



## SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO ACCOMPANY THE FINAL VERSIONS OF THE WORLD PARAVOLLEY CLASSIFICATION RULES

### Introduction

The purpose of this communication is to inform and update our ParaVolley Stakeholders about the status of our World ParaVolley Classification Rules Review (for Sitting Volleyball and Beach ParaVolley (Standing)) and highlight the main changes in the 2026 Classification rules compared to the previous rules (January 2018 and October 2020).

Early in 2025, World ParaVolley launched an initial stakeholder classification survey, developed a committee structure, and developed a plan with timeframes that had us completing a full review with rules ready to be implemented in January 2026. However, it became clear that the amount of preparation to update only our classification processes would be significant, and that rules would need to be reviewed for both sport disciplines of Sitting Volleyball and ParaVolley Beach (Standing). Additionally, the Steering Group prepared a mandatory Code Compliance plan for IPC that outlined our actions to work toward Code Compliance. As a result of this expansive work, the Steering Committee felt that it would be unrealistic, impractical, and unfair to try to achieve sport-specific rule changes affecting Minimum Impairment Criteria or our sport class structure without spending the necessary time, and investment to the careful consideration of any potential changes creating potential significant impact to Athletes and without an opportunity to receive enough membership feedback to be confident of stakeholder support.

Therefore, the Steering Committee elected to postpone the review of the sport-specific rules that would require research/evidence, significant stakeholder feedback, and consensus, and focus on the procedural aspects of the rules for this version that have now been approved by the WPV Board in March 2026 to be implemented **August 1, 2026**. This decision was undertaken with a view to initiate more sport-specific Classification system/rules review after the procedural aspects were completed and implemented.

### What does this mean?

It means that the changes in the 2026 version of the rules will not impact current Athlete eligibility (Minimum Impairment Criteria), and Sport Classes. But the changes will improve many aspects of the Classification process and are required to be compliant to the 2025 Classification Code and International Standards. It also means that further work and consultation is required to address areas of non-compliance within the Classification system itself in the next few years.

## Summary of Main Changes to the Sitting Volleyball Rules

### Covered Competitions (Article 3.1)

The new IPC Code and World ParaVolley rules have added the term “Covered” Competition to the Definitions within each document. A “Covered” Competition means that the World ParaVolley Rules must be applied for those Competitions labelled as such. These include:

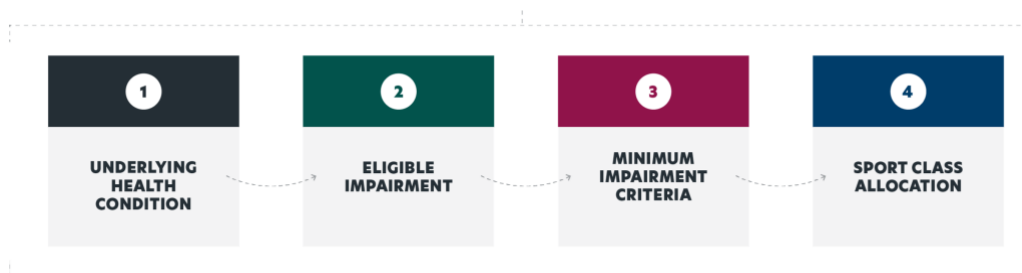
- The Paralympic Games
- The World Championships
- Any Competition that is part of the direct qualification to participate in the Paralympic Games

- Any Competition where Observation Assessment may take place as part of a Classification process; and
- Any other World ParaVolley Competition at the discretion of World ParaVolley.

This allows World ParaVolley to keep the standardization at the highest levels of Competition, while providing more flexibility to promote development at other levels.

World ParaVolley will keep an updated annual list of all Covered Competitions on the Classification page of the Website (<https://worldparavolley.org/classification/>).

