

2019 IPC Athletes' Forum Executive Summary

Day 1, Friday, 22 November 2019

The 2019 Athletes' Forum was opened by IPC Athletes Council (AC) Chairperson Chelsey Gotell who welcomed all delegates to the USOPC Training Centre in Colorado Springs. Reference was made to the first IPC Athletes Forum 2017 which built the basis for the development of the first ever IPC AC strategy, that will be one major focus of this edition of the Forum.

The AC Chairperson welcomed the Forum's facilitator, 13-time Paralympic medallist Chris Waddell to the Forum. During his keynote speech, Chris touched on his personal life story and asked the question of what the role of athletes within the Paralympic movement is and how they can give back.

IPC Strategic Plan

IPC President Andrew Parsons also welcomed all delegates to the Forum and provided all with a detailed presentation of the IPC Strategic Plan 2019 - 2022. The President emphasised that while the "human rights" pillar had been added as a strategic focus of the movement, the key area of Paralympic sport will remain to be a priority. Following questions from the audience, he explained that while during the last 15 years, the movement has put all efforts into making the Paralympic Games a platform for elite para sport, it is now the right moment to go one step further and to ensure that the effect of the Paralympic Games will make life better for all persons with a disability.

IPC Athletes' Council Strategy

A session on the IPC Athletes Council Strategy was led by AC Chairperson Chelsey Gotell. The overview included a look back at the development of the strategy since the first Athletes' Forum in 2017 and the different pillars that will drive the direction of the AC work until 2022. Chelsey highlighted the importance of athlete



engagement within this process and that in order to make the strategy a success, open feedback from the athlete community is needed. Following questions from the delegates and the discussion on the IPC Strategic Plan, it was clarified that it is not yet defined, how the new pillar of “human rights” will affect the AC Strategy and work of the AC, but that the athletes are the Movement’s biggest asset to act as ambassadors to push the human rights agenda.

Athlete Representation

To build on the AC Strategy pillar one “Building athlete leaders” a panel discussion on effective athlete representation models followed.

Tony Walby (NPC Canada) provided interesting insights on how to navigate through difficult political situations as an Athletes Council with the advise to clearly take a decision as a council, then develop a plan and also develop several fall-back plans. He also advised to always push the positive first.

Vladyslava Kravchenko (NPC Malta) reported from her experience in setting up an Athletes Council within an NPC and from the challenge of making a council effective and functional, especially within small NPCs.

Nicole Nieves (World ParaVolley) explained how her IF had run the nomination and election process for setting up an Athletes Council.

Kurt Fearnley (IPC Athletes’ Council member) conveyed the importance of a succession and communication plan for those who are in leadership positions within an athlete representation model as it is the athletes’ responsibility to build their future leaders.

During a group discussion, the delegates were asked to discuss strategies for how we can motivate fellow Athletes Council members to be engaged and how to share the workload beyond the Chair and Vice Chair and to discuss strategies and best practices that you may have been part of for how to effectively lobby your organisation to influence decisions in a constructive way.

IPC Governance Overview

Following the group discussion, the newly appointed IPC CEO Mike Peters presented in detail the current governance structure of the IPC. Based on a personal



story from his athlete career, he underlined the importance of educating yourself in order to be an effective leader (“You need to know who you are talking to and who you need to talk to.”). Following questions from the delegates, roles and responsibilities of the IPC and IFs with regard to qualification regulations, the Paralympic Games sport event and medal programme and athlete numbers were clarified.

IPC Governance Review: Remaining Fit for Purpose

IPC President Andrew Parsons subsequently provided an overview of the governance review proposal “[remaining fit for purpose](#)” as it had been presented to the IPC membership during the 2019 IPC Conference in October

IPC Governance Review: Greater Athlete Engagement

AC Chairperson Chelsey Gotell pulled out two aspects of this proposal that will directly impact the athlete voice within the Movement, i.e. the composition of the Athletes Council and the suggestion to add a second athlete seat on the IPC Governing Board. Both questions were discussed by the delegates at the tables (and feedback was collected). A follow up survey will be shared with all athlete representatives to gain further individual feedback.

