



INTERNATIONAL PARA PICKLEBALL ASSOCIATION (IPPA)

Classification Handbook for Short Stature Athletes (Dwarfism)

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Foreword

It gives me great pride to present the **International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA) Classification Handbook for Short Stature Para Pickleball Players**, a pioneering step in advancing inclusivity and fairness in Para Pickleball worldwide.

This handbook reflects IPPA's commitment to ensuring that athletes with dwarfism or short stature are given equitable opportunities to compete, enjoy, and excel in the para pickleball. By aligning our classification principles with the **World Ability Sports Federation and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC)** framework, we affirm our dedication to transparency, functional assessment, and the celebration of every athlete's ability.

The introduction of classes **PP40, PP41, and PP40–41 Assisted** represents a thoughtful and inclusive approach to categorizing athletes based on functional ability rather than medical condition alone. This system will serve as a foundation for fair competition, talent identification, and global standardization within Para Pickleball.

I extend my gratitude to all classifiers, coaches, and national federations who contribute to the growth of Para Pickleball and to every athlete whose passion continues to inspire the development of our sport.

Together, we move toward a future where sport truly belongs to everyone.

Raghu Kumar Raghavelu

Secretary General

International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The **International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA)**, through its commitment to inclusivity and athlete empowerment, has established a structured classification framework for para pickleball players with short stature (dwarfism). This handbook outlines the criteria, classes, and assessment standards designed to promote fair competition and equal opportunity for participation in Para Pickleball.

The classification process ensures that success in competition is determined by **skill, strategy, and athletic performance**, rather than the degree of impairment. This handbook provides clear guidance to athletes, classifiers, coaches, and event organizers on the application of the Short Stature classification system (PP40–PP41 & PP40-41 Assisted).

It has been developed in accordance with the **IPC Classification Code and International Standards (2021)** and adapted to the functional demands of Para Pickleball.

CHAPTER 2: PHILOSOPHY OF CLASSIFICATION IN PARA PICKLEBALL

The philosophy of classification in Para Pickleball is grounded in three core principles:

1. **Fairness:**

Classification aims to minimize the impact of impairment on competition outcome by grouping athletes with comparable activity limitations together.

2. **Inclusion:**

The IPPA recognizes and values every athlete's right to participate. Classification provides pathways for athletes of all functional levels to engage meaningfully in the sport.

3. **Integrity:**

Classifiers are trained professionals who follow transparent procedures and uphold the integrity of the sport. Their assessments are conducted objectively, ensuring respect, accuracy, and fairness in every decision.

By implementing these principles, the IPPA strives to maintain the credibility of Para Pickleball as a sport that celebrates ability and achievement at every level.

CHAPTER 3: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR SHORT STATURE CLASSIFICATION

To be eligible for the **Short Stature Classification (PP40, PP41 & PP40-41 Assisted)**, athletes must have an officially recognized form of dwarfism or a comparable condition resulting in reduced standing height.

Eligibility is based on the following key criteria:

- **Verified height measurements** taken in a standing position without footwear.
- **Permanent and non-progressive** nature of the condition (e.g., Achondroplasia, Spondyloepiphyseal Dysplasia, Pseudoachondroplasia).
- **Functional limitation** in court reach, stride length, or leverage that materially affects performance in Pickleball.

Minimum Impairment Criteria (MIC) PP41:

- Males: standing height \leq 130 cm
- Females: standing height \leq 125 cm

Minimum Impairment Criteria (MIC) PP41:

- Males: standing height \leq 145 cm
- Females: standing height \leq 137 cm

Para Pickleball Players meeting these requirements are then assessed functionally to determine the most appropriate classification group — **PP40, PP41, or PP40–41 Assisted** according to their measured height and movement capability.

Definition (per IPC Explanatory Guide and Code 2025):

Short stature is a physical impairment characterized by reduced length in the long bones of the arms, legs, and/or trunk, leading to measurable anthropometric differences that affect sport performance.

Underlying Health Conditions (examples):

- Achondroplasia – disproportionate shortening of limbs due to FGFR3 mutation.
- Hypochondroplasia – mild form of disproportionate short stature.
- Spondyloepiphyseal Dysplasia Congenita (SEDc) – shortened trunk with vertebral and epiphyseal abnormalities.
- Cartilage Hair Hypoplasia, Pseudoachondroplasia, or Diastrophic Dysplasia – conditions resulting in reduced limb length, joint laxity or stiffness, and limited reach.

