



Q&A

Summary of changes introduced by the ITF Wheelchair Tennis Classification Rules

WHAT IS THE CHANGE?

On 15 February 2019, the ITF issued the ITF Wheelchair Tennis Classification Rules. These new Rules came into effect immediately and replace the 2017 ITF Wheelchair Tennis Classification Manual. In addition, a number of Regulations relating to classification in the 2018 ITF Wheelchair Tennis Regulations have been removed and/or updated.¹

This document contains a summary of the main changes to the ITF's classification system. The ITF strongly recommends that all *players, Player Support Team Members, National Associations* and *ITF Tournament organisers* familiarise themselves with their respective responsibilities and the processes under the new Classification Rules. In particular, each player and Player Support Team Member has a responsibility to be knowledgeable of and comply with all applicable policies, rules and processes established by the new Classification Rules.

WHAT IS CLASSIFICATION AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The ITF undertakes Classification in order to (i) define who is eligible to compete in ITF Wheelchair Tournaments, and (ii) group eligible players into categories (known as Sport Classes) for the purposes of competition, in an effort to ensure that it is sporting ability rather than nature or degree of impairment that determines success on the court.

Classification is therefore important to ensure that competition in ITF Wheelchair Tournaments is fair and meaningful and results are determined by a player's tennis ability rather than his or her degree of impairment.

WHY HAVE THE NEW CLASSIFICATION RULES BEEN INTRODUCED?

In recent years, participation in wheelchair tennis, along with its profile and that of Para sport in general, has continued to rise, so continuing to professionalise all aspects of the game is a key priority to the ITF. Increased participation and professionalisation brings greater scrutiny and higher expectations of integrity. Accordingly, the ITF has an increased responsibility to provide and implement a fair, transparent and standardised Classification system, including robust regulations and processes.

In addition, as a condition of the ITF's membership of the IPC, the ITF is required to publish and implement its own Classification rules and processes. In 2015, the IPC issued its Classification Code and International Standards, which aim to ensure that Classification

¹ Undefined, capitalised terms used in this document have the meanings given to those terms in the ITF Wheelchair Tennis Classification Rules.

processes across all para-sports are fair, transparent and harmonised. The ITF's new Classification Rules are based upon the IPC Classification Code and International Standards.

HOW WILL CLASSIFICATION BE STRUCTURED UNDER THE NEW CLASSIFICATION RULES?

Under the new Classification Rules, eligibility to compete in wheelchair tennis (Open division) will no longer be based on a player's self-assessment of their impairment (i.e. it will no longer be a player who decides that they are eligible (or not) to compete). Every player will now be required to undergo Classification (Player Evaluation) to determine his/her eligibility to compete in wheelchair tennis. The new Classification Rules contain no changes to the permitted impairment types (Eligible Impairments), the minimum disability or impairment criteria (now called Minimum Impairment Criteria) or the assessment criteria by which a player will be allocated to the Quad Division or the Open Division (now called a Sport Class). From 1 January 2019, the process of Player Evaluation will involve:

- assessment of whether the player has an Eligible Impairment (by the ITF Head of Classification and when required in conjunction with an Eligibility Assessment Panel [EAP]);
- assessment of whether the player's Eligible Impairment meets the Minimum Impairment Criteria (by a Classification Panel); and
- based on the degree to which his/her impairment affects his/her ability to execute the Fundamental Activities of wheelchair tennis, allocation of the player (by the Classification Panel) to a Sport Class (Open Division, Quad Division, Not Eligible) and subsequently a Sports Class Status

In order to be eligible to compete in an ITF Tournament, a Player must now have been allocated a Sport Class and designated a Sport Class Status.

A Sport Class is a competition category for wheelchair tennis. The ITF operates two Sport Classes: the Open Division and the Quad Division. For the avoidance of doubt, male and female players in the Open Division will continue to compete in separate draws, whereas male and female players in the Quad Division will compete together in one draw.