### Stages of Classification (Chapter 2 in 2026 Rules and Appendix 1 – Section 1)



The IPC Code and 2026 World ParaVolley Rules outline the four stages of classification, with increased emphasis on Stages 1 and 2 in this new version. Stage 1 (assessment of the Underlying Health Condition or UHC) must be completed first, with decision making occurring in sequential order. The Code emphasizes the importance of this stage and the role of National Federations in providing Diagnostic Information.

**Stage 1:** Stage 1 focuses on verifying whether an Athlete has, or has had, at least one medically and/or clinically diagnosed UHC. This is determined through a review of Diagnostic Information provided by the Athlete’s National Federation. Our previous rules were more focused on the impairment description rather than a clear clinical diagnosis, thus emphasizing and clarifying the significance of using credible, medical evidence for Classification going forward.

World ParaVolley has expanded its UHC Assessor pool to include more medical specialists, and in complex cases will utilize three Assessors to evaluate the documents to confirm the presence of an Underlying health Condition. Additionally, if the Assessors find the Athlete is Not Eligible (NE), the National Federation will be notified and the Athlete will be given a designation of NE-UHC (Re-evaluation), and a second panel of Assessors will review the medical documentation. This occurs automatically, therefore giving an additional opportunity to evaluate Stage 1 for Eligibility based on the presence of an UHC. If the Assessor(s) are satisfied of the presence of an UHC, the Athlete will then be designated as “New” (N). Please note that the UHC Assessment must be completed before the Athlete can be designated as a NEW athlete and permitted to attend classification.

This underpins the importance of providing clear supporting diagnostic medical evidence in addition to the Medical Diagnostic Form to ensure there is enough information for the Assessor to establish what the UHC is and what potential Eligible Impairment(s) could result. To this end, the Classification commission has developed a [Guideline for mandatory and recommended Supporting Documents](#) for more common clinical diagnoses leading to Eligible Impairments for ParaVolley Athletes. This will be published shortly on the Classification page of the WPV website.

**FAQ: Do we still send in Diagnostic Information only prior to a Competition?**

No. This UHC Assessment process can occur on a rolling basis and allows National Federations to register Athletes and submit Classification medical information in PVSAS at any time of the year, not just prior to Competitions. WPV encourages National members to register Athletes and submit the diagnostic information in PVSAS as soon as there is potential for an Athlete to represent the Nation at an International Competition in the future (and well before the deadline set prior to a Competition the Athlete will participate in), and notify the Classification Commission's UHC Assessment Coordinator at [UHCassessment@worldparavolley.org](mailto:UHCassessment@worldparavolley.org), so that the Athlete's information can be assessed and a designation of "New" Athlete can be assigned by WPV in PVSAS, with Stage 1 of Classification already completed well before a Covered Competition or Classification Opportunity.

Stage 2: The Stage 2 definition outlines a process to verify two key aspects: (i) that the Athlete has an Eligible Impairment (EI) catered for by World ParaVolley that is consistent with one or more Underlying Health Conditions reported in the UHC Assessment, and (ii) that there are no inconsistencies with such reported Underlying Health Condition(s). In other words, the emphasis in Stage 2 is placed on ensuring that the Athlete's presentation aligns with the Diagnostic Information they have provided. Appendix 1-Section 4 of the new WPV 2026 rules outlines how the EI is verified during classification. If the Classification Panel finds: a) inconsistencies with the UHC reported in the UHC Assessment; or b) no objective evidence of a Physical Eligible Impairment, under the new rules, the Athlete will be given (respectively) either a designation of (a) 'Classification Not Completed' (CNC) with a request for additional information or referred back to the UHC Assessor(s); or b) NE-Eligible Impairment (re-evaluation), which will trigger an automatic second panel of Classifiers to evaluate the Athlete's Eligible Impairment. The introduction of a second assessment opportunity under the new WPV Rules allows the Athlete to be assessed by two independent Classification Panels to verify the presence of the Eligible Impairment.

The definitions of Eligible Impairments have been refined (in the Appendix 1 – Section 2 of the WPV Rules), but no impairment types have been added or withdrawn from the current list of impairment types that WPV caters for.

