



# World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

December 2022 | Issue #30

## Happy Holidays from World Para Taekwondo



## 2022 Marks Momentous Year for Para Taekwondo

*From its introduction into the prestigious Grand Prix Series, to its first fully integrated event, to Para Taekwondo stars winning able-bodied awards, Para Taekwondo took major steps towards parity in 2022.*

### 1. Para Taekwondo Hits Prime Time at Para Grand Prix Series

Bright lights, ring walks, big-time fights – Para Taekwondo stars hit the limelight in style in 2022 as the sport's biggest stars staked their claims to being the biggest Paris 2024 medal threats in the sport.

Para Taekwondo made its debut at Taekwondo's biggest event series and made stars out of some athletes while cementing rivalries as Para Taekwondo barrels toward its second Paralympic Games.

Paralympic stars showed that they are still in top form, with six Tokyo 2020 medalists winning three of four Para Grand Prix Series gold medals.

Paralympic champions **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** (MEX) and **Guljonoy Naimova** (UZB) continued their dominance from 2021 by each winning three events, while Tokyo 2020 medalists **Silvana Cardoso** (BRA), **Evan Medell** (USA), **Mahmut Bozteke** (TUR), and **Meryem Cavdar** (TUR) each cemented their statuses as

Paris 2024 medal favourites by winning three of four Para Grand Prix gold medals each.

Bozteke and Cavdar were recognised for their Para GP success by winning Male and Female Athletes of the Year at the year-end Awards Gala – the first time Para Taekwondo was included in the ceremony.

“At the beginning of the year, we didn’t have light – we didn’t even have one organiser for the Para GP Series. Then we had one, then two...”, a delighted WT Para Taekwondo Chair **Chakir Chelbat** told World Taekwondo.

“We achieved many things in 2022. The Para GP Series was a great success. It was a great feeling to see Para athletes have the same opportunities and compete at the same level as able-bodied athletes”.

New athletes also showed they belong at the top of their respective weight categories. **Asad Toshtemirov** (UZB), **Alireza Bakht** (IRI), and **Ana Carolina Silva de Moura** (BRA) each won two Para Grand Prix tournaments, while **Djelika Diallo** (FRA) and **Shrijana Ghising** (NEP) each won their first international gold medals at the Para Grand Prix in memorable fashion.

Other Para Taekwondo winners at the WT Awards Gala included **Bobur Koziyev** (UZB) for Coach of the Year, **Brazil** for MNA of the Year, and **Ukraine** for Fighting Spirit.



## 2. Integrated Events Mark Wave of the Future

Para Taekwondo flexed its innovative muscles by becoming the first Para sport to hold concurrent competition with its able-bodied counterparts.

The European Championships in Manchester had Para Taekwondo finals featured in prime time on Great Britain’s national broadcaster BBC alongside Taekwondo’s biggest Olympic stars, offering Para fighters unprecedented access to eyeballs – both in the stadium and on TV.

“Spectators kept asking about the difference in rules (between able-bodied and Para Taekwondo)”, said WT Para Taekwondo Committee Vice-Chair **Usman Dildar**. “They noted that able-bodied was more touching (with precision) while Para was more powerful and passionate. They preferred Para”.

Of course, it wasn’t just the Para community that was delighted by the development. **Bradley Sinden**, Great Britain’s world champion and Olympic silver medalist, shared his sentiments with local media.

“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”, he told the Yorkshire Post. “So, fans will get to cheer on the whole team. We train together, so it’s about time we compete together”.

The extraordinary opportunity proved a boon to the hometown Great Britain team, who crowned two new European champions on the way to three total Para medals. **Beth Munro** finally bested Paralympic nemesis **Lisa Gjessing** (DEN) while **Joe Lane** topped talented young gun **Asad Toshtemirov** (UZB), as both won their first international tournaments.

“The cohesiveness and team energy (were amazing). It was electrifying with the crowd”, Munro told World Para Taekwondo about the experience. “It was also amazing to see the equality we Para athletes deserve –

long may it last”.

