



# World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

March 2022 | Issue #21

## Brazil to Host Pan American Championships



### Host Nation Hopes to Cement its Powerhouse Status in Hotbed of Para Taekwondo's Popularity Boom

After tournaments in Africa, Europe and Asia to begin the year, it's the Americas turn to host the party.

The world of Para Taekwondo returns to the Americas next as the top fighters in North, Central, and South America meet for the ninth Pan American Open championships.

The Americas have turned into a hotbed for Para Taekwondo, with fighters from the region winning half of the Paralympic titles. Mexico's **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez**, Peru's **Angelica Espinoza**, and Brazil's **Nathan Torquato** all returned home from Tokyo 2020 with gold medals around their necks.

Torquato will have the opportunity to defend his 2021 Pan Am title at home, as this year's action will take place at the Carioca Arena in Rio, which hosted basketball at the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Paralympic and Parapan Am champion has medaled at every Pan Am championship since 2018.

Para Taekwondo has caught on in a big way in South America's only Paralympic host country. After failing to medal at the 2017 world championships, Brazil topped the table at Tokyo 2020 and won the third most medals at last year's world championships, including a first world title for **Silvana Cardoso**. The Parapan Am champ and Paralympic bronze medalist will also be looking to defend her 2021 Pan American championship title at home next month.

After sending one of the biggest teams to the 2021 world championships, and recently completing its first "Para Taekwondo Draft" for the national team, the host nation is expected to field another large and strong team.

It's the first of two events in Brazil this year, with another event set for September in Sao Paolo.

## Paralympic & World Champs Highlight Field

Besides reigning Paralympic champion Torquato and reigning world champion Cardoso, the 2022 Pan Am Championships should draw a strong field.

Mexico is expected to field a strong team led by Paralympic champion Garcia Lopez, while Paralympic bronze medalist **Evan Medell** will front a growing American team at the tournament.

Strong fighters from outside the Americas are also expected to compete, hoping to win ranking points for themselves while denying their Pan Am opponents full ranking points. A G4/G2 event, fighters from the Americas will earn double the points of their non-Americas opponents.

Denmark's Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing** is set to compete, while Israel's reigning world champion **Asaf Yasur** will also make the trip to South America.

Gjessing won bronze at the 2021 Pan Am championships – the only medal in her legendary collection that isn't gold.

## Para Taekwondo's Popularity in Americas on Display

Inspired by the success of national hero **Juan Samorano**, who won a hard-fought bronze at Tokyo 2020, Argentina will send its most competitive team to date to Brazil. After holding a national training camp, the team will also be Argentina's largest ever.

Cuba is also expected to field its most competitive Para team yet. Taekwondo has been popular on the island since Cuba won gold at Taekwondo's Olympic debut at Sydney 2000. The nation cemented its up-and-coming status by winning four medals at the 2019 Parapan Am Games in Lima, Peru, highlighted by **Adrian Garcia's** march to the silver medal in the -75 category.

The 2022 Pan American Open championships will take place from April 14-15.

The registration deadline for the event is 8 April at 4:59 CEST. To register, please click [HERE](#).



Host Iran Shines at President's Cup - Asia



## Turkey, Uzbekistan Also Have Tournaments to Remember

*As the upper tiers of the new weight categories come into focus, fighters from Turkey, Iran, and Uzbekistan starred at the President's Cup – Asia in Tehran, Iran.*

Powerhouse Para Taekwondo nations Turkey and Iran showed why they are considered the best in the sport, while up-and-coming countries like Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan continued their pushes for greatness at an entertaining President's Cup – Asia last month.

Host Iran led the medal table with nine medals, including four gold – **Alireza Bakht**, **Sajjad Javanbakht**, **Fatemeh Dodangeh**, and **Mehdi Pourrahnama**, who continued his torrid win streak since falling in the gold medal final at Tokyo 2020.

A podium threat at every tournament, Turkey finished right behind with nine medals, including four gold – **Gamze Gurdal**, **Secil Er**, **Mehmet Sami Sarac**, and **Ali Can Ozcan**, who was named the top male fighter of the tournament.

