan. Someone – let's go drink for the first time in a while!"

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

Kazakhstan Holds National Para Taekwondo Championships

If there was any doubt that Kazakhstan isn't a Para Taekwondo nation – that can be put to bed. Kazakhstan had 37 athletes from 10 regions of the country participate in its National Para Taekwondo Championships from 1-4 June. Not surprisingly, the team's experienced fighters dominated, with Paralympians **Kamilya Dosmalova** (-57 kg), **Nurlan Dombayev** (-80 kg), and **Nyshan Omirali** (+80 kg) all winning gold. Other fighters to become national champions include **Milana Krasavtseva** (-47 kg), **Nysanbek Aidarbekov** (-58 kg), **Baurzhan Kusherbaev** (-63 kg), and **Zhanbolat Kaziev** (-70 kg). In the K41 class, **Serikbay Kapbasov** (-63 kg), **Sivazbek Daliev** (-70 kg), **Malik Mukashev** (-80 kg), and **Kenzhebek Rakhmetaliyev** (+80 kg) became national champions. The competition was funded through the corporate sponsorship of SportQory. ProSports.kz also covered the success of the team at the Para Grand Prix, where Dosmalova and Omirali won bronze medals.



For the full list of medalists and pictures of the medal winners, please click [HERE](#). For the ProSports.kz story, please click [HERE](#).



Mongolia Thanks Sponsors, Looks for More

Mongolia's Para Taekwondo team is on the active lookout for sponsors. Consisting of five-time world champion **Bolor-Erdene Ganbat**, former world champion **Enkhtuya Khurelbaatar**, former Asian champion **Shinebayar Batbayar**, and world championship bronze medalist **Enkhtuvshinzaya Oyunsuren**, the team put out a request for support ahead of travelling to the first Para Grand Prix in Sofia, Bulgaria where Khurelbaatar won silver and Ganbat and Batbayar won bronze. The team is currently sponsored by Relo Mongolia, and energy-efficient grinding company, and Turkish Airlines. Already famous with several world titles and appearances at the Paralympic Games at Tokyo

2020, the team's Grand Prix fights were carried live on Mongolia's livetv.mn.

"The Grand Prix is the most prestigious competition in the world", the team said in its fundraising plea, "our national team needs support in this competition, and we are collecting donations".

For more on the team's fundraising, please click [HERE](#). To view the replays of the team's fights on livetv.mn, please click [HERE](#).

Nepal's National Channel Profiles Ghising, Goverdhan

Nepal continues to show love for its Para Taekwondo athletes, as all three athletes that have qualified for next year's Asian Para Games were featured in national media last month. Nepal's state broadcaster NTV Plus aired separate, 30-minute interviews with Asian Youth Para Games champion and Paralympian **Paresha Goverdhan**, before sitting down with

Asian Youth Para Games runner-up **Shrijana Ghising** the following week. The channel interviewed both athletes as part of its 'Sports & Adventure' series that profiles the nation's top able-bodied and Para athletes. The network might want to add teammate **Ranjana Dhami** to the list after she picked up a bronze at the Asian Para Games Qualification tournament, narrowly missing out on qualifying for Hangzhou 2022 by falling to Kazakhstan's Milana Krassavtseva 18-16 in a hard-fought -47 kg semi-final.



For Shoverdhan's interview, please click [HERE](#). For Ghising's interview, please click [HERE](#). For Dhami's feature in The Himalayan, please click [HERE](#).



Ganapin Becomes First from Philippines to Qualify for the Asian Para Games

The Philippines' **Allain Ganapin** continues to break boundaries. Nearly a year since he was prevented by COVID from becoming the first Filipino to compete at the Paralympic Games in Para Taekwondo, Ganapin earned his way to the Asian Para Games by winning the qualification tournament in Sharjah, UAE. Seeded No. 2 going into the event, Ganapin kicked past India's **Sandeep Singh Maan** 12-2 in the -80 kg semi-final before confidently dispatching Kazakhstan's No. 1-seeded **Zhanbolat Kaziyev** 10-1 in the final to win gold and claim his ticket to Hangzhou 2022. His achievement caught the attention of Filipino media, with several outlets covering his story, including The Manila Times.

To read the story in The Manila Times, please click [HERE](#).

Uzbekistan Thrilled with Asian Para Games Qualification Success

The Uzbek media is thrilled with the success of its Para Taekwondo team at the Asian Para Games Qualification tournament in Sharjah, UAE, where the team qualified five fighters – more than any other nation – for Hangzhou 2022. **Kudratjon Haydarov** (-63 kg) and **Javokhir Alikulov** (-70 kg) won the tournament outright, while three other fighters qualified through silver medal performances – **Faridakhon Habibullaeva** (-52 kg), **Aslbek Khusanov** (-70 kg), and **Asadbek Anvarov** (-80 kg). Led by Paralympic, World, and Grand Prix champion **Guljonoy Naimova** (+65 kg), Uzbekistan has now qualified 10 fighters for the Asian Para Games – more than any other nation except Iran's 11.