Continuing its parity path, the Pan American Taekwondo Union (PATU) selected Garcia Lopez as its 2022 Athlete of the Year – ahead of able-bodied athletes competing in the same category.

“It is important for federations to recognise Para athletes to make us feel like part of an inclusive family”, Garcia Lopez told the IPC after receiving the prestigious award. “That motivates us to continue seeking to be the best”.

Para Taekwondo looks to have set off a trend in Para sport, with Oceania Athletics hosting an integrated Athletics Championships later in the year.

## What Else Made the List?

There were plenty of other major moments in Para Taekwondo in 2022. What else made the list?

**3. Participation Support Works** - From Nepal's Shrijana Ghising winning gold at the Para Grand Prix Finals, to Ukraine's refugee team seeing five different athletes win medals in 2022; to Ghana crowning its first African champions in **Patricia Kyeremaa** and **Emmanuel Kofi Turkson** - World Taekwondo's Participation Support works.

**4. 'Undisputed' is a Disputed Label** - Four fighters won gold at the first three Para Grand Prix events, but none managed to go four for four in Riyadh. So, what exactly constitutes "Undisputed"? Is it going through the calendar year undefeated, like Mexico's Garcia Lopez or the USA's Medell? Is it Mongolia's **Bolor-Erdene Ganbat's** perfect 20-0 record at the World Championships? Or maybe it's having every major title at the same time, like Uzbekistan Naimova? While it might be up for discussion - the title is here to stay.

**5. No Clear-Cut Favourites for Paris 2024** - Very few fighters went through 2022 unscathed, showing just how competitive Para Taekwondo has become. Even the greatest fighters had their troubles. Paralympic champions like Brazil's **Nathan Torquato** and Denmark's **Lisa Gjessing** failed to capture Para GP gold, while Athletes of the Year Cavdar and Bozteke couldn't cap the year with Para GP Finals golds. Even the greats had a rough time: Naimova lost for the first time in two years, Ganbat failed to win a tournament, and Garcia Lopez needed a golden point win to get past Azerbaijan's **Imamaddin Khalilov** for European Championship gold.

With more tournaments than ever on tap for 2023 - there is no better time than now to be a Para Taekwondo fighter.

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



# Iran Tops, Nepal Wins First Gold at Para GP Finals



*Iran set a record with four gold medals, athletes from Nepal and Israel made history, and Para Taekwondo's best were feted at the Gala Awards at the season-ending Para Grand Prix Finals in Saudi Arabia.*

It was a historic day in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia as Para Taekwondo made its Grand Prix Finals debut – and the athletes responded with history-making performances.

Iran set a Para Grand Prix Series record by winning four gold medals; Nepal won its first-ever gold medal at a major international event; and 10 athletes became the inaugural winners of the first Para Grand Prix Finals gold medals.

Para Taekwondo's new wave of stars shone as just three world champions from 2021 – and only a single Paralympic champion – managed to find gold in the Saudi desert.

"2022 was a good year", said Paralympic champion **Guljonoy Naimova**, who won gold at three of four Para Grands Prix, the Asian Championships, and the President's Cup – Asia this year, "But I'm ready for 2023".

## Iranian Domination

Iran marked its return to the Para Grand Prix Series in style with a dominant showing that included five medals, including four gold, in the 10 events.

World champion **Hamed Haghshenas** led the way for Iran, again beating Croatia's **Ivan Mikulic** in a rematch of last year's world championship final.

"I think silver is my colour", Mikulic told World Taekwondo after receiving his Para Grand Prix Finals silver medal. Mikulic also won silver at Tokyo 2020, the 2021 World Championships, and both Para Grands Prix he competed in this year. "But it will be a different story at Paris 2024".

**Alireza Bakht** picked up where he left off by winning the -80 kg gold. He also won gold at his last event – the first Para Grand Prix in Sofia, Bulgaria.