Two Uzbek fighters won the remaining gold medals.

Reigning Paralympic and world champion **Guljonoy Naimova** continued her dominance of the +65 kg category by winning gold with a combined score of 60-6, easily earning the title of the tournament's top female fighter.

Teammate **Ziyadakhon Isakova** continued her march up the rankings in the -47 kg category with a convincing 18-6 win over Iran's **Maryam Deroei** to win gold.

## Look Out For Nepal and Thailand

Still, the top-ranked nations showed their fighters are vulnerable in the new weight categories.

In one of her nation's biggest Para Taekwondo wins of all-time, Nepal's **Shirijana Ghising** upset Turkey's Paralympic silver medalist **Meryem Cavdar** 11-10 on her way to a silver medal in the -52 kg category. She fell to Iran's Dodangeh in the final, to the delight of the home crowd.

Following the success of world champion **Khwansuda Phuangkitcha**, Para Taekwondo continues to grow in Thailand. The nation won two medals in Iran, highlighted by the inspired play of **Awipa Phuaphan**. The Thai fighter fell in the -65 kg semi-final to Turkey's eventual champion Er, but she gave the reigning world champion a run for her money before falling 15-9 to claim bronze.

Azerbaijan also had a memorable tournament in Iran, winning three medals to finish fourth on the medal table. The team was led by 2020 Paralympian **Imamaddin Khalilov** and 2021 world championship bronze

medalist **Sabir Zeynalov**, who both won silver.

Uzbekistan's **Burbur Koziyef** was named top coach of the women's tournament, while Iran's **Payam Khanlarkhani** won the honours on the men's side.

Thailand and Japan won the Fair Play Awards in the respective tournaments.



## Registering Poomsae Athletes with Virtus



## 2022 VIRTUS AMERICAS GAMES

SAO PAULO, BRAZIL  
18–23 SEPTEMBER  
Brazilian Paralympic Centre



## Virtus Regional Games to be Held in Americas, Oceania / Asia in 2022, Global Games in France in 2023

Para Poomsae is back – almost.

With Virtus Regional Games to be held in Sao Paolo, Brazil in September and Brisbane, Australia in November, it's important to make sure your athletes are classified and registered well in advance.

***IT CAN TAKE UP TO 16 WEEKS TO REGISTER YOUR ATHLETES – SO BE SURE TO GET STARTED SOON!***

Here is a handy guide to help you get your athletes registered for Para Poomsae.

### ***Who can register?***

The Virtus Games are the world's leading sports events for athletes with intellectual impairments. In addition to regional events, a Global Games is held every four years. The next Virtus Global Games will be held in Vichy, France from 4-10 June 2023.

Athletes can register in one of three eligibility groups (sport classes):

- II1 – For athletes with an intellectual disability
- II2 – For athletes with a significant additional impairment
- II3 – For athletes with autism who aren't eligible for II1 (trial group)

Only groups II1 and II2 will compete at the Virtus Regional Games.

You can find out more about athlete eligibility by clicking [HERE](#).

### ***How to Register?***

Virtus handles all Para Poomsae eligibility applications on behalf of World Taekwondo.

There is a two-step registration process: (1) national registration and (2) international registration.

### ***National Registration***

All new athletes must first apply through their national Virtus member. You can find your national Virtus member by clicking [HERE](#).

New applications for national registration should be made no later than four weeks before the competition deadline.

### ***International Registration***

Only national Virtus members can submit eligibility applications on behalf of its athletes.

New applications for international registration should be made no later than twelve weeks before the competition deadline.

### ***When do I need to register?***

New athletes should submit their eligibility applications to their national Virtus member organisations at least 16 weeks before the competition deadline. This will ensure sufficient time to process the application.

For the Virtus Americas Games, applications should be submitted no later than 20 June.

For the Virtus Oceania Asia Games, applications should be submitted no later than 7 October.