PP40–41 Assisted Category Eligibility

The **PP40–41 Assisted** Category in short-stature para pickleball is a functional sport class designated for athletes with short stature who demonstrate a significant reliance on assistive equipment such as lower or upper-limb prosthetics, orthotic supports, or other adaptive devices for effective participation. Classification within PP40–41 is

based on a technical assessment of anthropometric characteristics, limb deficiency, joint range of motion, and overall functional capacity, with particular emphasis on the extent to which assistive devices are required for locomotion, balance, and stroke mechanics. Athletes in this category are characterized by reduced independent mobility and/or limited reach and power generation without such equipment, which directly impacts court coverage and shot execution. The Assisted designation ensures competitive equity by grouping players with comparable levels of device dependence and functional limitation, while also giving such athletes a formalized opportunity to compete and play within a structured, inclusive, and performance-oriented environment.

CHAPTER 4: FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

The **IPPA Classification Process** evaluates each para pickleball player's physical function and its impact on their ability to perform essential skills in Para Pickleball. The process is designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and accuracy across all classification decisions.

4.1 Purpose of Functional Assessment

The functional assessment determines how an athlete's short stature affects performance in Pickleball-specific movements such as:

- ✓ Reaching for and striking the ball.
- ✓ Moving laterally and forward/backward across the court.
- ✓ Generating power during serves and returns.
- ✓ Maintaining balance and stability during play.

4.2 CLASSIFICATION PANEL

Classification is conducted by an **IPPA-accredited panel**, which typically includes:

- ✓ One **Medical Classifier** (with expertise in physical impairment or rehabilitation);
- ✓ One **Technical Classifier** (with sport-specific knowledge of Para Pickleball performance);
- ✓ In certain cases, a **National Federation Representative** may be present as an observer.

4.3 Evaluation Stages

- ✓ **Physical Assessment:**
 - Measurement of height, limb proportion, and joint mobility.
 - Observation of musculoskeletal characteristics typical of dwarfism.

✓ **Technical Assessment:**

Evaluation of the athlete's ability to perform Pickleball-specific skills including serve, rally, and court movement.

Observation in Competition (if required):

Classifiers may observe the athlete in actual match play to confirm classification accuracy. Adjustments may be made if the athlete's in-competition function differs significantly from assessment results.

4.4 Classification Outcomes

Following assessment, the athlete will be allocated one of the following statuses:

- ✓ **New (N):** Initial classification before competition.
- ✓ **Review (R):** Classification subject to future reassessment.
- ✓ **Confirmed (C):** Athlete's class is verified and stable with no expected changes.

CHAPTER 5: SPORT-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS IN PICKLEBALL

The **unique dynamics of Para Pickleball** including rapid rallies, compact court size, and precision-based play require that classification decisions account for how short stature specifically influences performance.

5.1 Key Functional Factors

- ✓ **Reach and Leverage:** Shorter arm span affects intercepting high or wide shots.
- ✓ **Mobility:** Reduced stride length influences coverage speed across the court.
- ✓ **Power Generation:** Limited mechanical leverage affects shot speed and serve velocity.
- ✓ **Balance:** Modified centre of gravity can aid stability but restrict dynamic range of motion.

5.2 Adaptations and Modifications

Where permitted, minor adaptations enhance safety and fairness without altering the essence of the game:

- ✓ Use of lightweight or extended-handle paddles.
- ✓ Adjusted toss height and flexible serve timing.
- ✓ In PP40 and Assisted classes, modified court size for singles play.

5.3 Participation Emphasis

The IPPA encourages all short stature persons to engage in competitive, recreational, and exhibition para pickleball events.

The emphasis remains on:

- ✓ Promoting inclusion in Para Pickleball.
- ✓ Encouraging participation and enjoyment.
- ✓ Celebrating individual skill development and sportsmanship.

CHAPTER 6: REVIEW, PROTEST, AND RECLASSIFICATION PROCESS

6.1 Review

Athletes classified as **Review (R)** may be reassessed periodically, especially when:

- ✓ Their physical status changes due to growth, surgery, or rehabilitation.
- ✓ They transition between competition levels.
- ✓ Classifiers identify performance inconsistencies.

6.2 Protest

National federations or para pickleball players may submit a **formal protest** if they believe an error occurred during the classification process.

Protests must:

- ✓ Be filed in writing within the timeframe specified by IPPA event regulations.
- ✓ Include supporting evidence (medical documentation, video footage, or classifier notes).
- ✓ Be reviewed by an independent **IPPA Protest Panel**, whose decision shall be final.

6.3 Reclassification

If an athlete's impairment changes over time or due to injury, reclassification may be initiated by:

- ✓ The para pickleball player or their national federation.
- ✓ The competition organizing committee (with IPPA approval).

Reclassification ensures that the athlete's current functional ability is accurately represented, maintaining fairness and consistency across all events.

6.4 Classifier Conduct and Ethics

Classifiers are bound by the **IPPA Classifier Code of Conduct**, requiring:

- ✓ Confidentiality of para pickleball players data.
- ✓ Impartiality and professional judgment.
- ✓ Respectful and transparent communication.