**Saeid Sadeghianpour** and **Maryam Deroei** won gold in -63 kg and 47 kg, respectively, while **Roza Ebrahimi** added a bronze in -57 kg to put the world on notice that Iran plans to pick up multiple medals at Paris 2024 to add to the gold and silver won by **Asghar Azizi Aqdam** and **Mehdi Pourrahnama** at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Sadeghianpour savoured his victory, waxing stoic after a disappointing bronze at the Asian championships earlier this year.

"Sometimes it is necessary to embrace the storms of our lives", he said about rebounding from the Asian

championships loss to win gold in Riyadh, "Nothing grows without rain. May this always remain as a memory".



## Himalayan High

The most stunning result was in the -52 kg weight category, where Nepal's **Shrijana Ghising** upended the **Meryem Cavdar** (TUR) / **Jessica Garcia** (MEX) lock on gold / silver that was seen at the previous three Para Grands Prix this year.

It was the first time in history that an athlete from Nepal won gold at a major international event.

"I am so happy right now", an elated Ghising told World Taekwondo after winning gold, "This achievement goes to my mom, my coach, and the Nepal Taekwondo Association".

In just her third major tournament, the 23-year-old won in style, topping the world's Top 3-ranked fighters, including a convincing 12-0 win over reigning world champion Cavdar in the final.

Despite the loss, Cavdar was named Top Female Para Fighter in the world at World Taekwondo's post-tournament Gala Awards ceremony.

It was the second time Ghising has beaten the world's top female fighter this year, marking her as a serious medal threat for Paris 2024. No Nepalese athlete has ever won a medal at the Olympic or Paralympic Games, meaning Ghising will be fighting for a piece of Nepal's sporting history should she qualify for Paris 2024.

The win in Riyadh will likely move her into the Top 6 in the rankings, which would earn her automatic qualification to Paris 2024 should she maintain the ranking throughout 2023.

## Historic Performances and Gala Awards

Ghising wasn't the only fighter to make history in Riyadh.

World champion **Asaf Yasur** became the first Israeli athlete from any sport to win a medal on Saudi soil. After winning gold at the previous two Para Grands Prix, he left the event with mixed emotions.

"I was ready to win the fight against **Sabir [Zeynalov** of Azerbaijan - in the SF]. We know his tactics; we knew what to do. I'm not sure I can point to the reason why I lost this fight", Yasur told the IPC. "We went back to the warm-up area and said 'let's finish this day with a medal. I'll get him next time".

Also making history were Para Taekwondo's first award-winners at the year-end Gala Awards.

Turkiye's **Meryem Cavdar** and **Mahmut Bozteke** picked up the Top Athlete Awards, while Uzbekistan's **Bobur Koziyev** was named Top Coach, **Brazil** was named Top MNA, and **Ukraine** won the Fighting Spirit

Award.

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



## Chelbat: 'Much to Celebrate' in Season's Greetings



*The Para Taekwondo Committee Chair allowed himself a smile as he reflected on a momentous year for Para Taekwondo.*

World Taekwondo's Para Taekwondo Committee Chair Chakir Chelbat is content this holiday season – and wants to recognise the achievements of everyone involved in making 2022 such an important year for the sport.

"We never achieved better results as this year", he said in a year-end interview.

"It was a great year of achievements. World Taekwondo put in a lot of resources, times, funds, and MNA assistance to help. This year was a high point – especially after COVID".

He singled out several groups that were integral to Para Taekwondo's success in 2022.

"First, let me commend President Dr. Choue for his great leadership and for the opportunity to be part of the Para movement. I'd also like to thank my colleagues on the Para Taekwondo Committee for their hard work, to the dedication and commitment of the WT Para Taekwondo Director – Olof Hansson and Assistant Manager Thomas Page, to the classifiers under the leadership of Dr. Hadwah Moawad, Mr. Said Khelwatty for all the preparation with the World Para Poomsae Championships, Mr. Mohammed Argoubi for leading the Referee Committee, Mr. Usman Dildar as Games Committee Chair, and to Ms. Sookyung Park", Chelbat said.