Stage 3: Stage 3 describes Assessment of the Minimum Impairment Criteria (MIC) and remains similar to the provisions in the 2018 rules, using impairment-based tests and not considering the use of any Adaptive Equipment as per the IPC Code requirement. As per the previous rules – an Athlete whose impairment does not meet MIC (NE-MIC Re-evaluation) will be given a second opportunity to be evaluated by a second independent panel of classifiers.

Stage 4: The allocation of a Sport Class and Sport Class Status remains similar to the provisions in the 2018 rules, with an update in wording from the Code that Sport Class Assessment must be based solely on the extent to which the Athlete's Eligible Impairment(s) impact(s) their ability to execute the specific tasks and activities fundamental to the sport – meaning that one or more Eligible Impairments may be considered, subject to each meeting the Minimum Impairment Criteria. This requirement and basis for Sport Class allocation will be carefully considered in the next phase of the sport-specific Rules and Classification Sport Class structure review as we have some work to do with respect to code compliance in this area.

Additionally, the IPC Code now states that the use of Athlete Adaptive Equipment on court must be considered in the allocation of a Sport Class, and therefore this requirement has been added to our rules (Article 17.6). To date, WPV has not considered the impact of the use of adaptive equipment in its previous rules except to check for safety or that the use of such equipment does not provide any advantage to the athlete beyond expected normal function and must be natural in type and extent (from the WPV Sitting Volleyball sport rules). Under the new Classification Code, the allocation of a

Sport Class must now take into account the use of such Adaptive equipment during competition, however the impact on function has not been researched nor gained consensus through expert opinion yet. WPV has developed a compliance plan which includes: i) assessing what adaptive equipment is currently being used by Athletes; ii) documenting and monitoring use of adaptive equipment at competitions; iii) assessing the impact on functional activities on court; and then iv) making a recommendation to WPV as to whether the use of any Adaptive Equipment merits a change in class (planned for future study).

The Observation Assessment will continue to be a formal part of the Stage 4 Classification except for clear cases of limb deficiency or for cases where there is no potential for the sport class to change following Observation on court.

Rule Changes to Sport Class Statuses are minimal. The previous term “Review” status is now termed “Review – Next Available Opportunity” (R-NAO)”, which means the athlete must be seen at the next opportunity. Example circumstances when this status applies is outlined in Article 20.1.2. The “Review – Fixed Review Date (R-FRD)” status is unchanged. An additional status “Expired” has been added to be assigned to an Athlete who has notified WPV of their retirement. Additionally, WPV has many Athletes on their Master List that have the old “D” and “MD” sport classes. National Federations will receive a letter informing them that any athletes from their country that have the old sport class names from prior to 2018 will be given Expired status. Article 21.3 details information about retired and previously “Confirmed” Athletes with “Expired” Status who wish to return to participation in Covered Competitions.

Overall, under each of the three stages of the Classification process where an Athlete may be designated any of the above designations (NE-UHC, NE-EI, or NE-MIC), the Code and WPV Rules provide for a second assessment to be conducted. The indication that the second assessment is due is captured by adding ‘(Re-evaluation)’ to the designation. Should the designation be final, reference to ‘(Re-evaluation)’ is removed. The three final designations cannot be Protested (as they have already had the opportunity to be seen by two separate panels) but may be subject to an Appeal.

### **Use of Adaptive Equipment**

The use of Adaptive Equipment plays an important part in our sport and now plays a role in Sport Class Assessment.

Under the new Code, there is a requirement for IF’s and the Classification Panels in identifying, assessing, regulating and monitoring the use of Adaptive Equipment in their sports.

The role of Adaptive Equipment in the Classification process is described as follows:

- The Classification Panel is tasked with assessing Athletes when they are using the Adaptive Equipment that they will use in competition. This ensures that the Classification process, and specifically Sport Class Assessment, considers the impact of Adaptive Equipment on the Athlete’s ability to perform specific tasks and activities within the sport.
- The Code requires International Federations to develop a system to document an Athlete’s use of Adaptive Equipment and enforce consistency in its use across different Sport Classes.

