



Para Taekwondo – *The Athletes Pathway*



Who is the Players' Journey handbook for?

Potential Para TKD players

Primarily upper limb impaired athletic talent, both genders, who meet Para Taekwondo's K44 classification eligibility

- Aspiring cadet or junior Taekwondo players with eligible impairments
- Potential talent transfer athletes from other donor sports with eligible impairments

Key Supporters and Stakeholders

- The player's parents, family, supporters and sponsors
- Australian Taekwondo's partners, *AIS and State institutes and academies*
- Taekwondo clubs and potential donor sports



What is the purpose of the Players' Journey Handbook?

To both inspire and inform potential players of the sport and their key supporters and stakeholders around,

- Openly displaying technical sport and classification requirements
- Providing a map of the Performance Pathway and some explanation around systemic concepts like categorisation to simplify the player's experience and their transitions.
- Illustrate what each step looks like on the *Explore, Train, Fight and Win* journey from being a new player learning the martial art of Taekwondo to a senior athlete competing at Paralympic Games.

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08 **Join us now!**

“Welcome and congratulations on making the first steps outside your comfort zone - it may seem scary right now, but trust me, you will not regret it.

In my personal experience, it is not knowledge and strength that will see you succeed in this sport, but rather wisdom and resilience.

Wisdom is not just knowing your stuff, but when and how to use it and why. Always keep learning.

Your strength will only get you so far. Things will not go your way and you will get knocked down - *literally*. Resilience is your ability to bounce back and get back up, *time and time again*.

Winning bronze at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics for Para Taekwondo was one of the greatest experiences of my life, and you too could have a similar experience.

I am setting you a challenge... Are you ready to etch your name into the history books alongside mine for Australia?”

**Janine Watson - Para Taekwondo Bronze Medalist
2020 Tokyo Paralympics**



What is Para Taekwondo (Para TKD)?? – K44 Classification

Taekwondo is a martial art focusing on both physical combat and mental discipline. The K44 Classification is the Paralympic Taekwondo class and has been contested at two Paralympic games. The next Paralympic tournament will be in 2028 in Los Angeles, USA. Para TKD is characterized by,

- It is a combat sport, fighting spirit and mental and physical resilience are critical.
- Point based fighting with the aim of out scoring your opponent. 3 x 2 minute rounds, designed for short and explosive bouts
- No head kicks allowed, *punches allowed but not scored*.
- Specialised protective equipment with sensors for scoring, head gear with protective visors for Para.
- 5x weight classes to compete within for each gender (Male and Female)
- Paralympics and Para World Championships - major benchmark events

What does training for Para Taekwondo look like?

- Weekly training at your HP club in the evenings, with strength and conditioning (S&C) once categorised
- Integrated training/sparring with able bodied players to enhance your development
- High Performance camps (*National Para Development Pathway Squad*)
- Performance Support when reach categorisation (I.e Strength & Conditioning, Nutrition, Psychology, Athlete Wellbeing & Engagement)
- Domestic and International tournaments supported with coaching at higher levels of categorisation (**More to come on page 13**).



What is 'Classification' for Para Sport?

Classification determines who is eligible to compete in Para sport to ensure fairness. The process groups eligible Athletes based on their impairments into **Sport Classes**. The sport class of Para Taekwondo is **K44**. All Para sports must comply with the **IPC Athlete Classification Code**.

Are you eligible for Para TKD's K44 classification?



K44 Classification = athletes with impairments in one or both arms, that affect at least one shoulder, wrist or elbow. This includes amputation, congenital limb length difference, impaired muscle power and impaired passive range of movement.

Classifications can be complex, Australian Taekwondo (AT) leads the classification process with provisional technical and medical classification, utilize the QR code or chat to Jerry at AT for more.



For try out or classification information, contact Jerry or scan the QR code



jerry.moraitis@austkd.com.au
M: 0401 447 777



Jerry Moraitis
Para Technical Lead

Explore Taekwondo with no upfront cost*

As you consider Para Taekwondo as a potential pathway to the Paralympics, it is important to test if it truly sparks your passion! We recognise that it is a long road to the Paralympics and it *requires fighting spirit, a growth mindset and commitment*.

What's on offer?

If you want to try the sport, AT program/or partners will make a *provisional assessment of your classification* and if suitable, you may be offered a 'no cost'* 3 month exploration period where you can discover, test and learn foundational Taekwondo in an inclusive club environment. All you need to do is get yourself to the Taekwondo club specified and complete your part in classification processes.

What does training look like at the start?

- 3-4 sessions a week optimally in your new Taekwondo club
- Integrated combined sessions with able bodied players and coaches.
- Learning technique and skills aligned with TKD technical and tactical abilities (more to come on this)
- Improving your physical conditioning, body awareness and discipline regardless of your impairment.
- Off the mat training advice offered to improve your mobility, flexibility, agility and anaerobic/aerobic capacity to enhance your Taekwondo skills.