"Thanks to the hard work of everybody – everyone has done such a great job. Thank you so much for your support to develop and promote Para athletes worldwide".

## **2022 – A Year of Achievements**

Chelbat was quick to point out the many achievements of Para Taekwondo in 2022.

"At the beginning of the year, we didn't have a light; we didn't even have one organiser for the Grand Prix Series. Then we had one; then two...", he said.

"The Grand Prix Finals were a great success. It was a great feeling to see Para athletes compete at the same level as able-bodied athletes and to see them have the same opportunities".

In addition to the successful launch of the Para Grand Prix Series, Chelbat raised a number of other achievements of 2022, including full integration at the 2022 European Championships, classification opportunities across the world, and increased MNA support from continental unions.

"We're very happy that the leadership continues its support and continues the push for the Para movement around the globe", he said.

"I'm sure the future of Para Taekwondo is very bright".

## **2023 – Continued Growth**

Chelbat has high hopes for 2023.

Beyond hosting a record number of events, Chelbat lists the return of the Para Poomsae to the World Championships, more preparation for the Grand Prix Series, multiple continental multisport competitions, expanded training and classification opportunities and, perhaps, the introduction of Para Taekwondo into World Taekwondo's Grand Slam.

"It will be a very busy year as we continue to look for successful pathways for the Para movement and Para sports", he said.

Among the new opportunities for the Para Taekwondo community in 2023, Chelbat listed the Paralympic qualification camps for referees to be held in March / April, new education for athletes that will focus on their rights and responsibilities, and kickstarting Para Poomsae, which in 2023 is set to hold its first in-person World Championships since 2019.

"We're ready to restart the Para Poomsae Championships around the globe. We want to see events on all five continents", he said.

He hopes for the active support of continental unions and MNAs in this regard.

"I hope that every GP Series host – or the hosts of any Para event, or even able-bodied – can put the same effort to support the Para movement. We hope they can also organise Para Poomsae events alongside Para Kyorugi. Every country needs to take the responsibility to promote Para alongside able-bodied", he said.

"It needs to start raining before there can be a tsunami", he said, referring to his hopes to see more Para Poomsae events.

Chelbat also mentioned streamlining training standards, including standardising syllabi and belt system graduation. This would allow for some competitions, like the Para Grand Prix Series or Grand Slam, to require certain belt levels.

“Para Taekwondo was a baby and needed to grow”, he said about allowing athletes from all belt levels to compete at the highest level.

“We believe it can now stand on its own two feet”.

## 2024 – Paralympic Success

Chelbat was exuberant about speaking about the opportunities that the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games will bring.

“After a very successful Tokyo 2020, we’ve seen the number of medal events increase, the number of weight divisions increase, and the number of athletes increase”, he said.

“This is a great opportunity for Para Taekwondo”.

While noting the challenges ahead, Chelbat expressed faith in the Para Taekwondo team.

“This group of super talented, devoted officials – with great expertise – will continue to move the Para movement forward. Our aim is to deliver an exceptional Paris 2024 Paralympic Games”, he said.

“With a team like this, the impossible is possible”.

He also wanted to extend Season’s Greetings to the entire Para Taekwondo community.

“I hope that 2023 is a year of peace, great achievements, and good health and prosperity among all of our MNAs he said”,

“As President Choue would say, ‘Peace is more precious than triumph”.



## Para Taekwondo Athletes Reap the Rewards





*From World Taekwondo crowning its best for the first time at the year-end Gala Awards, to athletes around the world being named Top Para Athlete, to fighters being feted by royalty, Para Taekwondo's best were well recognised for their achievements in 2022.*

You reap what you sow – and for Para Taekwondo athletes in 2022, there was plenty of gold to go around.

Athletes from around the world went home with more than just gold medals this year as more Para Taekwondo fighters than ever went home with prestigious accolades.

Recognising this trend, World Taekwondo included Para athletes at the year-end Gala Awards, naming Turkiye's **Meryem Cavdar** and **Mahmut Bozteke** as the Top Female and Male Fighters of the Year. Other awards went to Uzbekistan's **Bobur Koziyev** for Top Coach, **Brazil** for Top MNA, and **Ukraine** for Fighting Spirit.