As World ParaVolley has not developed a robust policy in regard to the use of Adaptive or Protective Equipment and has not previously monitored any equipment in a formalized way, this requirement was the catalyst for WPV to consider and develop a Policy concerning the use of Adaptive and Protective Equipment. Consultation with various Commissions (Technical, Referees, Athlete reps, Rules of the Game, and Beach ParaVolley) and the Rules Review Steering Committee has resulted in the draft of a policy. The draft policy has been included in the 2026 WPV Rules (Appendix 1 – Section 7) and will be replaced with the final version when the policy is evaluated and finalized. Our

World Championships in July 2026 will provide an opportunity for WPV to pilot its documentation process for the Policy on Adaptive and Protective Equipment. WPV will only be collecting data on the equipment and fine-tuning its procedures relating to assessing, and monitoring equipment at this time. The data will be used to inform further development of the final policy and initiate discussions on the impact of equipment on tasks and activities on court for future rule changes if necessary.

### **General Provisions for all Aspects of Evaluation Sessions/Roles & Responsibilities**

The 2026 WPV rules more clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of World ParaVolley, the National Federations and Athletes (Article 22-25 and Articles 61-65) with respect to Classification. All National Federations should review their roles and responsibilities within their organization and educate their Athletes and Athlete Support Personnel regarding the same. World ParaVolley is developing an online education module on this topic to assist our Member nations, which will be available later this summer. This section of the new rules also details circumstances where an Athlete evaluation session may be terminated.

### **Location of Evaluation Sessions**

The new Code allows for some stages of Classification to take place away from Competition (with same classification requirements outlined in the rules), with the exception of Stage 4 Observation Assessments, which must take place at a Covered Competition by the same panel who assessed the Athlete in the Evaluation room. World ParaVolley has elected to have the option to develop classification opportunities away from Competition within the 2026 version of the rules. Athletes that do not require Observation Assessment to complete classification have an opportunity to finish their Classification Evaluation Out-of-Competition.

World ParaVolley will be offering a pilot Out-of-Competition Classification Opportunity in the latter half of 2026 to determine if this offering is found to be beneficial to Nations and their Athletes. The pilot will allow World ParaVolley and Nations to monitor Athlete and National Federation satisfaction, cost-effectiveness, and consistency of classification outcomes.

### **Protests & Appeals**

This area of the rules has been updated without substantial changes surrounding these two mechanisms to challenge the outcomes of Classification. However a few small but important changes are noted here.

#### **FAQ: What is new about Protests & Appeals?**

The types of Protests (a challenge filed against the Athlete's sport class either by the National Federation or by World ParaVolley) has not changed. While a National Federation cannot make a Protest in respect of a Sport Class allocated to an Athlete from another Country/Territory, it can present any concerns about the Sport Class allocated to such Athletes to its International Federation so that World ParaVolley may consider if it wishes to make an International Federation Protest. This is outlined in our 2026 Rules in Article 40 for clarity. Where a provisional Sport Class has been allocated that is subject to Observation Assessment, a National Federation Protest can be made after the relevant Evaluation Session but before Observation Assessment, or after the Observation Assessment (the specific provisions for this are detailed in Article 40.5.1). If a protest has been dismissed after the initial evaluation, a Protest can still be filed after Observation Assessment, however it cannot relate to any aspect that preceded the Observation Evaluation. Should such a

protest related only to the Observation aspect be accepted, the Athlete will be assessed by a second panel, including Stages 2-4.

The new 2026 rules have added a new provision concerning challenge options following an International Protest. If World ParaVolley files an International Federation Protest with respect to an Athlete's Sport Class after the deadline for the National Federation to file a Protest, the decision following a Protest Panel Evaluation will not be considered final and allows a further Protest opportunity for both the National Federation and World ParaVolley. The decision of a Protest Panel may also be appealed by the National Federation if the requirements for Appeal are met.