"It is noteworthy that in this prestigious competition", wrote Sports.uz, "our representatives won first place in the team event with two gold, three silver, and two bronze – for a total of seven medals".

For the full Sports.uz story, please click [HERE](#).

Europe:

**Azerbaijan Federation
Debriefs Para Team After
Mixed Performances**



The Azerbaijan Taekwondo Federation (ATF) welcomed home its Para Taekwondo team to debrief after winning medals at three events this year – the President's Cup – Asia, the European Championships, and the first Para Grand Prix. Azerbaijan has long been a hotbed of Para Taekwondo, hosting the first World Championships in 2009 and sending more athletes to Tokyo 2020 than any other nation except

Turkey. While the team medaled at each event in 2022, the team has yet to capture a gold medal, which was a focus during the meeting, held after training camps in Uzbekistan and Baku, Azerbaijan.

“Of course, our goal is to see Para Taekwondo athletes the strongest in the world”, said ATF Vice-President **Naghi Safarov**. “You showed true heroism in the battles and proved that you are strong. We believe that you will fight better and win medals in the upcoming tournaments ... and secure your license to the next Summer Paralympic Games”.

Team captain and Paralympian **Abulfaz Abuzarli** was especially critical of his performances.

“Yes, I won a bronze medal at the President's Cup ... but I failed at the European and Grand Prix competitions”, he told the ATF. “I see myself as the reason. I didn't build the fights correctly, I made mistakes, and I couldn't recover”.

For the full interview, including comments from European silver medalist **Imamaddin Khalilov** and World Championship bronze medalist **Sabir Zeynalov**, please click [HERE](#).

Success and Celebrity for Croatia's Mikulic

Two more tournaments and two more finals for one of Para Taekwondo's most consistent fighters – Croatia's **Ivan Mikulic**. Mikulic added his fourth European crown last month in Manchester by beating Turkey's **Mehmet Sari Sarac** in the final in front of super fan Dexter (pictured). He made the finals of the first Para Grand Prix, before falling to perennial rival **Evan Medell** (USA) in a rematch of the Paralympic semi-final. Mikulic also made the finals at the Paralympic Games and 2021 World Championships, also claiming silver at both events.

“Silver at the Grand Prix is a huge result, but we are bitter about it because we always go for gold”, Mikulic told Slobodna Dalmacija. “We met several times in the final, but Medell was better this time”.

For the full Slobodna Dalmacija story, please click [HERE](#).



Denmark's Johansen Wins Coach of the Year

Danish national team coach **Bjarne Johansen** was named Coach of the Year in his home community of Aarhus last month. Johansen coached Danish legend **Lisa Gjessing** to the Paralympic gold medal at Tokyo 2020 and was instrumental in helping set up a program with Elite Sports Aarhus to help train Ukraine's national Para Taekwondo team after they were forced to flee the war in Ukraine. Gjessing was on hand as a surprise presenter at the event. “You work hard and keep renewing and still have the athlete at the centre”, she said afterward. “It was a huge honour to be able to surprise you at the DM Party at City Hall”.

“I am very honoured and proud to receive the Coach of the Year Award”, Johansen said afterward. “I would like to thank Elite Sports Aarhus for the award ... Also, a big thank you to the Elite Sports athletes for putting

up with me and for having the will and attitude to fight daily – and for going all the way”.

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

France's National Broadcaster Covers Kong Live at EUROS

Two years ahead of appearing at a home Paralympic Games, French legend and six-time world champion **Bopha Kong** is getting plenty of press time. One of the faces of France 2024's marketing campaign, French national broadcaster France.tv covered Kong's fights at the European Championships in Manchester, Great Britain live – including post-match interviews and the medal ceremony. Veteran Kong showed he's still a serious medal threat at Paris 2024 by upending Israel's reigning world champion **Asaf Yasur** 21-12 in a thrilling -58 kg semi-final before dropping a 34-15 decision to Turkey's European champion **Ali Can Ozcan**.



“The young French [fighter] Bopha Kong may have been worthy”, said the broadcaster in a post-match description, “but he lost in the final of the European Para Taekwondo Championships”.

For a replay of the final, please click [HERE](#). For Kong's post-match interview, please click [HERE](#). For the -58 kg medal ceremony, please click [HERE](#).



World Champion Inspires Israel with Continued Success

Israel's reigning world champion Asaf Yasur continues to impress at international competitions – and continues to inspire his home nation. Yasur won bronze at the European Championships in Manchester, falling to his long-time rival from France, Bopha Kong, in the semi-final. He then beat Kong at the first Para Grand Prix in Sofia before falling to Turkey's Alican Ozcan in the final. Since winning the world championship last year, Yasur has become an inspiration in Israel, with major outlets regularly covering his story and progress.

