



World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

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Home Sweet Home for Para GP Host Great Britain



Will Attract Best Field Since Tokyo 2020

Manchester, Great Britain will host the most competitive Para Taekwondo event since Tokyo 2020 when over 100 of the world's best athletes meet at the third leg of the inaugural Para Grand Prix Series.

Over 100 of the world's best Para Taekwondo athletes. 19 current or former world champions. Four reigning Paralympic champions.

When World Taekwondo launched its inaugural Para Grand Prix Series – this is what it had in mind.

The last leg of the inaugural Para Grand Prix Series will take place in Manchester, Great Britain on 20 October and will draw the most competitive field since the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Several teams and fighters are making their long-awaited returns to international competitions, including Peru's Paralympic champion **Angelica Espinoza**, Nepal's Asian Youth Para Games champion **Palesha Goverdhan**, and Great Britain's 2019 world champion **Matt Bush**. After missing the Paris Para GP, Great Britain's former world champion **Amy Truesdale** is expected to make a return, as are teams from Korea, Chinese Taipei, and Thailand.

If the first two Para GP events in Sofia, Bulgaria, and Paris, France are any indication, Para Taekwondo fans are in for a treat.

Home Cooking for Host Great Britain

If history is any indicator, hosting the Para Grand Prix could be a boon to the team from Great Britain.

Several of the biggest moments in Great Britain's Para Taekwondo history happened on home soil.

Truesdale won her first world championship in London in 2017, while teammates **Beth Munro** and **Joe Lane** won their first European championships in Manchester earlier this year.

2019 world champion **Matt Bush** will make his return to competition for the first time since winning the European Paralympic Qualification tournament last summer. In top shape after rehabbing a serious knee injury, he won't have to face Croatia's Paralympic silver medalist **Ivan Mikulic**, who was forced to withdraw due to his own injury.

While Great Britain's Para Taekwondo fighters have risen to the occasion at home in previous tournaments, the Para GP could be a different experience. After hosting the last Para GP, France's former world champion **Bopha Kong** and Afghan refugee Paralympian **Zakia Khodadadi**, who lives and trains with France's team, both cited nerves as a factor in their performances at their home GP.

"My first fight on French soil put a lot of pressure on me," Khodadadi told the French Taekwondo Federation after failing to medal in Paris, "This made it a lot harder to fight in Paris than in another country".

New Talents Emerge

Allowing up-and-coming athletes more opportunities to show their progress, the Para Grand Prix Series has put several new athletes on the radar as potential Paris 2024 medal hopefuls.

Brazil's **Ana Carolina Silva** topped the reigning Paralympic, World, and European champions on the way to her first major international title at the Para GP in Paris.

Spain's **Dalia Santiago** handed Uzbekistan's in-form **Guljonoy Naimova** her first loss since becoming Paralympic champion to become the surprising +65 kg gold medalist in Paris.

Capping a strong 2022, Uzbekistan's **Asad Toshtemirov** won his first Para GP title by besting Kazakhstan's former world champion **Nurlan Dombayev** in the -80 kg final in Paris.

At the first Para GP in Sofia, it was France's **Djelika Diallo** and Ukraine's **Vlad Nechai** that won surprise medals, both at the expense of Great Britain's current European champions. Diallo topped Paralympic silver medalist **Munro** for gold, while **Nechai** beat Paralympian **Lane** in the quarter-final to secure his first international medal.



Crowning Para Taekwondo's First Undisputed Grand Prix Champions

Four fighters will be battling for a piece of Para Taekwondo history in Manchester – to become the sport's first Undisputed Grand Prix champions.

Mexico's Paralympic champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** has only lost twice since winning his first world championship in early 2019. He's the only fighter to have won every fight so far in 2022, including both Para GPs, but uncharacteristically needed a golden point to get past Azerbaijan's **Imamaddin Khalilov** in Sofia.