A Sport Class Status is a designation (description) to indicate the extent to which a player has or may be required to undertake Player Evaluation and/or be subject to Protest. The Sport Class Status used in wheelchair tennis are: New (N); Confirmed (C); Review (R); Review (Transition) (RT); and Review with Fixed Review Date (FRD).

WHAT WILL CHANGE IMMEDIATELY WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW RULES?

There will be a Transition Period while these changes are implemented, likely to end in 2022, but there are some changes that will take effect immediately. The current 'division' that a player competes in will remain the same because the assessment criteria that is currently used to allocate players to divisions is the same as will be used under the new Classification Rules to allocate players to a Sport Class (Quad Division or Open Division). However, under the new Rules adopted from 1 January 2019:

All existing Open Division players i.e. players who have competed in an ITF wheelchair tennis tournament prior to 1st January 2019 will automatically be designated Sport Class Status 'Review (Transition)' (see Articles 16.9 and 16.10).

- Players designated Sport Class Status Review (Transition) will continue to be able to compete in all ITF-sanctioned competitions until it becomes redundant at the end of the Transition Period.
- According to IPC requirements, those players who will compete at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games will need to have completed Player Evaluation and been designated Sport Class Status 'Confirmed' in advance of the Games to be eligible to compete (see Tokyo 2020 classification requirements below).
- Following Tokyo 2020 all remaining players will also need to be classified in accordance with the new Classification Rules, and his/her Sport Class Status will change accordingly thereafter.
- At the end of the Transition Period Sport Class Status Review (Transition) will become redundant and will be removed from the Rules. As of 31st December 2022 all players who still hold Sports Class Status Review (Transition) must complete Player Evaluation before they can continue competing in ITF Wheelchair Tennis Tournaments.

All existing Quad Division players who have had 'Confirmed' (C) status will automatically be designated Sport Class Status Confirmed under the new Rules. All existing Quad Division players who have 'Provisional' (P) status will be automatically designated Sport Class Status New.²

A summary of the automatic changes to Sport Class and Sport Class Status that will take effect on 1 January 2019 is set out in the below table:

Current division	Current status	Sport Class from 1 Jan 2019	Sport Class Status from 1 Jan 2019
Quad Division	Confirmed	Quad Division	Confirmed (C)
	Review	Quad Division	Review with fixed review date (FRD)
	Unclassifiable	Quad Division	Classification Not Completed (CNC) or Sport Class Not Eligible (NE)
	Provisional	Quad Division	New (N)
	Not eligible (following classification, but eligible for Open Division)	Open Division	Confirmed (C)
Open Division	Eligible (self-assessed)	Open Division	Review (Transition) (RT)

² Quad Division players with Sport Class Status New will be limited in the number (four) and level (Future Series only) of ITF Tournaments in which they can compete.

	Confirmed	Open Division	Confirmed (C)
Not eligible	Not eligible to compete	Not Eligible (NE)	

CAN A PLAYER CONTINUE TO SELF-ASSESS HIS/HER ELIGIBILITY FOR THE OPEN DIVISION (MEN’S AND WOMEN’S EVENTS)?

To date, eligibility to compete in the Open Division has been based on self-assessment by each player. Each Open Division player may initially self-assess his/her eligibility but the ITF has a right to request additional information from the player and require the player to undergo Player Evaluation. This will continue to be the case through the Transition Period.

Open Division players who have competed in ITF Tournaments or held an IPIN Membership prior to 2019 will be designated Sport Class Status Review (Transition) (RT), while new players entering the game will be designated Sport Class Status New.

Open Division Players designated with Sport Class Status Review (Transition) and New will be entitled to compete in any ITF Tournament (except for the Paralympic Games and other IPC-sanctioned events beyond 2020). Ultimately, all such players are required to complete Player Evaluation but the ITF will prioritise classification opportunities to ensure as far as possible that the Players who are most likely to qualify for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games are Classified in accordance with the Classification Rules in good time before the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games..

The ITF will phase out self-assessment and by 31st December 2022 (the end of the Transition Period) all players (including Open Division players) will be required to complete Player Evaluation, including assessment by a Classification Panel, prior to competing in any ITF Tournaments or competitions. This change is being introduced to ensure a high level of integrity in wheelchair tennis and to ensure a level playing field is maintained.