### ***Virtus Americas Games 2022***

The Virtus Americas Games will take place from 18-23 September at the Brazilian Paralympic Centre in Sao Paolo, Brazil. Sports that already have programme confirmation include athletics, basketball, futsal, table tennis, taekwondo, and swimming.

“This event will contribute to the nation’s goal of helping popularise Paralympic sport in Brazil and help in the inclusion of people with disabilities in our society”, said Brazil’s Confederation of Sports for the Intellectually Disabled President **Adilson Pereira Ramos**. “Our vision for this event is to shine a light on athletes from every part of the Americas region, where any young man or woman – even from a small town – can become a national athlete on the world stage”.

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

### ***Virtus Oceania Asia Games 2022***

The Virtus Oceania Asia Games will take place from 5-11 November in 2032 Paralympic host city – Brisbane, Australia. Sports that already have programme confirmation include athletics, basketball, cycling, rowing, swimming, table tennis, and tennis. Taekwondo is still awaiting confirmation.

“The Australian Government has a deep commitment to ensure sport is accessible for people of all abilities and is pleased to support the hosting of Virtus Oceania Asia Games 2022”, said Australian Minister for Sport **Richard Colbeck**. “We look forward to ... continuing our journey towards the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games”.

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



## Education



### Upcoming Courses - Registration Open Now!!

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

- Course Dates: April 18-20; Registration Deadline: April 16

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

- Course Dates: April 22-24; Registration Deadline: April 19

## Calendar



- Pan American Para Taekwondo Open Championships (G4/G2) - April 15 - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- 2022 Asian Para Games Qualification (G1) - TBC - TBC  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level I required for all coaches)
- European Open Para Taekwondo Championships (G4/G2) - May 19-22 - Manchester, Great Britain  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- Pan Am Series (G2) - May 27-30 - Fort Worth, USA  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- Asian Para Taekwondo Open Championships (G2) - August 26 - Ulaanbaator, Mongolia  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

## Around the World



### Refugee:

### Afghan Refugee and Paralympian Finds a Home in France

The story of Afghan refugee **Zakia Khodadadi's** harrowing journey to Tokyo 2020 made international headlines last summer. Days before departing for a training camp in Turkey ahead of the event, a change of government at home had her hiding for her life. After her plea for help went viral, several international organisations and governments helped her escape. Now, she's a mentor in the 'Terrains

d'Avenir' ('Land of the Future') programme, sponsored by the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation and the French Taekwondo Federation. World Taekwondo President **Dr. Chungwon Choue** was on hand for the programme kick off earlier this month. Khodadadi will help train and mentor other refugees in the programme. The new opportunity has allowed for world class training, for her family to join her in Paris, and for continued opportunities to compete. Last month at the President's Cup – Europe, she beat world championship silver medalist **Nurchihan Ekinci** on her way to a silver medal, showing she's a real threat for a medal – for her new home – at Paris 2024.

"I am committed to Paris 2024 – I want this Paralympic medal in France!", Khodadadi told the French Taekwondo Federation in an interview. "This will be a punch in the mouth of the Taliban, who reject women – especially the thousands of disabled women that have no future".

For more on the 'Terrains d'Avenir' programme, please see the story [HERE](#).

To read Khodadadi's full interview with the French Taekwondo Federation, please click [HERE](#).

To see press coverage of Khodadadi and the 'Terrains d'Avenir' programme, please click [HERE](#).

## Ukrainian Paralympic Stars Forced to Flee War

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has upended Ukraine's Para Taekwondo team. Registered to compete at the President's Cup – Europe tournament in Albania, the team was forced to withdraw after Ukrainian airspace was closed. Ukraine's Paralympians – six-time world champion **Vika Marchuk**, 2021 world championship bronze medalist **Yuliya Lypetska**, and former world champion **Anton Shvets** – were all forced to leave their homes and abandon their regular training regimens. Hailing from Zaporizhia, just 120 kilometres from the Enerhodar Nuclear Power Plant that was attacked last month, Lypetska and Marchuk were forced to take cover in bomb shelters before managing to escape to Europe. Currently, both are looking for new accommodations and training programmes. Shvets is with his family outside his home city and is unable to leave the country due to martial law restrictions. While fleeing Ukraine, Marchuk managed to call into an event held in Denmark to support Ukraine's Para Taekwondo athletes.