After going through 2022 undefeated by winning three Para Grand Prix Series events, as well as the Pan American and European titles, **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** was named Top Taekwondo athlete of the year by the Pan American Taekwondo Union – ahead of his able-bodied competition.

He also carried the flag at the able-bodied World Championships in Mexico, showing just how important Para athletes are becoming in their home countries.

## Parade of Champions

National Paralympic Committees and National Taekwondo Federations around the world named Para Taekwondo athletes as the best in their own nations.

**Ivan Mikulic** won European gold and three Para Grand Prix Series silvers to take home both the awards for Top Para Athlete and Top Para Taekwondo Athlete in Croatia.

After winning three of four Para Grand Prix Series events this year, including Para Grand Prix Finals gold, and adding the Asian Championship to become the only fighter in the world to be Paralympic, World, continental, and Para Grand Prix champion at the same time, **Guljonoy Naimova** was recognised as Uzbekistan's best.

The list goes on.

Some of the other athletes named the best in their nation include **Elliot Loonstra** in Aruba, **Nathan Torquato** in Brazil, **Nurlan Dombayev** in Kazakhstan, **Palesha Goverdhan** in Nepal, **Jelena Rasic** in Serbia, and **Khwansuda Phuangkitcha** in Thailand, **Secil Er** in Turkey, and **Evan Medell** in the USA.

Even more athletes were shortlisted for national awards, including Turkey's Cavdar and Great Britain's **Beth Munro**.

Multiple Para Taekwondo stars were recognised by regional, district, or municipal authorities in 2022.

Brazil's reigning world champion and Paralympic bronze medalist **Silvana Cardoso** and Mexico's three-time Para Grand Prix silver medalist **Jessica Garcia** are two of many athletes to be recognised by their local governments.

Mikulic, too, was named Top Para Athlete in his home city of Split. The city also put his face on postage this year.

Others will have to wait until early next year to find out.

Argentina's Paralympic and Para Grand Prix Finals bronze medalist **Juan Samorano** and teammate **Facundo Novik** are up for Top Taekwondo Athlete of the Year alongside able-bodied competition, while **Bjarne Johansen** is up for Denmark's Para Coach of the Year Award in January.

## Contributions to Sport

Several members of the Para Taekwondo Community were recognised for their overall achievement to the sport – and to the Para movement in general.

Denmark's Paralympic champion and four-time world champion **Lisa Gjessing** and coach Bjarne Johansen were inducted into the Taekwondo Hall of Fame for a lifetime of achievement.

Likewise, five-time world champion **Bolor-Erdene Ganbat** and 2017 world champion **Enkhtuya Khurelbaatar** were given the prestigious Merited Master of Sport Award by the Mongolian government. The distinction is only given to international champions "who have made valuable contributions to the sport".

Six-time world champion **Vika Marchuk**, herself a Merited Master of Sport in Ukraine was finally awarded her own apartment for her continued success and contributions to Para sport. Weeks later, she was forced to flee the country due to bombing in her city.

**Patricia Kyeremaa** was recognised by the Ghanaian government for her efforts in promoting Para Taekwondo in Ghana after becoming the country's first African champion and participating in the Para Grand Prix Series.

"It is through sheer arduous work, dedication, and passion for your sport and art that you have accomplished these feats and brought great honour to our nation", the Ghana Taekwondo Federation said in a statement. "The GTF and the people of Ghana are most proud of you".

## Additional Exceptional Honours

While no Para Taekwondo athlete had a burger named after them – like Canada's **Anthony Cappello** in 2021, or any stars added to their local Walk of Fame – like Spain's **Alejandro Vidal Alvarez** in 2020, there were plenty of other interesting ways Para Taekwondo's best were recognised in 2022.

Paralympic medalists Beth Munro and **Amy Truesdale** visited Buckingham Palace alongside Great Britain's other Olympic and Paralympic medalists for an audience with British King Charles.