Following the conclusion of the Transition Period, players will not be able to continue competing until Player Evaluation has been completed and they have been designated Sport Class Status Confirmed .

From 2019, National Associations and ITF Tournament organisers will be required to cooperate with the ITF to host and deliver classification events to provide opportunities for Player Evaluation.

WHAT CLASSIFICATION REQUIREMENTS WILL THERE BE TO COMPETE AT TOKYO 2020?

It will be an eligibility requirement to compete at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games for each player to complete Player Evaluation and be designated Sport Class Status Confirmed. Priority for completing Player Evaluation, including review of MRF and attendance at Evaluation Sessions with a Classification panel, will be determined by the ITF so as to ensure as far as possible that the players who are most likely to qualify for Tokyo 2020 are classified in accordance with the new Classification Rules in good time before Tokyo 2020. The process, for each player who has not yet started Player Evaluation, will involve:

- submission to the ITF of the player's personal/medical information (specifically relating to his/her impairment), via the Medical Registration Form (MRF) in order to assess eligibility; and

- assessment of the player by a Classification Panel during an Evaluation Session at a classification event organised by the ITF (if required).

The ITF will communicate specific processes and timelines for classification to relevant players, and players must use all reasonable efforts to comply with those processes and timelines. It is the personal responsibility of each player to ensure, should they wish to compete at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, that they are eligible to do so.

WHAT IS MEANT BY ‘DIAGNOSTIC INFORMATION/DOCUMENTS’, THE INFORMATION THAT MUST BE SUBMITTED BY PLAYERS WITH THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION FORM?

Diagnostic information and documentation are formal supporting evidence that has been provided to a player by medical or healthcare professionals that substantiates/validates the information provided in the MRF. This information can include MRI scans, x-rays, letters from medical doctors, video/identifiable photographs.

Please note that this diagnostic information is evidence that is acting to support information provided within the MRF and it should therefore be as detailed as possible in order for ITF (including Classification Panels) to assess eligibility of the impairments presented. However please note the diagnostic information should only be linked specifically to the Eligible Impairments and Minimum Impairment Criteria – the ITF does not require a full medical history unless this is relevant.

FOR PLAYERS WHO HAVE A REALISTIC EXPECTATION OF COMPETING AT TOKYO 2020, WHEN MUST THEY SUBMIT THEIR MEDICAL REGISTRATION FORMS?

In order to classify all the players who will compete in Tokyo prior to the event, it will require the cooperation of players to complete and submit Medical Registrations Forms (MRF) in a timely and efficient manner.

Such players must look to complete and submit their MRF with complimentary diagnostic information as soon as possible, ideally not later than 21 April 2019, in order for ITF to successfully plan and manage the programme of Classification events.

Players who are competing in tournaments where a Classification event is scheduled and who have not yet submitted the relevant documentation should aim to do so ideally no less than three weeks in advance of the start of the tournament. The first Classification event that will be available for such players will be the Cajun Classic Super Series event in USA in March 2019, followed by the Daegu Open ITF1 tournament in Korea Rep. in April.

WHEN WILL PLAYERS BE ABLE TO ATTEND EVALUATION SESSIONS HELD BY CLASSIFICATION PANELS?

ITF is scheduling a programme of Classification events during 2019 and 2020 that will take place at UNIQLO Wheelchair Tennis Tour tournaments. This will be published and circulated to relevant players, National Associations and tournaments and will be updated regularly according to the demand for additional events.

In accordance with the new Rules, ITF will manage attendance of players at Classification events according to their participation in the UNIQLO Tour tournament. Players will not be required to ‘sign-up’ for a Classification event but instead they will be contacted by ITF to advise that they will need to attend an Evaluation Session at a particular event. However, in order for this to work efficiently and effectively, players must complete and submit their Medical Registration Forms as far in advance of any tournament with an associated

Classification event for which they have entered. Players must also be aware that they may be requested to attend certain events in order for the ITF to manage to requirements of completing Player Evaluation within the given timeframe.