To view the call, please click [HERE](#).



## Africa:

### Nigerian Media Celebrates Para Taekwondo Success

Nigerian media is revelling in the breakout performance of Nigeria's Para Taekwondo athletes after the team picked up six medals, including three gold, at the Niger Taekwondo Open in February. Team captain **Chinazum Nwosu** won gold in the -53 kg category, promising newcomer **Benjamin Okuomose** topped the +97 kg field, and **Oyebanji Olapeju** won a championship in just his second event. Other medalists include **Henry Chukwudi Nzelu** (silver in -87 kg), **Arinola Olawale** (bronze in -54 kg), and **Samson Saaondo Ukpera** (bronze in -87 kg). Nigerian referee **Thursdaline Peters** was named the event's top official. The success thrilled the Nigerian team, who have big goals in mind. "I'm proud to have led this group", Nwosu told Pulse Sports. "The plan is to apply pressure, compete more, and put Nigeria back on the map with our

eyes on the world championships".

"We are happy with the results but want to only use this as a launchpad", agreed teammate Nzelu. "There are way more events coming this year and we need to keep racking points to improve our rankings and chances of making the Paralympics".

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

## Asia:

### China's World Champion Li Carries Paralympic Torch at Beijing 2022

China's former world champion and Paralympic bronze medalist **Yujie Li** was one of the last torchbearers for the Beijing 2022 Paralympic Games. Less than eight months after winning China's first Paralympic medal in Para Taekwondo, Li carried the torch near Yanqing,

home to the Para Alpine Skiing events. Decked in the white and red torchbearer uniform, Li showed off her Taekwondo skills by posing for a photo with the torch while doing a high kick. Li was one of several world and Paralympic champions from China to carry the torch on its way to the Opening Ceremony.

In a social media post the day of the Beijing 2022 Paralympic Games Opening Ceremony, Li shared photos on Facebook under the Beijing 2022 motto 'Together for a Shared Future'.

To see the post and other photos of Li's torchbearer experience, please click [HERE](#).



## Iran Celebrates Para Taekwondo to Mark Persian New Year

After a big 2021 saw Iran crown both Paralympic and world champions, Iranian media feted the Iranian Para Taekwondo team to mark Persian New Year (Nowruz) on 20 March. A traditional Para Taekwondo powerhouse, Iran finished second on the Paralympic medal table after Asghar Azizi Aqdam won gold in +75 kg and teammate Mehdi Pourrahnama won silver in the -75 kg category, after falling to world champion Juan Diego Garcia Lopez (MEX) in the final. Pourrahnama would exact his revenge a few months later by reclaiming the world title over

his Paralympic rival in a tense world championship final. Iranian media lauded the team in a series of articles, with Vana News saying the team's "brilliant performance" made up for the "tragic and disappointing" performance of its Olympic Taekwondo team, while Imna named the team's performance "one of the most memorable and special events in Iranian sport" last year. Last month, Iran topped the medal table as host of the President's Cup – Asia.

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

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

## Kazakh Para Taekwondo Head Featured in National Newspaper

You've probably met her before at an event, but Kazakhstan's Head of Para Taekwondo – the ebullient **Meruyert Tlebady** – was featured in Kazakhstan's national newspaper The Astana Times as part of an International Women's Day profile. Tlebady spoke about the role of gender in her profession, "Stigma about women being head coaches is present, especially taking into account that most coaches are men". Tlebady also outlined her strategy of dealing with discrimination.

"Stereotypes should not be fought; they have to be accepted", she told the newspaper. "I am who I am. You can't change me. I am not a person who cries out that something is unfair. You have to strive for your goal, no matter what".



To read the full interview in The Astana Times, please click [HERE](#).



