



Cheryl's Chief Instructor's Section

2020 Olympics & Paralympics

2020 is an exciting year with the Olympics taking place (subject of course to Covid-19) in Japan. The Paralympic Games are scheduled to be held, in Tokyo, from the 25th of August to the 6th of September.

Turtle's Swim Club supports the pathway of aspiring Para-Swimmers, helping club members to learn to swim and then go on to achieve national success through this route.

If you are interested, and are a competent swimmer and fit the Para-criteria, we can point you in the right direction to the UK's Para-Swimming Talent Coaches. They will send out a 'tracker form' for you to fill in and return to them. Once the form is reviewed the Para-Swimming Talent Coaches will invite you to an ID Sessions at the London Aquatics Centre. These sessions take place once a month and are also run by volunteers, just like the Turtles.

We are often asked about Para-Swimming and we hope this article will give you a snapshot of information for those who either want to watch it on TV or take part.

History of Para-Swimming

Sport for athletes with an impairment really took off after World War 2, in 1945. The British Government asked Dr. Ludwig Guttmann to open a spinal injury centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. Part of the rehabilitation process was recreational sport and later this evolved into competitive sport.

On 29 July 1948, the day of the Opening Ceremony of the London 1948 Olympic Games, Dr. Guttmann organised the first competition for wheelchair athletes and named it, The Stoke Mandeville Games, a milestone in Paralympic history. They involved 16 injured servicemen and women who took part in archery. Source: <https://www.paralympic.org/ipc/history>

A short link below takes you through the history:

<https://youtu.be/aLOMJPSuLjU>

The Stoke Mandeville Games were later renamed the Paralympic Games. The first Paralympic Games were held in Rome in 1960. Para-Swimming was one of the eight original sports that featured at this event. The event has since taken place every four years and continues to grow:

Rome 1960 - 15 countries and 77 participants

London 2012 - 74 countries and 604 participants

In addition, the World Championships are also held every two years (Last one Malaysia 2019).

The sport has two Governing Bodies; International Paralympic Committee / World Para-Swimming

Classification Eligibility

Swimmers must meet the eligibility criteria for their medical condition to be recognised if they wish to follow the competitive Para-Swimming Pathway.

2020 Olympics & Paralympics Classification Contd.

The primary diagnosis must be stable and belong to one of the 10 eligible impairment types:

- Hypertonia (high muscle tone)
- Ataxia (involuntary movement)
- Athetosis (involuntary contraction of muscles)
- Limb deficiency
- Impaired passive range of movement
- Impaired muscle power
- Leg length difference
- Short stature
- Visual
- Intellectual

Classification Requirements

For a swimmer to be put forward for a classification assessment they must:

- Have an eligible impairment
- Be training a minimum of 3 times per week
- Be able to swim a minimum 50m of three strokes (freestyle, backstroke and breaststroke)
- Minimum of 5 recognisable strokes of butterfly (where the impairment permits)
- Be able to perform a front float and a back float
- Be able to rotate from front to back
- Be confident in deep water
- Complete a set of approx. 1k metres completing all the above strokes

Classification Swimmer Classes

- Classes S1-S10 are allocated to swimmers with a physical impairment
- Classes S11-S13 are allocated to swimmers with a visual impairment
- Class S14 allocated to swimmers with an intellectual impairment

Prefix S, SB & SM

- S denotes the class for Freestyle, Backstroke and Butterfly
- SB denotes the class for Breaststroke
- SM denotes the class for Individual Medley

From a swimming perspective, we would always encourage you to watch the athletes on television and learn from them to improve your swimming. The underwater cameras are great for aspiring swimmers and teachers/coaches to see how the professionals tackle techniques such as Tumble Turns and Breaststroke Underwater phases. Sometimes, it is not clear to see these from within the pool or on the poolside. Of course, we would always ask you to follow your doctor's advice and to not over exert yourself. If you would like help with trying a swimming technique that you have seen, please ask one of our helpers/teachers and we would be happy to work with you to get you there.

We appreciate that not everyone will fit the Para-Criteria or might not want to commit to the requirements. That's why at Turtles we offer all our swim members who are competent swimmers the opportunities to take part in galas where you can compete against local swimming teams. The Turtles Invitation Gala is very popular and not just because of the good buffet spread that we are known to put on afterwards! Together with a local network of clubs, we hold galas for a wide range of disabilities utilising the NASCH handicapping system. So, all swimmers are given the chance to compete, win and feel valued. <https://www.paralympic.org/swimming>