Turkey has a pair of fighters looking to become Para Taekwondo's first Undisputed GP champions. **Mahmut Bozteke** has twice beaten Brazil's Paralympic champion **Nathan Torquato** in the Para GP finals, including in Paris in one of the most entertaining fights of the year. Paralympic silver medalist **Meryem Cavdar** has yet to lose at the Para GP, beating Mexico's **Jessica Garcia** in the final at both events.

The USA's **Evan Medell** is also looking for his third straight Para GP title. While he won't have to face Croatia's Paralympic runner-up Mikulic for a third straight time due to an injury by his opponent, he may have to get past Great Britain's 2019 world champion **Bush** to claim the title in what would be one of the most highly anticipated matches in Manchester.

No Easy Fights

In a sign of Para Taekwondo's increasing talent and depth at the elite level, there are no sure-fire winners heading into the Manchester Para GP.

Every major Paris 2024 medal contender has lost at least once in 2022 except Mexico's Garcia Lopez, who fell in the 2021 World Championship final and needed a golden point victory to claim his first Para GP title.

Every other Paralympic champion has been beaten this year – Brazil's Torquato is still in search of his first Para GP title; Denmark's **Lisa Gjessing** lost at the European Championships and Paris Para GP; Uzbekistan's Naimova was upset in the Paris Para GP final, and Peru's Espinoza lost in her first fight since winning Tokyo 2020 gold – her first loss since 2019 – at the Pan Am Series earlier this month.

Six of the 10 Paralympic weight categories have already seen multiple Para GP champions.

With returning stars like **Bush**, **Espinoza**, and **Truesdale** in the mix in Manchester, it won't be any easier for

**NOTE: Para Taekwondo could be included in the 2022 Grand Prix Finals. Be sure to subscribe to the World Para Taekwondo newsletter for all the latest updates.*

Para Grand Prix Series Medal Table					
Rank	Nation	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	Turkey	6	2	5	13
2	Mexico	2	4	0	6
3	Brazil	2	3	4	9
4	Uzbekistan	2	1	3	6
5	USA	2	0	0	2
6	Mongolia	1	1	2	4
7	Israel	1	1	0	2
8	France	1	0	3	4
9	Iran	1	0	1	2
9	Spain	1	0	1	2
10	Thailand	1	0	0	1

Paris 2024 Qualifying Hits High Gear



It's been a busy month in the world of Para Taekwondo.

With three major tournaments on three different continents, the best Para Taekwondoists on the planet had plenty of opportunities to rack up ranking points in their quests to qualify for Paris 2024. Here are the highlights.

Paris Para Grand Prix

Para Taekwondo's prestige tournament series returned with nearly 100 of the world's top fighters traveling to Paris for the second Para Grand Prix.

Mexico's Paralympic champion Juan Diego Garcia Lopez stayed perfect in 2022 by winning his second straight Para GP gold. Other repeat Para GP champions include Turkey's **Mahmut Bozteke** and **Meryem**

Cavdar, and USA's Evan Medell.

The event saw breakout performances by several fighters, including Brazil's **Ana Carolina Silva**, Spain's **Dalia Santiago**, and Uzbekistan's **Asad Toshtemirov**.

Silva topped the reigning Paralympic, World, and European champions on the way to her first major title, while Santiago was the first fighter to get past Uzbekistan's **Guljonoy Naimova** since the world No. 1 won Paralympic gold last summer.

For full coverage, please check out World Taekwondo's coverage by clicking [HERE](#).

Asian Para Taekwondo Championships

Iran dominated, while Japan crowned its first two Asian champions as the 7th Asian Championships returned to Vietnam for the first time since 2018.

Despite missing reigning world champion and 6-time Asian champion Mehdi Pourrahnama, Iran won 9 medals in Vietnam, including crowning Asian champions in 5 of the 10 Paralympic-eligible weight categories.

Japan, too, saw great success as the 2020 Paralympic hosts found its first Asian champions – Tokyo 2020 Paralympians **Mitsuya Tanaka** and **Shunsuke Kudo**.

