

## **Background.**

Classification provides a structure for Competition. Classification is undertaken to ensure that the Athlete competes equitably with other Athletes.

Classification has two important roles:

- To determine Eligibility to Compete
- To group Athletes for Competition

Classification provides a systematic method for grouping Athletes, according to their visual abilities, into "classes" which act as the framework for competition.

Prior to competing in IBSA-sanctioned Continental or World Championships, Athletes must undergo Classification, carried out by an International V.I. Classification Panel.

It is important to state that the IBSA Classification Rules and Procedures relate only to those Sports governed by IBSA. For Sports that are governed by other International Federations (IF), the Classification Rules of the relevant IF will apply.

It is required, as a condition of membership of IPC, that IFs develop and implement Classification Rules in accordance with IPC Classification Code 2007. IBSA is eager to interact with IFs that have Athletes who are blind or partially sighted, to ensure equitable competition between those Athletes.

## **IBSA VI Classifiers**

Classification at world and regional level may only be conducted by "VI International Classifiers". IBSA is fortunate to have at its disposal a pool of expert "VI International Classifiers", all of whom have been certified jointly by IBSA and IPC.

In order to become a "VI International Classifier", potential classifiers (either ophthalmologist or optometrist) must graduate from a classifier certification course approved by IBSA and IPC.

A list of IBSA certified international classifiers is available [here](#) in the IBSA Documents section on this web site.

## **Eligibility Criteria.**

Vision Impairment arises from a variety of conditions - genetics, prenatal developmental issues, or from illness or trauma.

Vision Impairment occurs when there is damage to one or more of the components of the vision system, which can include:

- impairment of the eye structure/receptors

- impairment of the optic nerve/optic pathways
- impairment of the visual cortex

Athletes are required to forward a fully completed Medical Diagnostics Form in advance of classification; Athletes who do not present a fully completed medical diagnostics form risk not being classified.

### **Definition of Visual Classes.**

The determination of visual class will be based upon the eye with better visual acuity, whilst wearing best optical correction using spectacles or contact lenses, and/or Visual Fields which include central and peripheral zones.

**B1:**

Visual acuity poorer than LogMAR 2.60.

**B2:**

Visual acuity ranging from LogMAR 1.50 to 2.60 (inclusive) and/or Visual field constricted to a diameter of less than 10 degrees.

**B3:**

Visual acuity ranging from LogMAR 1.40 to 1 (inclusive) and/or Visual field constricted to a diameter of less than 40 degrees.

### **Athlete Evaluation.**

The Athlete must appear for Classification at the appointed time, prepared to be fully assessed by the Classification Panel, with their passport as evidence for identification purposes.

- Athletes must sign the Consent to be Classified Form prior to classification.
- The Athlete's photograph may be taken for Classification education purposes.
- If the Athlete has a health condition that will impair their ability to be classified, the Chief Classifier may, at their discretion and time permitting, re-schedule the evaluation. Ultimately, if the Athlete does not have a Sport Class and a Sport Class Status they will not be eligible to compete at the competition.
- Athletes may appoint one person to accompany them during classification. This person should have an understanding of the Athlete's impairment and sport performance. If required, that person may be asked by the classifiers to assist with communication.
- Should the Athlete require the presence of a translator, such individual (provided by the Athlete) will also be permitted to attend.

### **Sport Class Status.**

The purpose of the Sport Class Status model is to assist Classifiers to identify those Athletes whose visual ability is consistent over time, and those whose visual ability may change over

time.

As a result, the following Statuses have been established, informed by the above factors:

**Confirmed (C):**

Confirmed is a designated Status for Athletes who have completed a V.I. International Classification evaluation. Confirmed Status implies that the Athlete's visual ability is not likely to change over time. This Status will be assigned to Athletes with a permanent, unchangeable condition.

**Review (R):**

Review is a Classification Status for Athletes who require:

- a. Re-evaluation; OR
- b. Have a fluctuating or changing condition that affects their vision, requiring them to be re-assessed at a later stage. If their vision does not change significantly after a prolonged period, and their sight class does not change, the Athlete may be assigned confirmed status.
- c. Are assessed for the first time as a New (N) Athlete. However, if in the opinion of the Classification Panel, the eye condition of a New (N) Athlete will not change over time, they may be assigned the Status of Confirmed (C).

If the Status of Review is assigned, the Athlete may compete at the event where the Classification took place; however, they must be reassessed before any subsequent competition.

Where an athlete is assigned Review with a year (e.g. Review 2015), it means they must be reassessed at their first event in that calendar year.

Review (R) Status may be assigned to Athletes whose diagnosis has not been proven by the evaluation process. In such cases, the Athlete will be expected to present the results of further diagnostic tests (e.g. Electrophysiology; Visual Fields; Computer Tomography), before the next classification opportunity for a sport class status to be assigned. Once the diagnosis has been verified, further re-evaluation may necessary in order to verify stability of the condition.

Review Status is assigned at the discretion of the Classification Panel, depending on fluctuating or variable conditions.

**New (N):**

New Status is assigned to Athletes who have never been Classified before.

**NE:**

Not Eligible – Visual acuity better than LogMAR: 1.0 and visual field diameter equal to, or greater than, 40 degrees.

This Class is assigned to an Athlete who does not meet the minimum visual impairment criteria. NE Athletes are not permitted to compete in IBSA-sanctioned competitions. Athletes with a degenerative condition, and who do not currently meet the eligibility criteria, may do so at a future date. It is the responsibility of the relevant IBSA member, NPC or IF to provide medical documentation showing a change in the level of vision of the Athlete and to submit a request for the Athlete to be re-evaluated subsequently.