HOW WILL EXISTING QUAD PLAYERS BE AFFECTED BY THE NEW RULES?

Quad Players who are currently competing as a 'C' status player, will see little difference under the new Classification Rules, however they should educate themselves with the new Rules, as they continue to be bound by the provisions included.

Quad players who have previously competed with a P status, will now be designated the 'New' Sports Class Status. As a Player with Sports Class 'Quad' and Sports Class Status 'New' a player will only be able to compete in four (4) events in total at FUTURES level only before they are required to complete Player Evaluation – in this case players can proceed straight to review by a Classification Panel at a Classification event, as the MRF has been completed previously.

Players who have previously been assessed for Quad Eligibility and not met the Minimum Impairment Criteria for the Quad Division will become Sports Class 'Open', Sports Class Status 'Confirmed'.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF, AFTER SUBMITTING THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION FORM AND/OR ATTENDING AN EVALUATION SESSION, A PLAYER IS ASSESSED TO BE NOT ELIGIBLE?

Up to now, all players have assessed their own eligibility to compete in Wheelchair Tennis in accordance with published Eligible Impairment Types and Minimum Eligibility and Disability Criteria. However, the ITF has held the right to request additional information/evidence from a player to prove their eligibility and if necessary require a player to undergo Player Evaluation.

Although self-assessment will continue through the Transition Period, the new Rules require players to complete Player Evaluation to determine eligibility and ultimately be designated a Sport Class and Sport Class Status by a Classification Panel. Self-assessment will eventually be phased out.

In order to compete in Wheelchair Tennis a player must have at least one of seven permitted/Eligible Impairments (EI) (types of impairment) and the impairment must meet specific Minimum Impairment Criteria (MIC). The EIs and MIC are not changing under the new Rules.

A player who attends an Evaluation Session with a Classification Panel who is ultimately assessed to be Not Eligible will no longer be able to compete in ITF Wheelchair Tennis Tournaments or competitions.

It is possible that a player who previously assessed themselves to be eligible to compete in Wheelchair Tennis will be assessed as Not Eligible by a Classification Panel. Any such players will also no longer be permitted to compete in ITF Wheelchair Tennis Tournaments or competitions.

HOW WILL PLAYERS, NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND TOURNAMENTS KNOW A PLAYER'S STATUS OR WHETHER THEY ARE ELIGIBLE TO COMPETE IN WHEELCHAIR TENNIS?

A key goal of the Classification system is to provide transparency throughout its Rules, procedures and competitions. Eligibility to compete in competitions is an important factor for all stakeholders so moving forward, ITF will publish a Master List of all current players on the

ITF website that will state their designated Sport Class and Sport Class Status as well as Nationality. The list will be updated regularly.

WILL THERE BE CHANGES TO THE PROTESTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURES?

Protests

Under the new Classification Rules, there will be changes to how and when a Protest can be logged and by whom.

Players who are deemed to be Not Eligible by a Classification Panel will have the right to be re-assessed by a second Classification Panel. This is not mandatory however, and please be aware the cost associated with attending the a second event must be covered directly by the Athlete/NA. This is not however seen as a protest, as Protest cannot be made in respect of a Player who has been allocated Sports Class Not Eligible.

Protests can only be made in respect of a Players Sports Class, not their Sports Class Status.

Protests can only be submitted by the ITF and by National Associations, the latter can only submit protests relating to players from their own Nation. When logging a Protest, the National Association must abide by the timeframes outlined within Part Six of the Classification Rules.

Appeals

If a National Association considers there have been procedural errors made and as a consequence a Player has been allocated an incorrect Sport Class or Sport Class Status, it may submit an Appeal. Appeals will be heard by the ITF Independent Tribunal.

WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DO PLAYER SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS (PSTM) AND NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS HAVE IN RELATION TO CLASSIFICATION?