For full coverage, please check out World Taekwondo's coverage by clicking [HERE](#).



Pan Am Series

Brazil showcased the depth of its Para Taekwondo programme by dominating the G2 Pan Am Series event in Sao Paulo which attracted over 50 athletes from 10 countries.

The hosts won 7 of 10 gold medals, with a handful of lower-ranked Brazilian fighters upending their higher-ranked teammates.

Demonstrating Para Taekwondo's increasing global depth, several favoured fighters faltered in Brazil.

Peru's Paralympic champion **Angelica Espinoza** lost her first fight since winning gold at Tokyo 2020, while Kazakhstan's reigning Asian champion **Kamilya Dosmalova** failed to win a fight. Even hometown hero and Paralympic champion **Nathan Torquato**, featured prominently on a giant billboard alongside the mats,

needed a last-second kick to get past Argentina's veteran **Facundo Novik** to win gold.

For full coverage, please check out World Taekwondo's coverage by clicking [HERE](#).



"Para Taekwondo is Better Than Ever" - Chelbat



After Grand Prix Success, Chelbat Hopes to See Improved Conditions for Para Athletes

*In an exclusive interview with World Para Taekwondo, Para Taekwondo Committee Chair **Chakir Chelbat** spoke about the new Para Grand Prix series, what's in store for 2023, and the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.*

Here's what he had to say:

On the Grand Prix Series

Chelbat expressed pride in the launch of the new Para Grand Prix (PGP) series and explained how he hopes to improve the prestige tournament series going forward.

"It feels like a Grand Prix – even if they didn't get any prize money", he said, "First be part of the Grand Prix. Next, improve the conditions. The best way to do this is to partner with the able-bodied series".

Besides the goal of offering prize money to PGP winners, Chelbat expressed a desire to see the event move to a multi-day affair.

"The PGP and PGP Finals for 2023 will have better conditions", he said, "We hope to do it parallel with able-bodied like [at the 2023 European championships] in Manchester or to do a two-day event before the able-bodied competition".

He spoke about the success of the integrated European championships earlier this year.

"This was highly appreciated and a great success", he said, "The media, the people, the athletes and coaches – all raved about the format. We were the first IF [international federation] in the world to do that".

He thanked World Taekwondo leadership for its commitment to the sport.

"We are grateful to President Choue for putting it on the programme and for his continuing commitment to Para Taekwondo", he said, "Our IF is very unique. We have programmes for refugees, we help athletes affected by war – our IF is so involved".

On what's in store for 2023

Chelbat was excited to speak about the 2023 Para Taekwondo calendar.

"In 2023, there will be more events than ever for Para Taekwondo", he said, "I hope to see even more countries hosting G events on all 5 continents to help Para Taekwondo grow. We want Africa to host, we want Europe to continue to host".

It's not only the athletes that will look to qualify for Paris 2024 next year. Chelbat spoke about Paralympic qualification for referees.

"Paralympic qualification for Para Taekwondo referees will start in March or April", he said, "There will be three camps – one in Pan Am, one in Europe for Europe / Africa, and one in Asia for Asia / Oceania".

In 2023, World Para Taekwondo will continue to build its international classifier database.

"We will continue to work on training classifiers all over the world", he said, "and we are still working to classify all of our athletes".

On the Pan Am Series

Speaking about the successful launch of the Para Pan Am Series.

“The Pan Am Series is a great idea”, he said, “I hope other continents will follow suit. For able-bodied G events, it would be nice to see these competitions give some courts to Para Taekwondo competitions”.

On Paris 2024

Chelbat was enthusiastic when he spoke about the Para Taekwondo competition at the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris, France, believing that the sport would be beautifully displayed.

“I believe strongly that at these Paralympic Games, Para Taekwondo will be broadcast [by the IPC] – which will be amazing news for us”, he said, “Being at Paris’ Grand Palais, in the same venue and with the same conditions as our able-bodied Olympians – it’s all very nice”.