“What an opening to the European Championships!”, said Israel's Time News after Yasur won his quarter-final match. “The Para Taekwondo fighter moved the country after losing

both hands when he was electrocuted as a child and won the World Championships last December ... is [now] assured to win a medal’.

To read the full story, please click [HERE](#).

Polish Para Taekwondo Fighter Loses MMA Debut

Polish Para Taekwondo fighter **Przemek Wiczorek** participated in what could be the first Para MMA fight in history last month when he faced off against **Bartosz Klimek**. After losing his arms in a train accident at the age of 20, Wiczorek turned to Para Taekwondo to help overcome the trauma. He has since won several medals at the World and European Championships. Taking place alongside able-bodied fights in Poland's Solo Combat Federation, the fight lasted for three, three-minute rounds with Klimek coming out on top by unanimous decision. The fight occurred on 10 June – the 17th anniversary of Wiczorek's train accident.

“It's a miracle that I survived, but then I broke down a lot and didn't feel like living”, he wrote on social media ahead of the fight. “I know that nothing is impossible for those who believe and consistently do

their won thing, so I'm very happy that I will have the pleasure to fight Bartek”.

For highlights of the fight, please click [HERE](#).



Serbia's Micev Owes Success to Brother

Serbia's **Marija Micev** is back and better than ever – and she attributes that success to her brother. Speaking to Serbia's 24 Sedam, she tells of how her brother opened a new Taekwondo school and her decision to move over to train with him and recounts how they recruited teammate **Miso Gavrilovic**, who they found working at a petrol station in Indija. Micev's success has been apparent. The 2019 world championship silver medalist went through a tough spell in 2021, finishing a disappointing 7th at the Paralympic Games and 5th at the 2021 World Championships. Micev has medaled at her last two events, a silver at the European Championships – an event she has won twice



before – and a bronze at the first Para Grand Prix, where she fell to Brazil's reigning world champion **Silvana Fernandes** 7-2 in a strategic semi-final.

"I felt that I needed a change of energy so not to stagnate ... Here, I gained some new energy", she told the newspaper. "Taekwondo has definitely brought us closer. Love for this sport is something we both share".

To read the full 24 Sedam story, please click [HERE](#).

Santiago's Silver Showcased in Spanish Press

Spain's **Dalia Santiago** is quickly establishing herself as one of the +65 kg category's top medal threats for Paris 2024 – and the Spanish press is taking notice. Nearly a year to the day after failing to qualify for Tokyo 2020 by losing by a heartbreaking Golden Point, Santiago has emerged as one of the strongest fighters in the division. After winning the President's Cup – Europe earlier this year, the 2021 European champion again reached the European final – this time with a comfortable 12-2 win over Great Britain's former world champion – and hometown favourite – **Amy Truesdale**. She fell in the final against Uzbekistan's reigning Paralympic and World champion **Guljonoy Naimova** in the first matchup between the two. Santiago again fell to Naimova at the Para Grand Prix semi-final, but the bronze continues her successful streak to start 2022.



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To read about Santiago's success, please read the DXT Adaptado feature [HERE](#).



Powerhouse Turkey Revels in Success

Dominant performances by Turkish athletes at both the European championships and first Para Grand Prix saw the team top the podium at both events – and left little doubt who is in the driver's seat less than two years before the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. The team won eight medals in Manchester, which saw 7 fighters make the finals and 4 become European champions: **Nurcihan Ekinci** (-47 kg), **Gamze Gurdal** (-57 kg), **Alican Ozcan** (-58 kg), and **Mahmut Bozteke** (-63 kg). The team replicated its success in Sofia, with 6 of 10 athletes winning a medal, including first-time Para Grand Prix winners **Meryem Cavdar** (-52 kg), Ozcan, and Bozteke. Turkey will be looking for its first Paralympic champion at Paris 2024 after

qualifying more fighters than any other nation for Tokyo 2020 without winning any gold medals.

“Turkey has become the European champion in Para Taekwondo – these are great results for Paris 2024”, said Turkish Taekwondo Federation President **Dr. Metin Sahin**. “There is no success that the youth of this nation cannot achieve”.

For more on Turkey at the European Championships, click [HERE](#). For Turkey at the Para Grand Prix, click [HERE](#). For comments from President Sahin and Turkish coaches, please click [HERE](#).