Denmark's Gjessing fought with Ukraine's Marchuk, who relocated to Denmark after fleeing Ukraine, in front of Danish Queen Margrethe II in honour of her 50<sup>th</sup> year on the throne.

Gjessing is no stranger to Danish royalty; she took a call from Danish Crown Prince Frederik mere moments after winning gold at Tokyo 2020.

In a Paralympic year where the world's best Winter Paralympians competed in Beijing, it was China's 2019 world champion **Yujie Li** that led the way by carrying the Paralympic torch just days before the opening ceremony, while Finland's two-time world championship medalist Matti **Sairanen** competed in snowboarding. Beyond sport, Gjessing was also recognised this year as Denmark's Optimist of the Year "for Danes who defy adversity in an inspiring way".

## Para Taekwondo - #Home of the Champions

The number of accolades our athletes received in 2022 is a testament to the growing recognition National Paralympic Committees are giving to the importance of Para Taekwondo.

This comes just one year after six Para Taekwondo athletes were named their country's flagbearers at Tokyo 2020 – Aruba's Loonstra, Denmark's Gjessing, Kazakhstan's Dombayev, Libya's **Mohamed Abidzar**, Nepal's Goverdhan, and Peru's Paralympic champion **Angelica Espinoza**.

To honour the achievements of athletes in the world's fastest-growing Para sport, World Para Taekwondo will launch a social media campaign in early 2023 - #HomeOfTheChampions.

To be recognised, please forward information about the award, including name and purpose of the award,



## Education



## Upcoming Courses

- Coming soon!

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## Calendar



2023

*(Provisional calendar subject to change)*

- 2023 Egypt Para Taekwondo Open (G1) - February 16 - Cairo, Egypt  
**(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level I required for all coaches)**
- 2023 President's Cup - Asia (G2) - March 6 - Nablus City, Palestine  
**(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level I required for all coaches)**
- Qualification Tournament for 2023 Parapan American Games (G1) - March 22 - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
**(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level I required for all coaches)**

- 2023 10th World Para Taekwondo Championships (G14) - 2023  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level III required for all coaches)
- Rome 2023 World Para Taekwondo Grand Prix (G6) - June 9-11 - Rome, Italy  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level III required for all coaches)
- Virtus Global Games (TBC) - June 9-10 - Vichy, France  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level III required for all coaches)
- 2023 European Para Taekwondo Open Championships (G2) - June 30 - Montargis, France  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level III required for all coaches)

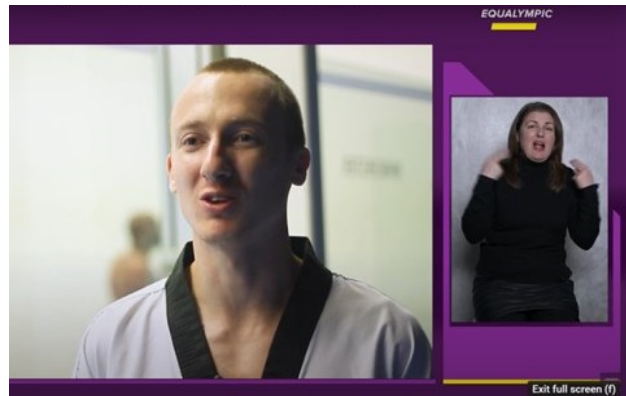
*For the full, updated 2023 calendar, please click [HERE](#).*

## Around the World

### Refugee:

#### Ukraine's Refugee Team Recognised for Accomplishments

It has been a difficult year for Ukraine's Para Taekwondo team, who were forced to flee the country due to war. After resettling in Denmark and training with the Danish national Para team, five of six athletes ended up winning medals at international events. World Taekwondo awarded Ukraine's Para Taekwondo team with the Fighting Spirit Award at the year-end Gala Awards, while Ukraine's national Paralympic channel Equalympic featured the team in a 45-minute year-end review feature, which documented the team's flight from Ukraine and successes at international tournaments.