He spoke about how he would like to see Para Taekwondo presented at the Paralympics post-Paris 2024.

“It would be nice – a dream come true – for Para Taekwondo to have five days for 10 weight categories”, he said, “It will show equity in the sport (able-bodied has four days for 8 weight categories at the Olympic Games) and will help the sport to grow”.

On being named Technical Delegate for Paris 2024

Chelbat expressed pride in being named the Technical Delegate for Para Taekwondo at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games for the second time, after serving in the role at Tokyo 2020.

“I’m very proud, very honoured, and very grateful for the trust and huge responsibility our president Dr. Choue has put on my shoulder”, he said, “Together with my great team and colleagues, we will work hard to deliver a historical and successful Paralympic Games at Paris 2024”.

On what comes next

Chelbat looked back, before looking forward.

“It was a difficult time during COVID, after COVID. But now things are moving forward”, he said, “This is thanks to the good governance of World Taekwondo and the organisation of World Para Taekwondo”.

He expressed a desire to continue to see Para athletes have the same opportunities as their able-bodied counterparts.

“We weren’t in the Paralympic Games; now we are. We weren’t in the Grand Prix series; now we are”, he said, “We continue to look for equal opportunities for our Para athletes, so now we are hoping to join the Grand Slam.”

Education



Upcoming Courses

*** COMING SOON ***

Calendar



- ~~WT President's Cup Oceania (G2) – September 30, 2022 – Papeete, French Polynesia~~
(EVENT IS CANCELED)
- ~~Oceania Para Taekwondo Open Championships (G4/G2) – October 1, 2022 – Papeete, French Polynesia~~
(EVENT IS CANCELED)
- 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~~
(EVENT IS CANCELED)
- 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:

Khodadadi Hopes to Compete for France at Paris 2024

Afghan refugee **Zakia Khodadadi** made international headlines last year after issuing an emotional plea for help to escape Taliban-led Afghanistan to compete at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. Several governments and organisations – including World Taekwondo – stepped in to make sure she safely reached Japan. Khodadadi competing in Tokyo was universally named as one of Tokyo 2020's most inspiring moments and it looks like she'll have the opportunity to become a two-time Paralympian. Competing in international events as a refugee under the World Taekwondo flag, Khodadadi announced on France's BFM TV that she plans to compete for host France at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. Khodadadi currently lives and works in Paris and trains with the French national team. Currently ranked No. 12 in the -47 kg category, Khodadadi would likely claim one of the positions reserved for host country athletes at the Paralympic Games, should she



receive her French citizenship in time.

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



Ukraine's Paralympic Channel Covers Paris Para Grand Prix

Ukrainian TV channel Equalympic – the first TV channel in the world dedicated exclusively to Para sport content – was in Paris last month to cover World Taekwondo's Para Grand Prix. The channel produced three segments featuring interviews with World Taekwondo President **Dr. Chungwon Choue**, Ukrainian athletes and members of the team, and Danish Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing** and her Hall of Fame coach

Bjarne Johannsen. The Ukrainian team currently lives in Denmark and trains with the Danish team after fleeing Ukraine for safety. Six-time world champion and Paralympian **Vika Marchuk** won a bronze medal – her first Para GP medal – at the event in Paris. Equalympic provides dedicated coverage of Paralympic, Deaflympic, and other Para sport competitions worldwide. The channel employs former Para athletes and ensures accessibility through use of sign language, subtitles, and audio-video commentary. Equalympic can be found on satellite, through several OTT providers, and online on the equalympic.tv website or YouTube (click [HERE](#)).

“13 years ago, when Ukraine won its first Para Taekwondo world championship, it was a dream for the sport to be in the Paralympic Games. Now it's not a dream, it's the future”, said Equalympic in a post sharing the video. “What athletes from other countries are saying about our team and how they support Ukraine during the war”.

To watch the clips, please click [HERE](#), [HERE](#), and [HERE](#).

