



INTERNATIONAL PARA PICKLEBALL ASSOCIATION (IPPA)

Classification Handbook for Wheelchair Para Pickleball Players

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Foreword

It gives me immense pride to present the International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA) Classification Handbook for Wheelchair Para Pickleball Players, a key step in ensuring fairness, inclusion, and competitive integrity for athletes who compete using wheelchairs.

This handbook reflects IPPA's unwavering commitment to enabling athletes with mobility impairments to participate fully and safely in Para Pickleball. By aligning our classification framework with the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Classification Code, 2021, World Ability Sports Federation (WASF) standards, and international wheelchair pickleball principles, we ensure consistency, transparency, and global recognition.

The introduction of classes PP51 through PP57 represents a functional approach to grouping athletes according to mobility, trunk control, balance, and upper limb function rather than medical diagnosis alone. This system provides a foundation for fair competition, talent development, and global standardization within Wheelchair Para Pickleball.

Together, we foster a sport where opportunities are equitable, participation is empowering, and every achievement is recognized and celebrated

Raghu Kumar Raghavelu

Secretary General

International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA)

IPPA PARA PICKLEBALL SPIRIT OF PLAY PLEDGE

We pledge to play with joy, fairness, and respect.

We promise to support one another as teammates and friends.

We celebrate effort more than victory, and inclusion more than competition.

We will play safely, kindly, and with courage.

Together, we honour the Spirit of Pickleball where everyone belongs.

Restoring Life – Let's Do It Together

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The **International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA)**, through its commitment to inclusivity and athlete empowerment, has established a structured classification framework for wheelchair pickleball players during IPPA Sanctioned Para Pickleball Events. 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 Wheelchair Pickleball Players classification system (PP51–PP57).

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 WHEELCHAIR PARA PICKLEBALL

The philosophy of classification in Wheelchair 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.

CHAPTER 3: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND FUNCTIONAL PROFILES (PP51–PP57)

The purpose of this chapter is to define the eligibility criteria and functional profiles for wheelchair athletes in Para Pickleball. Classification ensures that athletes compete according to their functional ability, not solely their medical diagnosis.

3.1 General Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for Wheelchair Para Pickleball classification (PP51–PP57), athletes must:

1. Have a permanent mobility impairment affecting the lower limbs or trunk.
2. Use a manual or power wheelchair for competition.
3. Demonstrate a functional limitation in court movement, balance, reach, or power generation due to their impairment.
4. Provide verified medical documentation confirming the nature and permanence of their impairment.
5. Meet IPPA rules for age and safety requirements during play.

Classification is based on functional assessment, focusing on trunk control, upper limb strength, wheelchair manoeuvrability, and court coverage ability.

3.2 IPPA Wheelchair Para Pickleball Classification (PP51–PP57)

IPPA Class	Functional Profile	Key Considerations / Adaptations
PP51	Severe impairment: limited shoulder, arm, hand, and trunk function; relies heavily on wheelchair for movement.	Modified court zones; adaptive paddles; extended serve time.
PP52	Moderate impairment: some trunk control; fair shoulder and elbow function, limited hand function.	Standard court with minor adaptations; serve assist allowed.
PP53	Good shoulder and arm function; limited or no trunk function; fully wheelchair mobile.	Standard court; minor pacing adjustments.
PP54	Normal arm and trunk function; excellent wheelchair mobility; minimal impairment affecting play.	Full competition rules; standard court and timing.
PP55	Mild limitation affecting lower trunk or balance; upper body largely functional.	Full court; minimal modifications.
PP56	Low-level impairment; high functional ability for competitive play.	Standard competition rules.

IPPA Class	Functional Profile	Key Considerations / Adaptations
PP57	Minimal wheelchair impairment; included for classification consistency; fully functional for competition.	Full standard rules.

3.3 Assessment Requirements

Classification assessment includes:

1. **Physical Assessment:**

- ✓ Trunk stability and control
- ✓ Shoulder, arm, and hand strength and range of motion
- ✓ Core balance while seated in wheelchair

2. **Technical Assessment:**

- ✓ Ability to maneuver wheelchair effectively on court
- ✓ Stroke mechanics and serve execution
- ✓ Reaction speed and mobility during rallies

3. **Observation in Competition:**

- ✓ Evaluators may observe athletes during practice or matches to confirm functional ability and appropriate class placement.