"The Ukrainian national Para Taekwondo team continues to fight for the victory of Ukraine", Ukraine's National Paralympic Committee said in a statement, "Athletes devoted this year to the European Championships and several international Grand Prix Series tournaments".

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



### Africa:

#### Ghana Honours African Champion Kyeremaa

African champion **Patricia Kyeremaa** was feted by the Ghana Taekwondo Federation for her accomplishments in 2022. Kyeremaa became Ghana's first-ever Taekwondo champion at the African championships and reached the quarterfinals of the Para Grand Prix event in Paris. She is currently the top-ranked fighter in Africa in her weight category. She received a glass plaque and award at a ceremony in Tema, with the federation crediting her for "whipping up interest" in Taekwondo for Ghanaian youth.

"Your gold medal honours at the 2022 African Championships is the first of its kind since Taekwondo became a national sport in Ghana in 1980", the federation said at the ceremony. "It is a record-setting achievement ... It is through sheer arduous work, dedication, and passion for your sport and art that you have accomplished these feats and brought great honour to our nation".

## Asia:

### Iran Holds Para Team Tryouts

Just days after winning four gold medals at the Para Grand Prix Finals in Riyadh, Iran conducted a national Para Taekwondo team tryout to recruit additional athletes. Along with Turkey, Brazil, and Uzbekistan – Iran is looking to become one of the few nations to qualify an athlete for Paris 2024 in all 10 weight categories. Currently, the team has fighters ranked in the Top 6 of the world rankings in four divisions, although with her recent Para Grand Prix Finals victory, **Maryam Deroei** is certain to become the sixth. Iran's women's team is one of the up-and-coming programmes to watch ahead of the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Para Games as the women won 3 gold and 2 silvers at the 2022 Asian championships.



“Deroei is a young and technically skilled player who, with the support of the Iranian Taekwondo Federation and the National Paralympic Committee, can make it to the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games”, said Iran's women's national team head coach **Atefeh Keshavarz**.

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



### Khurelbaatar Featured on Mongolia's National TV

Former world champion and four-time Asian champion **Enkhtuya Khurelbaatar** was featured on the sports interview show Yalaghy on Mongolian national news channel Urug last month. The 20-minute segment digs into the life of Khurelbaatar – from acquiring her impairment at age 13, to raising her son as a single mother, to becoming one of the most dominant Para Taekwondo fighters in

the world. The feature focuses on her contribution to Mongolian Para sport, including the recent ceremony where she was named a Merited Master of Sport in Mongolia – the most prestigious sports award in the country.

To read the article, which includes a link to the video feature, please click [HERE](#).

### Ghising's Gold Sets Off Media Frenzy in Nepal

**Shrijana Ghising's** gold medal triumph at the Para Grand Prix Finals in Riyadh set off a media frenzy in her home country of Nepal. Greeted by federation and government officials on her arrival home, nearly every major news organisation in Nepal marked her achievement of becoming Nepal's first-ever gold medal winner at a major international sports event. Ghising did it in style, too, beating her division's Top 3 fighters, including an impressive 12-0 win over Turkiye's Athlete of the Year **Meryem Cavdar** in the final. Ghising was also featured prominently in an IPC story on Nepal's Para Taekwondo programme and in an IPC Instagram post that went viral, receiving nearly 8,000 likes.



To read the IPC article, please click [HERE](#).

### Pakistan Holds National



## Para Taekwondo Championships

Lahore was the host to over 30 athletes at last month's 2022 All-Pakistan Pioneer's Open Para Taekwondo Championship. Kyorugi competitions were held for athletes with physical impairments, while Poomsae competitions were held for athletes with intellectual impairments. Among the winners included **Saira** in K40, who hopes to compete on the international Kyorugi circuit in 2023, as well as **Mughees Alam** and **Mustafa Jamali** in

P20, who hope to compete at next year's World Para Poomsae Championships.