Asia:

Iran Tops Asian Championship; Eyes Asian Para Games

Iran showcased why it is considered to have one of the world's finest Para Taekwondo programmes by topping the medal table at the 2022 Asian Para Taekwondo Championships. Nine of the team's 11 athletes won medals in Vietnam, with the team winning five of the event's 10 gold medals and adding another in K41. It was Iran's women that led the way, winning three of the five Asian titles – **Maryam Deroei** in -47 kg, **Mahdiyeh Hosseini** in -52 kg, and **Rayehe Shahab** in -65 kg. The men's team added two more Asian champions – **Alireza Bakht** in -80 kg and world champion **Hamed Haghshenas** in +80 kg. According to the Secretary General of the Iran Taekwondo Federation **Masoud Lashkari**, the team is looking for a strong performance at next year's Asian Para Games in China, where Iran has qualified fighters in 9 of 10 events.



“Despite only forming the women's [Para] Taekwondo team in 2018, the team ... had a significant performance”, Lashkari told Iran's ISNA, “Some male Taekwondoists won their first medals, which is great for the future of the men's team ... The effort is to invest in the team and prepare them for the Asian Para Games in China and the Paralympic Games in Paris”.

For the full ISNA interview, please click [HERE](#). For Asian Championships coverage, please click [HERE](#).

Kazakhstan Celebrates Asian Championships Success

Kazakhstan's strong performance at the Asian Championships in Vietnam caught the attention of the country's media with several outlets reporting on the team's success. Kazakhstan won 7 medals at the event,



including the first-ever Asian title for Paralympian **Kamilya Dosmalova**. The team saw four other fighters make the finals, with Paralympic teammates **Nurlan Dombayev** (-80 kg) and **Nyshan Omirali** (+80 kg) winning silver along with **Nysanbek Aidarbekov** (-58 kg), and **Bauyrzhan Kushervaev** (-63 kg). **Alisher Garipollaev** won bronze in +80 kg, while **Malik Mukashev** won gold in the -80 kg K41 event. The 7-medal haul was good enough to claim second in the standings after Iran and earn national team coach **Nurzhan Chalobaevich** the award for Best Coach.

“65 athletes from 15 countries took part in the Championship”, said Head of Team **Bigarin**

Merey, “In the team standings, the Kazakh team took an honourable [second]”.

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

Phuangkitcha Named Thailand's Para Athlete of the Year

The Sports Correspondents Association of Thailand held its annual ‘Best Athlete Day’, where the country’s top athletes and sports teams are recognised for their achievements. Thailand’s two-time reigning world champion and Paralympic bronze medalist **Khwansuda Phuangkitcha** was named Thailand’s Top Female Para Athlete for 2021. Phuangkitcha had a 2021 to remember, winning her second world title and rebounding from a semi-final loss at Tokyo 2020 to claim an emotional bronze medal. Showing the popularity of Taekwondo in Thailand, Olympic champion and No. 1-ranked **Panipak Wongpatanakit** – who won Thailand’s only gold medal at Tokyo 2020 – was named Best Female Amateur Athlete for the third straight time, with her coach **Che Yong Suk** winning for Best Coach. Several VIPs were on hand to present the awards, including IOC member **Pattama Leesawadtrakul** and several other government and sports officials.



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



Uzbekistan Crowns New Para Grand Prix Champion

It seems fitting that at the same event where Uzbek superstar **Guljonoy Naimova** lost for the first time since becoming Paralympic champion, Uzbekistan found a new Para Grand Prix champion in **Asad Toshtemirov**. The No. 12-ranked fighter upended a trio of Paralympians, including Great Britain’s European champion **Joe Lane** and Kazakhstan’s Paralympian **Nurlan Dombayev**, to add a Para GP gold to the bronze he won in Sofia. Naimova suffered her first setback since becoming Paralympic champion, losing a 6-5 squeaker to Spain’s **Dalia Santiago**, while teammate **Zukhriddin Tokhirov** completed the set by adding a bronze in the -63 kg event. Naimova’s success

has fueled a Para Taekwondo renaissance in Uzbekistan and the team has now won 6 Para GP medals (2 gold, 1 silver, 3 bronze) – more than all but Turkey and Brazil.