Anti-Doping in the Paralympic Movement

The day closed with a session on Anti-Doping in the Paralympic Movement. James Sclater, IPC Anti-Doping Director provided a detailed overview of the overall anti-doping ecosystem. The presentation was followed by a panel discussion.

Stuart Kemp, WADA Deputy Director Standards and Harmonization, explained how WADA is addressing the testing discrepancies with identifying gaps and then building capacities. Stuart also informed on how WADA is trying to make the whereabouts requirements easier.

Rudolf Klemetti, IPC Athletes’ Council member reported from his experience in attending the WADA roundtable meeting on athletes’ involvement in the fight against doping in sport which was held in Poland in September 2019.



Day 2, Saturday, 23 November 2019

Classification

Linked to pillar four of the AC Strategy, the second day of the Forum opened with a session on Classification, focussing on the top three items that had been identified by the athlete delegates leading into the forum: eligible impairments, protests and appeals and intentional misrepresentation and classification research.

Erin Popovic, Paralympian and former member of the Classification Committee provided an overview of the history of classification and the definition, purpose and principles of classification. Moran Samuel, Paralympian and athlete member of the Classification Committee then elaborated in detail the classification process and how a sport class is allocated. Furthermore, it was explained how classifiers are trained and certified. The session closed with a group discussion regarding classifier expertise and training.

Liz Riley, IPC Legal Counsel, subsequently presented the differences between protests and appeals and the different processes for each. Furthermore, she outlined how the IPC is currently dealing with allegations of intentional misrepresentations. This session also closed with a group discussion on the protest and appeal process and the question whether IFs should be introducing video recording of physical/technical assessments.

With regard to the session on research, Sean Tweedy, member of the IPC Classification Committee confirmed that at the moment the research is sport-specific, but that it will create structures that can be used for other sports in the future. He also agreed that due diligence is required when it comes to introducing changes and that a sport needs to carefully consider effects of potential changes within a sport-specific classification system.

Human Rights and the Paralympic Movement

Juan Pablo Salazar, IPC Governing Board member, introduced the delegates to the topic of Human Rights, covering aspects such as the paradigms of disability, the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD), and the implementation of cultural shifts. Furthermore, he explained the difference between reasonable accommodations and universal design. With regard to the para sport



Movement, he pointed out the importance of defining the role of the athletes together and the various levels on which athletes could be involved in the Human Rights Movement (levels A/B/C).

Athlete Health and Wellbeing

During the session on athlete health and mental wellbeing, Dr. Cheri Blauwet, Paralympian and IPC Medical Committee member, provided an overview of different aspects of mental health and how the discussions around the topic have evolved. The audience was polled with various “slido” questions to gather direct feedback for the work of the IPC Medical Committee. During a panel discussion on the topic, Pippa Britton (IPC Anti-Doping Committee member) shared her personal experience from the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games, not meeting the expectations everyone around her had. Natalie Du Toit (IPC Athletes' Council member) looked back at a story from when she was 14 and missed a race at the Commonwealth Games and then from her experiences to retire at the age of 28 and moving from the world of sport to the world of business. Derek Williamson, USA Triathlon Coach emphasised the importance of mental health and the role of the coach. He furthermore pointed out the importance of making mindfulness practice a part of the training.

Open Forum with IPC President Andrew Parsons, IPC CEO Mike Peters and IPC Governing Board member Juan Pablo Salazar

The session was designed as an open dialogue between the delegates and the President, CEO and GB member. The first discussion evolved around the topic of para sports in multiple-sport events, such as the Commonwealth Games, where athletes clearly voiced that they see great benefits in participating in such events. For the Paralympic Games, this is not a question as for a large majority, athletes feel that the identity of the Paralympic Games is excellent. The President explained that there needs to be a benefit for the Movement to be included in such multi-sport events and that also practical issues need to be taken into consideration (e.g. para athletes wearing Olympic rings on the uniforms). He reiterated that it will be important to have a dialogue “from movement to movement” with the organisers of these events. The athletes requested to be consulted with regard to future discussions on this topic.