Appeals are described as a challenge to any aspect of the Classification process where a breach of the rules has occurred that could have led to incorrectly allocating a Sport Class or any of the designations, including 'Not Eligible – Eligible Impairment', 'Not Eligible – Minimum Impairment Criteria', and/or Sport Class Status. World ParaVolley Classification Appeals will now be heard and determined by the independent IPC Board of Appeal for Classification (BAC) – a specialist dispute resolution body. An agreement between World ParaVolley and IPC is currently being prepared. It is important to note however, that Classification Appeals filed during a Competition will not likely have a decision during the period of the Competition. Further details regarding the Classification Appeals process, potential costs, and timeframes will be published on the World ParaVolley Classification Page when the agreement and procedural details are finalized.

### **Intentional Misrepresentation (IM)**

World ParaVolley has updated and expanded its rules concerning Intentional Misrepresentation, with the development of a stand-alone set of Intentional Misrepresentation Rules, which will be available on the WPV Classification webpage in the near future. The WPV 2026 Classification Rules and World ParaVolley IM Rules reflect the requirements from the 2025 IPC Code and International Standard for Intentional Misrepresentation

The new 2026 Rules outline what constitutes IM with examples provided to ensure they are clear and all encompassing. A participant can commit IM even if that Participant is not aware that their conduct will constitute an IM violation of the rules. It is therefore important that all Participants be aware of what constitutes IM and what consequences are possible should a Participant be found to have been in violation of the IM Rules and that providing education on IM and its consequence is a shared responsibility of World ParaVolley and the National Members.

The Rules also outline the obligation for Participants and National Federations to report what might be considered to be planning or committing of IM, and to cooperate fully with World ParaVolley.

The new IM Rules clarify the Procedures for investigation, disciplinary and hearing proceedings, to ensure fair, consistent and transparent management of alleged IM cases.

There are now sanction details that include a minimum default period of Ineligibility of 4 years, which can be increased or reduced (but only to a minimum of 1 year sanction) depending on the nature of aggravating or mitigating circumstances. Examples of such circumstances are listed in the World ParaVolley IM Rules to guide WPV in sanction-related decisions.

Public Disclosure is required under the IM International Standard and World ParaVolley IM rules (with some disclosures subject to specific circumstances), including the identity of the Participant, the nature of the IM, and the consequences imposed. Additionally, an IM designation must be

added to the Participant’s information on the publicly-available Master list, together with duration and date of commencement of the period of Ineligibility.

### **Classifier Personnel & Training**

Classifier Personnel are fundamental to the management and delivery of Classification. The 2026 WPV Rules outline the World ParaVolley responsibilities for recruitment, education, training, and development of Classifier Personnel, according to the 2025 IPC International Standard for Classifier Personnel and Training.

A “UHC Assessors” term, definition, and role have been added to our 2026 Rules which outlines the competencies required for Persons to be a UHC Assessor for World ParaVolley. The Rules also outline the skills and experience required for Assessors to conduct UHC Assessments.

World ParaVolley has also introduced a new position of UHC Assessment Coordinator, who is responsible to manage requests for UHC Assessments throughout the year. The UHC Assessment Coordinator is a Classifier who is appointed by the WPV Team Leader of Classification to manage the receiving, screening, triaging, and processing of an Athlete’s Medical diagnostic Form and supporting Medical diagnostic information prior to assigning a UHC Assessor(s) to conduct a UHC Assessment. This addition allows for more timely receipt of Athlete Medical diagnostic information throughout the year, rather than just prior to competitions.