## Goverdhan Named Nepal's Top Para Athlete

Asian Youth Games champion **Palesha Goverdhan** has been named the Top Para Athlete in Nepal at a gala ceremony for the NNIPA Sports Awards at Nepal's picturesque Bajrabarahi Temple. Goverdhan captured the country's attention by nearly becoming the first athlete from Nepal to win a medal at either the Olympic or Paralympic Games before falling to China's former world

champion **Yujie Li** 12-9 at the Tokyo 2020 bronze medal final. She then captured gold at the Asian Youth Para Games in Bahrain, becoming the first athlete from Nepal to do so. Along with her award, Goverdhan received a cheque for 10,000 Rs (\$130 USD). The future of Para Taekwondo in Nepal looks bright, as teammate **Shrijana Ghising** won bronze at last month's President's Cup – Asia by beating Paralympic silver medalist **Meryem Cavdar** (TUR). The fighters are now preparing for the Asian Para Games later this year in China.

For more information, please read the full article [HERE](#).

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

## Europe:

### Azeri Medalists Promoted by State Media

Following a successful performance at last month's President's Cup – Asia in Iran, where Azerbaijan finished fourth on the medal table, the country's three medalists were featured in an article by state news agency Azertac. Paralympians **Imamaddin Khalilov** and **Abulfaz Abuzarli** bagged silver and bronze in the -70 kg and -80 kg categories, respectively. Fresh off his bronze medal at the 2021 world championships, up-and-comer **Sabir Zeynalov** captured silver in Iran, falling to Turkey's No. 2-ranked **Ali Can Ozcan** 21-11 in the final. The performance showed a marked improvement from when the pair met in the world championship semi-final, where Ozcan beat the young Azeri 41-12.



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



## Denmark's Gjessing Leads 'Taekwondo for Peace' Fundraiser for Ukraine

Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing** and other Danish Taekwondo stars held a 'Taekwondo for Peace' event in support of Ukrainian taekwondo athletes affected by the war in Ukraine. The athletes held a training session at Aarhus' Ceres Arena that drew dozens of participants, who were able to win some great prizes, including a duvet and pillow set from Jysk, Taekwondo equipment, and even a bottle of fine whiskey. The event even featured a phone call from Ukraine's six-time world champion **Vika Marchuk**, who was in the process of fleeing the country at the time. The event ended up raising 21,870 Kr (2,350 USD) for Ukrainian Taekwondo athletes. The Danish government has also committed to hosting Ukrainian refugee athletes, including Marchuk.

For more, please see the social media post [HERE](#).

To see Marchuk's call to the participants, please click [HERE](#).

## Finland's Sairanen Stars at Beijing 2022

Finland's two-time world championship medalist **Matti Sairanen** made a splash at Beijing 2022 – his second straight Winter Paralympic Games. Having spent part of his childhood and studying university in the country, Sairanen was an instant media sensation. One of Para Taekwondo's early stars, Sairanen won bronze at the second world championships in 2010, before narrowly missing out on his first world title by losing 2-1 in the 2011 final. Less than a year after narrowly missing out on qualifying for Tokyo 2020, Sairanen finished 17<sup>th</sup> in the SB-UL Banked Slalom at Beijing 2022. It was his language skills – Sairanen speaks fluent Mandarin – that led to his celebrity status at the Winter Paralympic Games. "I feel like a tour guide here", he told one Chinese newspaper, "I'm visiting my hometown". Sairanen's Para Taekwondo days aren't done just yet. In an interview with the Finish Paralympic Committee, Sairanen confirmed he's aiming for Paris 2024.



"My goal is to go to Paris in 2024 as both a sparring buddy for the Olympics and as a competitor for the Paralympics", he told Finland's NPC.

To read his interview with Finland's NPC, please click [HERE](#).

For a taste of his coverage in Chinese media, please click [HERE](#).



## Great Britain's Munro Hopes to Inspire Similar Success

It wasn't long ago that Great Britain's Paralympic silver medalist **Beth Munro** was attending an InSport event herself – now she's the main attraction. Munro was at the launch of Wales' Para Sport Festival, a three-year initiative that will bring over 5,000 participation opportunities in five sports to Welsh children. The programme aims to grow the range and level of opportunity in Para sport for years to come. Munro discovered Para Taekwondo at a similar event in 2019, leading to her incredible journey to the Paralympic podium at Tokyo 2020.