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

Europe:

Despite Success, Press Keeps Pressure on Azerbaijan Team

Though tripling the medal output from the first Para Grand Prix, Azerbaijan athletes continue to face pressure from a demanding media that has high expectations for one of Para Taekwondo's pioneering programmes. After winning a single silver at the inaugural Para Grand Prix in Sofia, where Paralympian **Imamaddin Khalilov** took Mexico's Paralympic champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** to golden point before falling to the world No. 1, Azerbaijan added three medals at the Para Grand Prix event in Paris. Led by young star **Sabir Zeynalov**, who won silver after losing to Israel's world champion **Asaf Yasur** in the -58 kg final, Khalilov picked up another GP medal – bronze in -70 kg, while Paralympic teammate **Abulfaz Abuzarli** upset Mexico's up-and-coming **Luis Najera** on the way to his first GP medal, a bronze in -80 kg. The improvement didn't satisfy some in the Azeri media, whose headline "Para Taekwondo Fighters Fail to Conquer Paris" underscores the expectations for the team that qualified four fighters to Tokyo 2020 – more than any other nation except neighbouring Turkey. Azerbaijan has a storied history with Para Taekwondo, hosting the first world championships in 2009.



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



Denmark's Gjessing First Para Athlete Named to Taekwondo Hall of Fame

Denmark's legendary **Lisa Gjessing** was the first Para Taekwondo fighter to be named to the Taekwondo Hall of Fame, while her coach **Bjarne Johansson** was also honoured at a ceremony near New York City last month. Not affiliated with World Taekwondo, the for-profit Taekwondo Hall of Fame was the first organisation to recognise outstanding talent in the field of Taekwondo. Gjessing and coach Johansson have put together a sterling career highlighted by four world championships and Paralympic gold at Tokyo 2020. The 44-year-old is still ranked No. 1 in the world and will attempt to repeat as Paralympic champion at Paris 2024. The pair was inducted along with **Se-Hyuk Kim** (Korea), **Eui Lee** (Korea), and **Mark Williams** (USA). World Taekwondo announced the first inductees of its own official Hall of Fame at a ceremony in Sofia, Bulgaria last month.

"The ceremony took place in fantastic surroundings ... with the view of New York's Manhattan as the backdrop", said Johansson after the ceremony. "It was a very special experience".

For more, please click [HERE](#). For information on World Taekwondo's Hall of Fame, please click [HERE](#).

France Reflects on Pressure-Packed Paris Para Grand Prix

The French Taekwondo Federation interviewed French athletes **Bopha Kong** and **Djelika Diallo**, as well as refugee athlete **Zakia Khodadadi** – who trains with the team – and national team coach **Oury Sztantman** to get their thoughts on the first Para Grand Prix held in the future host city of the 2024 Paralympic Games. Kong and Diallo won bronze medals at their home Para GP, while Khodadadi failed to match her bronze-medal performance from the inaugural Para GP in Sofia.



"A first Grand Prix at home in Paris ends with many regrets as I had gold in mind", said Kong, "The important thing is I did my best. I will come back stronger and hope to do better next time".

“Watching the other [able-bodied] fighters motivated us ... Physically, I was at 100%, but the stress of a first competition in France took it away”, said Diallo, “I remain relatively inexperienced with this type of tournament ... Getting experience at this point in my career is the priority”.

“My first fight on French soil put a lot of pressure on me ... This made it a lot harder to fight in Paris than in another country”, said Khodadadi, “Most of all I’m happy with my progress and am really enjoying my quiet life in France”.

“Adding the Grand Prix to our calendar is truly a sign of prestige and recognition for our sport”, said Sztantman, “That’s right – we’re making progress!”