Pan Am:

Aruba's Loonstra Lured by Ranking Points to European Events

Ranked No. 7 in the world, Aruba's **Elliot “Lefty” Loonstra** knows that every ranking point matters. Only the Top 6 in each weight category earn automatic qualification spots for their nation to Paris 2024, so every tournament matters. That's why Loonstra made the long trip from his island nation of Aruba to Manchester, Great Britain and Sofia, Bulgaria for the European Championships and Para Grand Prix. Loonstra fell in a hard-fought and entertaining quarterfinal against Turkey's **Oktay Atalay** at the G-2 tournament in Manchester and was upset by Ukraine's **Roman Ivanyuk** at the G-6 Sofia Grand Prix. Still, at No. 7 in the world – every ranking point matters, as Aruba head coach **Luciano Mazzeo** explained to TeleAruba News.



“It is very important to maintain his world ranking and to assess his condition during the fight”, said Mazzeo. “A big thank you goes out to ... the people of Aruba, who always show unconditional love for Elliot via social media”.

To read the full interview, please click [HERE](#).

Brazil Impresses at Para Grand Prix

Living up to its reputation as one of the world's best Para Taekwondo programmes, Brazil won three medals at the first Para Grand Prix event in Sofia, Bulgaria last month. The team was led by Paralympic bronze medalist **Silvana Cardoso**, who looked powerful in a 35-12 run to the -57 kg gold medal. Paralympic champion **Nathan Torquato** had a tougher time in Sofia, needing a golden point in the semi-final to get past Iran's pesky **Saeid Sadeghianpour** before falling to Turkey's European champion **Mahmut Bozteke** in the -63 kg final. The team finished its collection when **Christiane Nascimento** picked up a bronze medal



in the -52 kg final.

“In the last editions of the strongest events in the world – the Paralympic Games, World Championships, and Grand Prix – Brazil was in the Top 3 of all of them”, said Brazil’s Para Taekwondo Coordinator **Rodrigo Ferla**. “This shows the power that Brazil is in Para Taekwondo and we will continue working so that we follow this path”.

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

Canadian Champ Has Burger Named After Him

In a trailblazing career, Canada’s Anthony Cappelo has plenty of “firsts” in front of him – but this one takes the cake! The three-time Canadian champ and 2019 World Championship MVP recently had a burger named after him, becoming the first Para Taekwondo to have a food dish named after him. Montreal’s Notre Boeuf de Grace named the tasty creation after his signature kick – the back kick. The “Dwi Chagi – The Back Kick Burger” is a 6 ounce patty with Korean seasoning, Korean BBQ sauce, hoisin glazed bacon, and kale kimchi. The 2019 World Championship silver medalist posed for photos with his creation earlier this month.

“Just like Anthony’s signature kick – the back kick – this burger delivers a big kick of flavour!”, said the company in an advertising campaign.

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



Costa Rica Holds National Para Poomsae Championships

Costa Rica held the second stage of its National Taekwondo Championships last month in Desamparados, including several events for the countries Para Taekwondoins. Para athletes competed in eight events, organised by belt. **Daniel Matamoros** won gold in Poomsae, with **Gonzalo Lamosas** and **Isaac Murillo** winning silver and bronze, respectively. **Alexander Delgado** won gold in the Wheelchair Poomsae event. Stage three of the five-stage event will take place from 22-24 July.

“The national champions will be the athletes with the highest number of points obtained in the five dates”, Costa Rican Taekwondo Federation President Wilmar Alvarado said in a statement afterwards. “Each date the winners will be awarded with gold, silver, and bronze medals”.

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

Despite Success, Mexico Wants More

Mexico continues to show that it’s one of the top Para Taekwondo nations in the world – but the Mexican Taekwondo Federation wants more. After successful performances at both the European Championships and Para Grand Prix – where the nation finished in the top three at both events, thanks to double gold by Paralympic champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** and gold and silver by

Parapan Am champion **Jessica Garcia** – Mexico will hold a Para Taekwondo training camp from 17-24 June to recruit more fighters. Mexico has called in the big guns to help with recruitment, with 2008 Olympic champion **Maria Espinoza** releasing a video (watch [HERE](#)) and promising to attend the training. The team is specifically looking for athletes in the women’s -57 kg and men’s +80 kg, who could both be in line to directly qualify for next year’s Parapan Am Games in Santiago, Chile and be in a good position to qualify for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

“We don’t want to go through the last-chance regional qualifier”, head coach **Jannet Alegria** told Mexico’s Marca Claro newspaper. “We would like to ... take that pressure off ourselves and try to qualify as many as we can. So far, we have five athletes in the Top 15”.

Mexico’s Para Taekwondo Director **Veronica Santana** has an even longer-term plan. She is hoping for a full team – Kyorugi and Poomsae – ahead of Bribane 2032 and is working with the Teleton Foundation to find athletes. “There are several areas in which we are going to be working with [Teleton Foundation]”, she told Esto. “We are going to include all types of disabilities that Para Taekwondo works with – physical, intellectual, or neuromotor ... Teleton Foundation has a very innovative system”.



For the interview with Alegria, please click [HERE](#). For the interview with Santana, please click [HERE](#).

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