**Ineligibility Re-Evaluation:**

When a Sport Class Status of Not Eligible is assigned to an Athlete by a Classification Panel, the Athlete will be required to undergo evaluation by a second Classification Panel. Should that Classification Panel confirm the original status (NE), the Athlete will not be permitted to compete at that competition and will have no further opportunity to Protest; the verdict of the second Classification Panel is final.

It is very important to note that, should an Athlete be deemed ineligible for competition under the IBSA Classification Rules, this does not question the presence of a genuine impairment. This is solely a ruling on the eligibility of the Athlete to compete under the Sport Rules of IBSA, or of the relevant IF, where IBSA is providing Classification for that IF.

## **IBSA Classification Project.**

### **Background.**

In November 2007 the General Assembly of the IPC approved the IPC Classification Code.

Currently, many Paralympic sports use systems of classification that are described as functional (or sport-specific) – a notable exception being the classification system used by IBSA, which still utilises the “medical model”.

IBSA acknowledges that Sport-specific classification is necessary because any given impairment may have a significant impact in one sport and a relatively minor impact in another.

However, as a priority, IBSA first needed to address some fundamental problems with its existing classification procedures (which were both operational and administrative in nature).

### **Sight Classification Challenges.**

An immediate requirement was for IBSA to review and improve its current model of visual classification - which is based solely on levels of visual acuity and visual field - because no matter what the new IBSA Sport-Specific classification code will look like, there will still be a need for assessment of visual acuity and visual field as a form of pre-classification (visual acuity and visual field being the two most common measures of vision).

From the outset, IBSA was determined to develop and enhance the existing classification rules, procedures and policies in order to guarantee a fair and objective method of visual assessment, which would be thoroughly reliable, and could be replicated every time an IBSA Classification took place, in every location.

Even though IBSA is embarking on a challenging road leading eventually to Sports-Specific classification, there was still a need to sharpen basic sight classification procedures – which, in the new world, will still remain a critical element in the classification process.

Many of the classification concerns being expressed were as a consequence of procedural and

administrative failings rather than for strictly technical reasons - which, due the urgency attached, needed to be addressed immediately.

IBSA realised the pressing need to establish a strong regional classification structure outside of Europe, including the need to recruit new classifiers.

Following the appointment of Dr. Luigi De Salvia as IBSA Medical Director (Head of Classification) in July 2010, the aim was to select a designated IBSA Classification Director for every continent, each of whom would take responsibility for the development of classification in their area, including the formation of committees in each region. Their responsibilities were also to include recruitment and education of potential classifiers – in addition, the classification directors from each continent were to sit on the IBSA Medical Director's Classification Committee.

### **Steps taken by IBSA to date.**

IBSA's deadline for devising and implementing a Sport-Specific classification system is Rio 2016.

IBSA produced an action plan containing milestones along the way, which IPC will expect IBSA to meet; this has been approved by both IBSA Management Committee and Executive Board.

A most important "Blind Experts Seminar" took place in Bonn on 30th September and 1st October 2010. This joint IPC/IBSA initiative was attended by some of the top experts in the world of low vision, from a range of medical and sporting backgrounds. It represented the first step on a long road to defining the nature and extent of sport-specific classification of blind sports. It will be followed, in time, by research and evidence gathering in order to build a case for devising a comprehensive classification system in time for Rio 2016. It is important to point out that the target date for completion of a working model of sport-specific classification is 2015, in order to ensure that testing and fine-tuning can take place during the run-up to the Paralympic Games in Rio 2016 – and also recognising the qualifying period for the Paralympics.

As a follow-on to the "Experts" Seminar, a number of Classification Workshops have since taken place, the primary purpose of which was to conduct a complete review of the IBSA Classification Rules & Procedures, which were inadequate in the current circumstances, and had not been revised for more many years.

The result is a new version of IBSA Classification Rules and Procedures.

So far, the task of building a classification structure is well underway.

A Classification Director has been appointed in the following regions:

North America,  
South America,  
Asia,

Europe.

Work is still underway with a view to selecting Classification Directors for the following regions:

Africa,  
Oceania.

### **What has been achieved?**

- Greatly increased collaboration between IBSA and IPC.
- A far greater openness on the part of IBSA and IPC.
- Official V.I. Register of Classifiers – shared by IBSA and IPC.
- V.I. International Classifiers have been supplied to all competitions since August 2010.
- IBSA Classification restructuring ongoing.
- Classification records database.
- Experts Seminar.
- Classification Rules Review Workshops.
- Classification Equipment – agreement reached on the creation of a mandatory list.
- Medical Diagnostics Form – form has been designed with input from IBSA Classifiers and Bonn “Experts”.
- Outdated methods for measurement of visual acuity have been replaced by more appropriate and reliable tools & procedures.
- Revised IBSA Rules & Procedures – March 2011 (updated twice since).
- Classification Guidelines booklet has been produced.

### **What remains to be done?**

- Classifier pathway – Certification of existing and prospective classifiers - IPC Academy VI Classifier Training Courses have taken place in July 2011 and February 2012 - more are planned.
- Classification assessments results database – fine-tuning required.
- Completion of IBSA Classification restructuring (Africa & Oceania).
- Sport-Specific Classification Model – continued collaboration between IBSA and IPC; encourage ownership of process by IBSA Sports Chairs and International Federations (IFs); Engagement of relevant expertise for capturing and interpreting research data.
- Ongoing education concerning the impact of blindness and visual impairment to Sports, IFs etc.
- Engagement of Athletes, IFs and Coaches in the discussion and process of becoming Code. Compliant – including education and discussion of blindness and visual impairment – and the impact on participation in Sport (functional vision for Sport).
- Full compliance with the terms of the IPC Classification Code.