You can find the full posts on the French Taekwondo Federation Facebook page by clicking [HERE](#).



Turkey Celebrates Para Grand Prix Success

The Turkish Taekwondo Federation celebrated its national Para Taekwondo team after its athletes won 7 medals from 10 events – including 3 gold – to finish on top of the leaderboard at the Para Grand Prix in Paris. **Mahmut Bozteke** and **Meryem Cavdar** made it two gold medals each in two Para Grand Prix, while **Gamze Gurdal** won her first Para Grand Prix gold by beating Brazil’s **Silvana Cardoso** 7-3 in the -57 kg final to hand the world’s No. 1-ranked fighter her first loss of 2022. Turkey’s **Fatih Celik** picked up his first Para Grand Prix medal by winning silver after losing to Mexico’s Paralympic champion and No. 1-ranked fighter

Juan Diego Garcia Lopez in the -70 kg final. After winning gold in Sofia, **Alican Ozcan** won bronze in Paris, while teammates **Mehmet Sarac** won his second straight bronze and world champion **Nurcihan Ekinci**’s bronze was her first Para Grand Prix medal. In two Para Grand Prix, Turkey has now won 13 medals – 6 gold, 2 silver, and 5 bronze.

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

Pan Am:

Loonstra Wins Aruba's Para Athlete of the Year for 3rd Straight Time

Aruba’s Tokyo 2020 flagbearer **Elliot Loonstra** was named Aruba’s 2021 Para Athlete of the Year at the *Premio Excelencia den Deporte* ceremony in Oranjestad last month. It marks the third straight time Loonstra has won the award, after winning in 2018 and 2019 (There was no 2020 award due to COVID-19). Since the 2019 event was canceled due to COVID-19, Aruban Prime Minister Evelyne Wever-Croes presented the No. 10-ranked fighter with the 2019 and 2021 awards. Loonstra is making a case for winning the award again next year after winning bronze at the 2022 Pan American championships. Later in the month, he joined former NFL star **Tent Shelton** on a panel to speak to over 400 students about what it takes to become an elite-level Para sports athlete.



For more, please read the story on Aruba Today by clicking [HERE](#).

Brazil Hosts National Para Taekwondo Championships

It’s been a quick journey to the top of the Para Taekwondo world for Brazil; it took just three years to go from developing its first world champion – **Debora Menezes** at Antalya 2019 – to winning more medals than any other nation at the Paralympic Games. The Brazilian Taekwondo Federation has even bigger dreams, as can be



evidenced by Brazil's National Para Taekwondo Championships, held at the Paralympic Training Centre in Sao Paulo last month. The event drew 73 Para Taekwondoists from across the country, including 21 new athletes alone, who competed in the new training centre under a giant poster of Brazil's Paralympic champion **Nathan Torquato**. Participants competed in both Kyorugi and Poomsae in senior, junior, and cadet categories. In conjunction with the championships, Brazil hosted a National Classification Course. Brazil's depth was on display when the country hosted the Pan Am Series and won 20 medals, including 7 of 10 gold medals.

"We were excited to draw so many athletes to the event", Brazil head coach **Rodrigo Ferla** told World Para Taekwondo afterwards, "Especially the new athletes! Finding over 20 new athletes is a testament to the work we've been doing".

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

Mexico Applauds 3 More Grand Prix Medals

The Mexican media celebrated the continued success of its national team after winning three medals at the Para Grand Prix in Paris, where the team matched its output of one gold and two silvers from the inaugural Para Grand Prix in Sofia. Paralympic champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** continued his perfect run in 2022, getting past a stiff challenge from Japan's **Shunsuke Kudo** in the semi-final before easing past Turkish Paralympian **Fatih Celik** 19-2 in the -70 kg final. In a rematch from Sofia, **Jessica Garcia** closed the gap against Turkish rival **Meryem Cavdar**, losing 13-8 to win silver after falling 26-5 in Sofia. **Claudia Romero** won her first Para Grand Prix medal, winning silver after falling to Mongolia's former world champion **Enkhtuya Khurelbaatar** on golden point in a nail-biting -47 kg final. After winning silver in Sofia, **Luis Najera** failed to medal in Paris after losing to Azerbaijan's **Abulfaz Aburzarli** in the -80 kg quarterfinal.