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

## Thailand Showcases Para Taekwondo

With some of the world's most marketable stars in Para Taekwondo's two-time world champion **Khwansuda Phuangkitcha** and able-bodied 2022 Taekwondo Athlete of the Year nominee **Panipak Wongpattanakit**, it's no surprise that the sport is skyrocketing in popularity in Thailand. The Thailand Taekwondo Federation recently showcased the Para Taekwondo sport, producing a video of athletes with a variety of different impairment types performing Poomsae patterns and Kyorugi sparring. In addition to a third straight world championship, Phuangkitcha will be aiming for Asian Para Games glory in 2023.



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



## Europe:

### Azerbaijan Thrilled with Para GP Finals Success

The Azerbaijan Taekwondo Federation met with members of the Para Taekwondo national team to congratulate the team on its success at the Para Grand Prix Finals in Riyadh. Azerbaijan won two gold medals in Riyadh, with teen star **Sabir Zeynalov** and fast-rising **Imamaddin Khalilov** ending the year on a winning note. The pair, along with team captain and Paralympian **Abulfaz**

**Abuzarli** and coach **Farid Taghizade**, met with ATF Vice President **Nagi Safarov**, General Secretary **Hamdiya Mammadov**, and other board members.

"Our Para Taekwondo national team is in good shape at the moment", Safarov said in a statement, "This creates confidence that the next victories will replace each other".

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

## Mikulic Featured on Croatian Postage

Paralympic runner-up and former world champion **Ivan Mikulic** has left his stamp on Para Taekwondo history – and now Croatia post has put him on its stamp. In perhaps a first for any Para athlete in the world, Mikulic's face was imprinted on all Croatia mail mailed on 27 December. It was another successful year for Mikulic in 2022. A year after falling in the final at the Paralympic Games and World Championships, Mikulic won his third European championship and added a trio of Para Grand Prix silver medals. You can be sure that Croatia's Para Taekwondo Federation put their "stamp of approval" on the decision.

PRIGODNI POŠTANSKI ŽIG  
27.12.2022. 21000 SPLIT  
PREMA SUNCU - TOKYO IVAN MIKULIĆ - SREBRO  
- TAEKWONDO



“All mail sent out on December 17<sup>th</sup> will have a special stamp – with the face of Ivan Mikulic!!!”, the federation shared on social media. “Ivan deserves it!”

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



## Pan Am:

### Brazil Takes Pride in Best MNA Award

It's been a fast rise to the top for Brazil's Para Taekwondo programme. After **Debora Menezes** became the country's first-ever world champion in 2019, the team finished at the top of the Tokyo 2020

medal standings thanks to a full set of medals – gold for **Nathan Torquato**, silver for Menezes, and bronze for **Silvana Cardoso**. The team continued its success in 2022, seeing athletes in nearly every division regularly compete for hardware at virtually every international event. At the year-end Gala Awards, Brazil was named Best Para Taekwondo MNA, while Cardoso and coach **Rodrigo Ferla** were shortlisted for Top Athlete and Top Coach. Brazil was also named Best MNA in the Americas by the Pan American Taekwondo Union at the able-bodied World Championships in November.

“The award is a source of great pride for the Brazilian Taekwondo Confederation”, said Technical Director **Henrique Precioso**, with national Para team coach Ferla adding, “This shows the serious and committed work that everyone does with the modality – down to the base that is Brazilian coaches and athletes”.

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

## Other:

### IPC Features Peru's Espinoza in Year-End Address

In his year-end address, IPC President **Andrew Parsons** highlighted the successes and challenges the IPC faced holding two Paralympic Games within six months. Specifically raising the challenges of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the COVID pandemic, Parsons delivered a message of hope to the Para sports community. He twice featured footage of Peru's Paralympic champion **Angelica Espinoza** – who won her country's first Paralympic gold medal in over 20 years at Tokyo 2020 – including during his stirring end-of-message conclusion.



“So many people regularly go above and beyond the call of duty for one simple reason”, he said over footage of Espinoza celebrating with the Peruvian flag, “[because] they believe in what we do – they believe that Change Starts with Sport”.

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

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