CHAPTER 7: CLASSIFIER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Role of the Classifier

The IPPA Classifiers are responsible for evaluating and assigning para pickleball players to the appropriate class in accordance with IPPA classification standards. Their primary role is to ensure that classification decisions are made fairly, consistently, and in line with the principles of the **World Ability Sports Federation and International Paralympic Committee (IPC)**.

7.2 Core Responsibilities

- ✓ Conduct physical, technical, and observation assessments of para pickleball players.
- ✓ Maintain complete confidentiality of all personal and medical information.
- ✓ Apply classification criteria accurately, without bias or external influence.
- ✓ Record and report classification decisions clearly and promptly to the organizing committee.
- ✓ Participate in continuing education programs to maintain certification and knowledge of evolving standards.

7.3 Professional Conduct

Classifiers must:

- ✓ Treat all athletes with dignity and respect.
- ✓ Avoid any conflict of interest.
- ✓ Maintain neutrality and transparency throughout the process.
- ✓ Adhere to the **IPPA Classifier Code of Conduct** and uphold the integrity of Para Pickleball classification worldwide.

CHAPTER 8: ATHLETE RESPONSIBILITIES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

8.1 Para Pickleball Players Responsibilities

Athletes seeking classification are required to:

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- ✓ Provide accurate and complete personal and medical information.
- ✓ Cooperate fully during physical and technical evaluations.
- ✓ Follow the directions of classifiers respectfully.
- ✓ Refrain from any conduct intended to mislead or influence classification results.
- ✓ Report any change in physical condition that may affect classification status.

8.2 Para Pickleball Players Code of Conduct

All athletes participating in Para Pickleball events are required to uphold the highest standards of behaviour and professionalism. Players must demonstrate respect towards classifiers, officials, fellow competitors, and event personnel at all times. Integrity is essential, including honest and transparent participation in classification assessments and competitive events. Athletes are expected to exhibit exemplary sportsmanship, consistently upholding the principles of fair play, dignity, and mutual respect, irrespective of the outcome of competition.

Athletes must demonstrate:

- ✓ **Respect:** Toward classifiers, officials, and fellow competitors.
- ✓ **Integrity:** Honest participation in assessments and events.
- ✓ **Sportsmanship:** Upholding the spirit of fair play in all circumstances.
- ✓ **Commitment:** To the IPPA's values of inclusion, equality, and excellence.

Violation of the Para Pickleball Players Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action or review of classification status.

CHAPTER 9: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Classification:

A system that groups athletes based on how their impairment impacts performance in sport.

Functional Assessment:

Evaluation of an athlete's physical and sport-specific ability rather than solely medical diagnosis.

Short Stature:

A condition characterized by significantly reduced standing height resulting from skeletal dysplasia or similar medical causes.

Classifier Panel:

A team of qualified experts responsible for assessing and assigning classifications.

PP40 / PP41 / PP40-41 Assisted:

IPPA classification codes representing degrees of functional limitation due to dwarfism or short stature.

Observation in Competition:

Evaluation of a para pickleball player during live match play to confirm or adjust classification.

Review Status (R):

A temporary classification status pending further evaluation.

Confirmed Status (C):

A final, stable classification based on consistent evidence and observation.

CHAPTER 10: ANNEXURES

Annexure A Classification Card

Athlete Name Classification Code Status Classifier Panel Date Remarks

Annexure B Athlete Evaluation Form (Excerpt)

- ✓ Athlete ID:
- ✓ Gender:
- ✓ Height (cm):
- ✓ Type of Dwarfism / Condition:
- ✓ Functional Limitations Observed:
- ✓ Recommended Class:
- ✓ Notes / Modifications Suggested:

Annexure C Protest Form (Template)

- ✓ Athlete Name & Class:
- ✓ Event & Date:
- ✓ Basis for Protest:
- ✓ Supporting Documentation Attached:
- ✓ Federation Representative:
- ✓ Signature:

CHAPTER 11: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Raghu Kumar Raghavelu

Secretary General, International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA)

Raghu Kumar Raghavelu is a dedicated advocate for inclusion, equality, and accessibility in sports since 1994. As the Founder and Secretary General of the **International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA)**, he has played a pivotal role in developing Para Pickleball both nationally and internationally.

With extensive experience in organizing championships, promoting adaptive sports, and fostering collaboration across federations, Raghu Kumar's vision is to ensure that every athlete regardless of physical ability has the opportunity to participate, compete, and achieve excellence. Raghu Kumar Raghavelu is the founder of Short Stature (Dwarfism) Para Pickleball in the World.

This **Classification Handbook for Short Stature Athletes (Dwarfism)** is part of his continuing commitment to building a structured, fair, and globally recognized framework for Para Pickleball under IPPA standards.

End Note

This handbook is an official publication of the **International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA)**. All classification procedures, criteria, and class codes are governed by IPPA regulations in alignment with the **International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Classification Code (2021)**. Unauthorized reproduction or modification without written consent from IPPA is prohibited.

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