"To go from trying Taekwondo for the first time at an InSport event in November 2019 and becoming a silver medal-winning Paralympic athlete less than two years later in 2021 still blows my mind", Munro told Dai Sport. "The fact that I am now a role model to young people and young women is the reason why I will continue the legacy for as long as I can".

For more on the programme or to read the full interview, please click [HERE](#).

To see Munro look back on her journey, please check out the video [HERE](#).

## Turkey's Er, Cavdar Recognised for Achievements

It was a big month for Para Taekwondo in Turkey. Not only did the team bag four gold and nine medals at the President's Cup – Asia, but its star athletes continue to be recognised for their efforts nationwide. Secil Er, who picked up her first world championship last year in Istanbul, received the Capital Value Award for her

“Contribution to Sports in Ankara”. Meanwhile, teammate and Paralympic silver medalist Meryem Cavdar was selected to speak at a Turkish Ministry of Sports conference on Sports Psychology in Ankara. Both athletes are also in the running for the prestigious Milliyet Sports Award for Para Athlete of the Year. Reigning world champion Er won gold at the President’s Cup in Iran, while Cavdar picked up a bronze medal.

“This is proof of how strong the value of our Paralympic Taekwondo brand is in the world and in Turkey”, said Cavdar after appearing at the conference. “It has made me happy to see the fruits of how far ahead our athletes are in the fields of sports and civics”.



For more on Er winning the Capital Value Award, please click [HERE](#).

For more on Cavdar speaking at the Sports Psychology conference, please click [HERE](#).



## Pan Am:

### Paralympic Success Fuels Para Taekwondo Boom in Argentina

Call it the ‘Juan Samorano Effect’. Argentina is seeing a Para Taekwondo boom thanks, in part, to Samorano’s memorable march to the bronze medal at Tokyo 2020. Now, the Argentina Taekwondo Federation is reaping the rewards. With Para Taekwondo programmes popping up around the country, the Argentine National Team held a training camp from 17-27 March ahead of next month’s Pan American Championships in Brazil. Led by captain Samorano, the team received training from national team coaches

**Carlos Guerrini** and **Javier Borquez Delo** at the National Centre of Alto Rendimiento Deportivo (CeNARD). The goal was to empower athletes to competitively compete at continental-level competitions, increase promotion of the sport, and improve the technical aspects of team members ahead of the Pan American championships.

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

For an example of a new Para Taekwondo club in Argentina, please click [HERE](#).

## Aruba's Loonstra Becomes Face of Fitness Campaign

After gaining fame for becoming Aruba’s second-ever Paralympian, and popularity through clever fundraising ideas such as his trademark heart-shaped sunglasses, **Elliot Loonstra** became one of the faces of the island nation’s ‘One Healthy Day’ campaign last month. Running for 17 hours on 20 March, more than 57 sports and health activities took centre stage to promote healthy living among Arubans. Loonstra, and coach **Luciano Mazzeo**, led two Taekwondo seminars in the afternoon and participated in a self-defence and single-hand combat demonstration in the evening. The ‘One Healthy Day’ campaign provides a unique public showcase so Arubans can learn to focus on the abilities of an athlete, rather than their impairment.

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





## Brazil Names National Team After Competitive Selection Camp

You know you're in a good place when you can host a national selection camp – as Paralympic champions Brazil did last month. The team named its 12 best fighters to the national team, prioritising multiple athletes in several weight categories over having athletes represented in each. The team had already announced seven athletes would automatically make the team based on previous results, including Paralympic champion **Nathan Torquato** and world champion **Silvana Fernandes**. That left five national team positions for which 14 young Para athletes could compete. Using innovative selection methods, the team chose **Maria**

**Eduarda Stumpf** in -52 kg (266 points), **Hiury Martins** in -70 kg (255.3 points), **Fabricio Marques** in -58 kg (244.7 points), **Carlos Coelho** in -70 kg (229.3 points), and **Cicero Oliveira** in -58 kg (211.2 points).