Another topic raised was the athlete cap for the Paralympic Games, especially with regard to the Paralympic Winter Games and the general request to increase the development of para winter sport, with a focus on female athletes. The President explained the process of the negotiations for the athlete numbers and the selection process to be included on the Games programme. Reference was made to the IPC-IOC Agreement which clearly sets the parameters for athlete numbers and sports on the Paralympic Games. He also stressed that it is very important for the Paralympic Movement to only include sports on the programme that are “ready” to be included on a Paralympic Games level, meeting the required athlete numbers and other standards. Another reference on this topic was made by a delegate that for some IFs it is very challenging to maintain an elite competition at a Games level while ensuring the diversity requirements are being met. The President stressed that the universality of a sport is a non-negotiable requirement for inclusion to the Paralympic Games. In relation to the overall discussion, the President also provided further details with regard to the process for the medal events programme and the responsibilities of the IFs and the IPC. Reference was also made to the guiding principles which had been developed by the Paralympic Games Committee and to which the IPC cannot compromise.

Another question was raised around the future of classification and if there would ever be an independent body for classification outside of the IPC. The President referred to funding challenges for such a body and that in his view in the short and medium term this scenario is very unlikely. However, should the World Para Sports move independent by 2030, the IPC could act as such external agency ensuring classification code compliance for all para sports.

Furthermore, the athletes discussed how they see themselves within the human rights pillar of the movement. It was mentioned that ideally, athletes will be empowered to deliver workshops on the topic in the future. A delegate also requested that for those who can, to be proactive on the topic and act as ambassadors.

With regard to classification, it was clearly stated that the main concern of athletes is that they are being “classed-out” because of changes in the classification rules. The CEO explained that while the IPC has no authority over its members (including IFs), we can help them and ensure that support mechanisms for these athletes are in place. The IPC needs to become more membership focused and this will also be



addressed by the IPC in its management structure (newly hired IF Relations Coordinator). Through programmes of the Agitos Foundation, the IPC is also providing other support mechanisms to its members.

Further discussion points included the cancellation of the African Para Games, voting rights of athletes at the IPC General Assembly, the exposure of para sport in-between Paralympic Games, transgender athletes, change of dates for the Paralympic Winter Games and the removal of the factor system for some sports. On this topic, the AC Chairperson highly recommended all athlete representatives from the affected sports to get involved in the requested impact assessment within their IF.

Overall, all agreed that it is of utmost importance for the future to create a network of athletes that can be consulted so that the IPC Governing Board can take educated decisions. The President highly encouraged all to an open dialogue and to speak-up on any athlete-related topic. The CEO furthermore pointed out the passion of the staff that is working for the IPC and extended an open invitation to any athlete that is visiting Bonn to come to the IPC Headquarters.

Day 3, Sunday, 24 November 2019

The Future of Classification

During the session “The future of Classification” a panel discussed the role of the athletes in the future of classification. It was highlighted by a delegate that the expertise of athletes should not be underestimated and that a future model could be to develop athlete classifiers. Another discussion evolved around the topic of intentional misrepresentation (IM) and the pathway to reporting IM. Overall, the athletes stated strongly that an assessment on the field of play should be considered mandatory in the classification process for all sports. In general, the athletes also stated that they would have no objection to publishing the classification master list and other medical information to add more transparency to the overall process. The athletes also re-emphasised the importance of the timing of classification rule changes and the request that the IPC should have authority over this.



IPC Athlete Career Programme (IPC AC) in cooperation with the Adecco Group

Monica Bascio (IPC Athletes' Council member) and Mayi Cruz Blanco (Adecco Group Global Head of Athlete Programmes) led the discussions during the concurrent session. A brief introduction on the current status of the IPC ACP and work done to date to update the programme was provided in line with the AC strategy. They highlighted the importance of athlete preparation for career transition. Furthermore, discussions were held around the lifecycle of an employee which included recruitment, onboarding, transition and retention. This was followed by group breakout sessions focusing on company personas that hire athletes as well as athlete personas looking to be hired.

Athletes' Rights and Responsibilities within the Paralympic Movement

During this session, discussions were centred on how the Athletes' Rights and Responsibilities are reflected within the IPC Governance structure. Mike Peters (IPC CEO) and Liz Riley (IPC General Counsel) facilitated this discussion. Athletes also discussed potential ideas about what they would like to see included in an athlete rights and responsibilities document for the Paralympic movement.