"Work and struggle equal success", said Mexico's national team coach Jannet Allegria afterward, "We'll keep working and learning".

For more, please check out this story on Milenio by clicking [HERE](#).



Deaf Taekwondo Instructor Featured on USA's 'Good Morning America'

Joseph Santarose, a deaf Taekwondo instructor in Houston, Texas, was featured last month on 'Good Morning America' – the top-rated morning TV programme in the USA. Santarose has had 90% hearing loss since he was a child and picked up the sport when he

was four. He competed at the 2013 Deaflympics in Sofia, Bulgaria, and now hopes that two of his students qualify for the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, France. The owner and head instructor of his own academy, Santarose credits Taekwondo for helping him learn to live with his hearing loss. "Hearing is very important in martial arts because you have to be aware of your surroundings ... When you're 90% deaf, being aware of your surroundings is kind of hard, so it really helped me learn how to adapt to my surroundings". He uses the challenge of fighting with an impairment to teach his students.

"Not having hearing is a big obstacle", he said on the show, "I just want to encourage other students that, hey – you might have these big obstacles in life, but you can keep going no matter what".

For more, please click [HERE](#). To watch the video segment, please click [HERE](#).

Other:

KPNP Signs Agreement with European Taekwondo Union

The European Taekwondo Union (ETU) signed an agreement with KPNP to provide the Point Scoring System (PSS) for all Para Taekwondo events in Europe. The KPNP PSS becomes the second system recognised by World Taekwondo. Spanish provider Daedoo will continue to exclusively provide the PSS at other events, including the World Championships and Paralympic Games.

“The reality is that ... some major Grand Prix and other WT-sanctioned events are serviced by KPNP”, said ETU President **Sakis Pragalo**, “Out European athletes should be able to train and compete and learn to fight with both systems”.



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



USATKD Launches Project California 2028

Looking to capitalise on the massive marketing potential hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games offer, USA Taekwondo has partnered with the California Unified Taekwondo Association (CUTA) to launch Project California 2028 – a joint effort to promote the sport and prepare American Taekwondoins for success at the LA 2028 Paralympic

Games. Organisers promise to maximise marketing potential, optimise high-level training of elite athletes, and bid for major Taekwondo events to be held in California.

“LA 2028 will be the first-ever home Olympic Games for Taekwondo in the United States, and that means ... we’re doing something that has never been done before”, said USATKD CEO **Steve McNally**, “The more we find ways to work together, the more successful we’ll be and the greater the opportunity is for the sport of Taekwondo and its athletes to benefit”.

“I’m already dreaming of a California athlete standing on top of that Olympic medal podium in 2028”, said CUTA Secretary General **Derrick Carter**, “Chances are it will be an athlete who we don’t even know yet, and I’m so excited for the opportunity to be involved in everything we can”.

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

Para Taekwondo Chair Chelbat Named Technical Delegate for Paris 2024

Para Taekwondo Committee Chair **Chakir Chelbat** has been appointed by World Taekwondo President **Dr. Chungwon Choue** to be the sport’s Technical Delegate (TD) at the 17th Summer Paralympic Games in Paris, France. Chelbat previously held the role when Para Taekwondo made its Paralympic debut at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. In his letter outlining the appointment, Dr. Choue said: “The position of TD is of utmost importance to the sport of Taekwondo. I have every confidence in you ... to serve your post with integrity and pride”.



Speaking after the appointment, Chelbat said:

“I’m very proud, very honoured, and very grateful for the trust and huge responsibility our president Dr. Choue has put on my shoulder. Together with my great team and colleagues, we will work hard to deliver a historical and successful Paralympic Games at Paris 2024”.

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

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