3.4 Documentation Required

Athletes must submit:

- ✓ Medical diagnosis of impairment (permanent and non-progressive).
- ✓ Height and weight measurements (for adaptive equipment recommendations).
- ✓ History of prior wheelchair sports participation (optional but recommended).
- ✓ Any existing functional assessments from physiotherapists, occupational therapists, or sports classifiers.

This chapter ensures that each athlete is placed in a class that reflects their functional ability, allowing fair competition, safe participation, and consistent application across tournaments.

CHAPTER 4: FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

The functional assessment is a cornerstone of the IPPA classification system, ensuring that each wheelchair athlete is assigned to the most appropriate class (PP51–PP57) based on their physical capacity, wheelchair mobility, and on-court performance. The assessment process is designed to uphold the principles of fairness, transparency, and consistency.

4.1 Purpose of Functional Assessment

The functional assessment evaluates the impact of an athlete's impairment on sport-specific performance, including:

- ✓ Wheelchair mobility: Ability to maneuver efficiently across the court.
- ✓ Trunk and balance control: Stability while executing strokes and maintaining posture.
- ✓ Power and reach: Capacity to generate force and extend reach during serves and rallies.
- ✓ Reaction and agility: Responsiveness and adaptability during dynamic match situations.

This approach emphasizes functional capability in sport rather than relying solely on medical diagnosis.

4.2 Classification Panel

Assessments are conducted by an IPPA-accredited classification panel, typically comprising:

- ✓ Medical Classifier: Expert in physical impairments, rehabilitation, or physiotherapy.
- ✓ Technical Classifier: Specialist in Para Pickleball techniques and wheelchair sport performance.
- ✓ Optional Observer: A non-voting representative from the athlete's national federation.

All panel members must act with impartiality, professionalism, and confidentiality throughout the assessment process.

4.3 Assessment Stages

1. Physical Assessment

- ✓ Evaluation of trunk stability and core strength while seated in the wheelchair.
- ✓ Assessment of shoulder, arm, and hand strength and range of motion.
- ✓ Measurement of functional reach and mobility.
- ✓ Observation of balance and control during dynamic movements.

2. Technical Assessment

- ✓ Analysis of stroke execution, including forehand, backhand, serve, and volley techniques.
- ✓ Assessment of wheelchair propulsion, agility, and speed during lateral and directional changes.
- ✓ Evaluation of court coverage efficiency, including ability to reach wide and deep shots.
- ✓ Observation of performance under high pressure rally scenarios.

3. Observation in Competition (if required)

- ✓ Athletes may be observed during practice or official match play to confirm functional capacity in real-game conditions.
- ✓ Adjustments to class allocation may be made if observed performance significantly differs from initial assessment results.

4.4 Classification Status Outcomes

Following assessment, athletes are assigned one of the following classification statuses:

- ✓ New (N): Initial classification prior to competition.
- ✓ Review (R): Classification subject to periodic reassessment due to changes in functional ability.
- ✓ Confirmed (C): Class assignment verified and stable, with no anticipated changes.

4.5 Assessment Documentation

Classifiers are responsible for maintaining accurate and confidential records, including:

- ✓ Physical measurements and assessment observations.

- ✓ Technical skill performance results.
- ✓ Notes from on-court observations.
- ✓ Final class allocation and any recommended modifications (e.g., adaptive paddles, serve adjustments, court modifications).

All documentation is stored in accordance with IPPA regulations to ensure confidentiality and integrity.

This chapter guarantees that each wheelchair athlete is classified according to their true functional capacity, enabling fair and safe competition while maintaining international consistency and credibility in Para Pickleball classification.

CHAPTER 5: 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. As the 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.

This Classification Handbook for Wheelchair Pickleball Players is part of his continuing commitment to building a structured, fair, and globally recognized framework for Para Pickleball under IPPA standards.

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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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