The IPC Code and International Standard mandates all IFs to develop and adopt policies to identify, manage, record, and keep updated a register of actual, perceived and potential Classification Personnel Conflicts of interest (COI). World ParaVolley has developed such a policy and has included the specific restrictions identified by the IPC for persons wanting to initiate training to be an International Classifier. To supplement the policy, World ParaVolley has also developed a risk management matrix, COI declaration form, and a COI register to document all Conflicts of Interest, and mitigating actions taken.

### **Best Practice Classification & Research**

The Code now reflects a new term – Best Practice Classification as the minimum standard all International Federations must achieve, whilst still pursuing the gold standard evidence-based Classification systems.

The Code mandates that International Federations have sport-specific Classification systems that reflect Best Practice Classification. Best Practice Classification means that the Classification system (i) adopts the four stages of the Classification process, (ii) uses the best available evidence in each stage, (iii) applies principles of clinical reasoning and critical thinking, (iv) is consistent with established principles of human movement science and sports performance, and (v) is consistent with current knowledge of Underlying Health Conditions and Eligible Impairments.

The Code further requires International Federations to conduct multidisciplinary Classification Research to ensure that their Classification systems meet (and continue to meet) the requirements for Best Practice Classification and monitor the quality of their assessment systems and improve their evidence base.

World ParaVolley must ensure that its Classification system reflects Best Practice Classification. To this end, WPV will require further work in the next few years on its assessment methods, MIC and

Sport Classes and related descriptions via its Compliance Plan to evolve the relevant Appendices of the 2026 rules and become Code compliant in this regard.

### **Data Protection**

World ParaVolley has updated its documentation and practices to further improve security of Classification-related data. Given that classification occurs across international borders, we have developed more guidelines, policy, and training for Classifiers with respect to the safe use of personal devices internationally and safe practices to protect classification data. World ParaVolley has reviewed its procedures to ensure classification is accurate, processed lawfully and for specific and legitimate purposes, and that the information collected is limited to what WPV reasonably requires to conduct classification and meet requirements of the Code and GDPR. Privacy notifications have been added to forms to inform Athletes and Support Personnel about privacy and data processing.

### **Appendix 1**

- Section 1 – Introduction has been updated to orientate the reader where to find information regarding each stage of Assessment within Appendix 1. A flow chart has also been added to provide clarity to challenge routes for decisions at each stage.
- Section 2 – the list of Eligible Impairments that ParaVolley caters to.
- Section 3 – Assessment of the UHC with a flow chart of the process.
- Section 4 – Assessment to verify the presence of the Eligible Impairments – no substantial changes to this section – but has more detailed descriptions of assessment procedures
- Section 5 – Assessment of MIC with no changes in content with the exception of the added clarification of the impact of impairment on the standing version of the sport as the basis for determining MIC.
- Section 6 – Sport Class Allocation -no changes from the 2018 rules at this point.
- Section 7 – Draft Adaptive Equipment Policy (policy still under final development and will be replaced with final version later this summer)
- Section 8 – Observation Assessment details – with improved descriptions. World ParaVolley has more development to complete in this area.

## **Summary of Main Changes to the Beach ParaVolley (Standing) Rules**

Much of the procedural content for the 2026 Beach ParaVolley (Standing) Rules mirrors the procedures with the new 2026 World ParaVolley Rules for Sitting Volleyball in alignment with the IPC 2025 Code. The Appendix 1 – Sections 5 (MIC) and 6 (Sport Class Allocation) have been imported from the 2020 version of the Beach ParaVolley (Standing) Rules. Sport class descriptions have been added, however the impairment measurements and sport class borders have not changed from those of 2020. Sport-specific system changes will be addressed in the next phase of the Rules review, similarly to the Sitting Volleyball discipline. As we are still awaiting IPC feedback on the Beach ParaVolley (Standing) Rules, these will be published later this year.

For questions relating to Classification rule changes, please contact either:

- Team Leader for Classification – [classification@worldparavolley.org](mailto:classification@worldparavolley.org)
- Project Leader for Classification rules Review – [classificationrulesreview@worldparavolley.org](mailto:classificationrulesreview@worldparavolley.org)