*Club fees and reasonable provisional classification expenses covered by AT to get you started

What do Australian Taekwondo, affiliated clubs and coaches look for in Talent Transfer players?

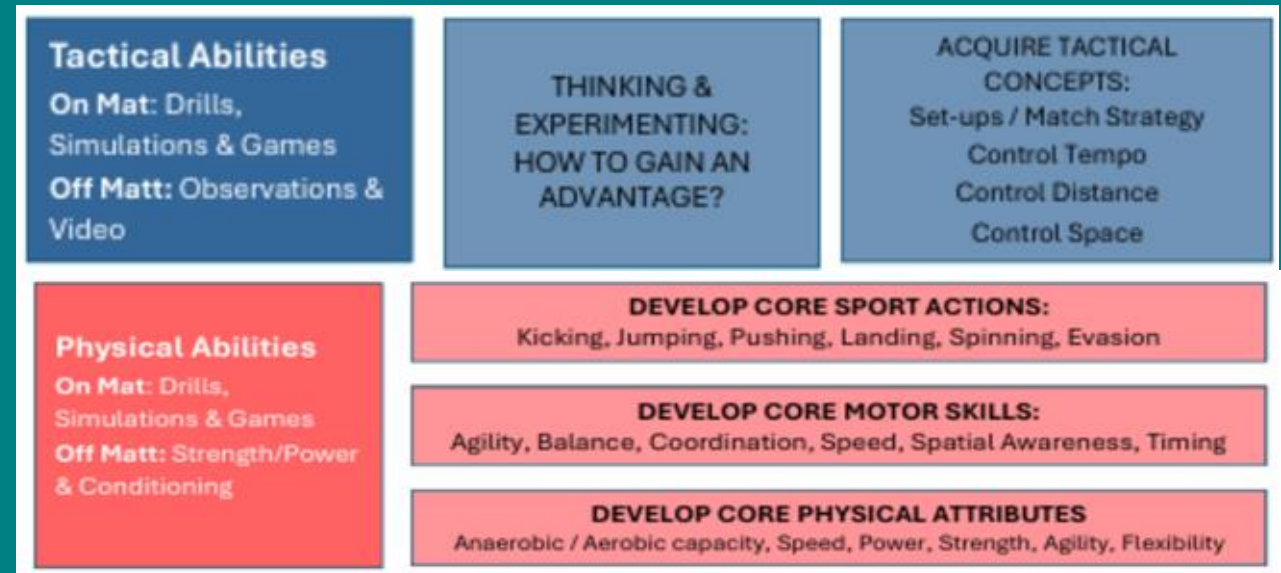
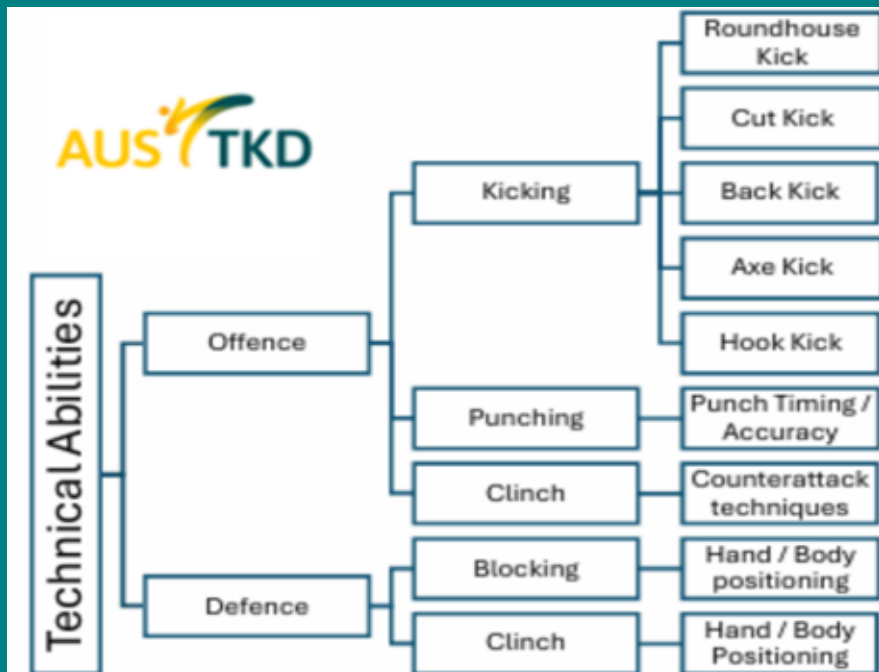
Across a 0 – 3 Months time frame – in an HP TKD club environment