The new Classification Rules identify the roles and responsibilities of parties covered under the rules. The responsibilities of Player Support Team Members are identified as;

- 1.1.1 being knowledgeable of and complying with all applicable policies, rules and processes established by the Classification Rules;
 - 1.1.2 using their influence on Player values and behaviour to foster a positive and collaborative Classification attitude and communication; and
 - 1.1.3 cooperating with any investigations concerning possible violations of the Classification Rules.
- 1.2 Player Support Team Members are also asked to provide information upon request that will assist the ITF in its development, management and implementation of Classification Systems.

National Associations have a number of Roles and Responsibilities throughout the new Classification rules, including but not limited to;

- Counter-signing the Medical Registration Form for all players within their Nations. This signature is a verification for all players that they are recognised by the National Association and that the Person who has completed the Medical section (Section 3) of the MRF is a recognised medical practitioner in the field they have cited.

- Act as a notifying party for the processing of MRF and parts of the Player Evaluation procedure.
- Accompany a Player to an Evaluation Session.
- Logging Protests and Appeals where applicable for their own athletes

IS ITF EXPECTING TO MAKE FURTHER CHANGES TO THE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM?

The ITF is committed to operating a fair and robust classification system as part of this to periodically reviewing that system to ensure that classification in wheelchair tennis is evidence-based, objectively determined, and informed (where possible) by scientific research. Moving forward, research will be used to:

- fully understand the types of impairment and range of abilities within wheelchair tennis;
- design enhanced and robust measures of impairment for use in Player Evaluation;
- review and refine the Minimum Impairment Criteria used to determine player eligibility; and
- explore and determine alternative classification structures (for example, the number and the boundaries of Sport Classes in wheelchair tennis.

The ITF has commissioned research from Loughborough University (GBR) and the University of Queensland (AUS) to examine these issues. Good research takes time however, and any changes are unlikely to be implemented until after Tokyo 2020.

Under the new Classification Rules, players are requested to participate actively in classification research by exchanging personal experiences and expertise. The ITF reiterates that request and will seek the cooperation and participation of all participants in wheelchair tennis to improve the classification system for everyone involved.

Soon, the ITF will conduct a simple survey of all active wheelchair tennis players relating to their personal circumstances and impairments. This is vital information for immediate research purposes and player cooperation is greatly appreciated.

WHICH PEOPLE WILL BE INVOLVED IN CARRYING OUT PLAYER EVALUATION?

The ITF will shortly appoint a new Head of Classification to coordinate and drive all matters relating to classification in wheelchair tennis. That person will have the roles and responsibilities allocated to them in the new Classification Rules.

During 2019, Evaluation Sessions will be undertaken by the ITF's existing Classifiers. The ITF acknowledges, however, that a larger pool of Classifiers will be required to implement the broadened classification system established by the new Classification Rules. It is in the process of identifying and recruiting new Classifiers, who will receive training throughout 2019, 2020 and beyond.

HOW WILL THE ITF USE AND PROTECT PLAYER DATA?

From 2019, the ITF will publish on its website a Classification Master List, noted above, which will contain important classification-related information about each active player, including his/her name, nationality, Sport Class and Sport Class Status. The Classification Master List will be used by the ITF and ITF Wheelchair Tournament organisers to recognise those players that are eligible to enter ITF Wheelchair Tournaments.

All data submitted by players will be securely stored in the ITF database and servers and processed in accordance with applicable laws. The ITF will only process Classification Data to the extent that it is considered necessary to conduct and verify classification or to allow the ITF to maintain and publish the Classification Master List. More information about the use and processing of Classification Data by the ITF, and the rights available to players under Applicable Data Protection Laws, can be found in Part Ten of the new Classification Rules and in the ITF Privacy Notice – Players participating in ITF competitions , which is made available to players on the ITF's website (<https://www.itftennis.com/media/302126/302126.pdf>).

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEW CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM?

Please contact the Classification section of the ITF Wheelchair Tennis department at wchclassification@itftennis.com.

This document will be updated if and when further clarification is required.

ITF Wheelchair Tennis

15 February 2019