Athletes already named to the team include Torquato in -63 kg, **Cristhiane Neves** in -52 kg, Fernandes in -57 kg, **Leylianne Ramos** and **Ana Carolina Moura** in -65 kg, and **Camila Macedo** and former world champion **Debora Menezes** in +65 kg.

“Our expectation is that they represent the Brazilian team in the best possible way,” said the national team Technical Director **Rodrigo Ferla** afterwards. “Brazil is a power in the sport – see our results in the Paralympic Games, Parapan Am Games, and also the World Championship. We are going with maximum strength, reinforced by the athletes who were selected in the draft”.

To read the full article, and see the full selection of 12 national team athletes, please click [HERE](#).

To read the story of Oliveira's journey to his selection, please click [HERE](#).

## Paralympic Star Shines in Costa Rica's Able-Bodied National Championships

Paralympic star **Andres Molina** showed that Para Taekwondo's best can compete with their able-bodied colleagues at the Costa Rican National Championships last month. Having competed for nearly 30 years in the sport, Molina bested two able-bodied opponents before withdrawing due to injury in the semi-final. Molina had a Paralympics to remember, battling his way to the bronze medal final before falling to No. 1-ranked **Evan Medell** (USA) 13-11 in a tense and entertaining bronze medal final.

“I had to use myself thoroughly to overcome athletes without any limitations”, the star said on social media afterwards. “To the surprise of myself and others, I did great ... [I proved] that limits don't exist and I thank everyone for the equality they allowed me to compete with”.

To view the post on social media, please click [HERE](#).



## Taekwondo Legend Visits Mexico's Para Taekwondo Training Camp

It's not everyday that a three-time Olympic champion gives you pointers, but that's exactly what happened to Mexico's Para Taekwondo stars when Taekwondo legend **Maria Espinoza** stopped by the team's training camp on 26 March. Espinoza worked with each of Mexico's nine national team athletes, giving them personal advice to improve their combat techniques. Espinoza hails from the same city as Paralympic champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez**, who is

training ahead of next month's Pan American championships. The team began its training camp on 7 March and will work toward next year's Parapan Am Games in Santiago, Chile.

"We are going to be working with the experience that some athletes already have and the new ones that are in development – to find that motivation together", said national team coach **Jannet Alegria Pena**. "Because the opportunity to be in a Parapan Am Games is for everyone, so each athlete has to find their way and seek to be in the select team that competes in Santiago 2023".

To read the article on the national team, including a list of selected athletes, please click [HERE](#).

To see a video of the team training, please click [HERE](#). To see more about Espinoza's visit, click [HERE](#).

## Other:

### World Taekwondo Condemns Russian Invasion of Ukraine

In a statement released following an extraordinary World Taekwondo Council meeting following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, World Taekwondo condemned the invasion and announced an indefinite suspension of Russian and Belarussian athletes and officials. The Council also announced that it would not organise events in Russia or Belarus and re-opened the bidding process for the 2023 World Taekwondo Championships. World Taekwondo reiterates that "Peace is more Precious than Triumph" and expresses its sincere sympathies to the Ukrainian victims, as well as expresses its desire for "a peaceful and immediate end to this war".



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



### Podcast Highlights Training Differences Between Olympic and Para Taekwondo

If you're wondering how to build your Para Taekwondo programme, and are specifically looking at what might be different from your able-bodied Taekwondo programme, we have the podcast for you. In Episode 11 of his Taekwondo podcast, former Olympic and Para Taekwondo coach **Diego Morine** covers just this topic. Using his background in Taekwondo and Sport Science, Morine discusses the differences and similarities in building a Strength and Conditioning programme for Olympic and Para Taekwondo athletes with fellow coach **Cesar Valentim**. The episode can be heard on Spotify, Google, Apple, Amazon, and other major podcast carriers.

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

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