They cultivate a love for Taekwondo as a sport	They learn Taekwondo as a martial art, develop foundational technique and skills.	They can demonstrate <i>resilience</i>	They display <i>self awareness, adaptiveness and growth mindset</i> for fast development, <i>despite impairment</i>
They meet provisional classification criteria and learn <i>relevant Para rules and specific equipment</i> for sparring	<i>Fighting Spirit</i> – They have the desire to challenge themselves	<i>Commitment</i> – They demonstrate the ability to commit their time and self	<i>Discipline</i> – They show up, remain focused and make the effort to access opportunities offered

Coaches will observe your capacity or ability to learn ‘TKD technical, tactical, physical and mental’ attributes such as,

- *Fighting Spirit* and the *Resilience* (both physically and mentally) to remain composed in combat, do you have the grit to get it done?
- The mechanical forms of varied *Para Taekwondo techniques*, like kicks and defensive positions (being mindful of Para rules/impairments)
- How you apply techniques with timing, awareness, and adaptability to demonstrate *your skills*, especially while practice sparring
- *Tactics* at a basic level, via your ability to consider which skill or combination to use and when based off what you observe during sparring.
- Your ‘*Physical capabilities*’ by testing your motor skills, attributes and then working to improve your body awareness and core sport actions.

AT and club affiliated coaches understand *that initial assessments will be weighted toward considering your long-term capacity for success when compared with the Talent Success Factors*. If you demonstrate the ability to learn quickly, have fighting spirit/resilience and have some baseline physical and mental abilities, you will begin your journey and progress through the pathway, once you learn and gain more experience sparring.



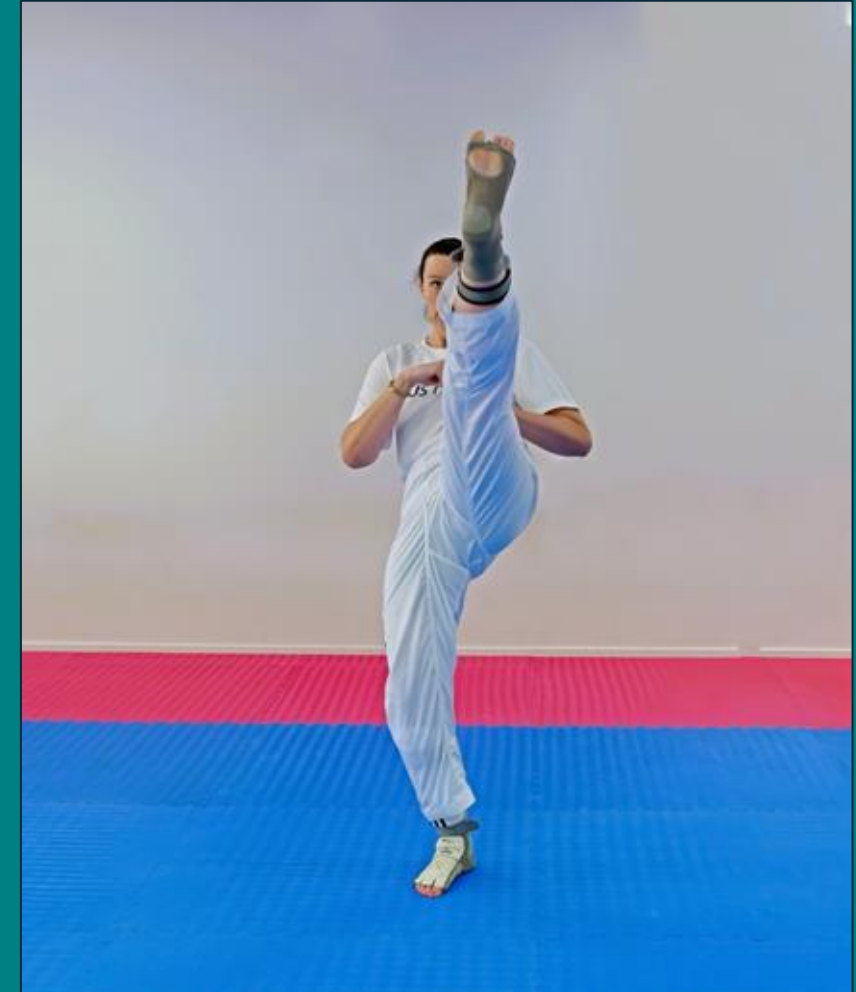
What happens at the end of your three-month exploration of Taekwondo?

Step	Description
1	You (<i>the player</i>) complete the three months in your club and decide if you enjoy the challenge of Taekwondo and wish to continue further.
2	<i>All parties book a short 30–45 minute meeting for the provision of feedback, within 2 weeks of the 3 months finishing. Before attending the meeting on the day, both coach and player reflect on and fill in the talent confirmation questionnaire, which has reflective questions that align to the talent success factors seen previously.</i>
3	In the feedback process, we discuss the reflections within the talent confirmation questionnaire. Both the player and any coaches or AT staff that connected with them will share their positive and constructive feedback and consider how the three months have progressed and what is needed to continue in Para Taekwondo successfully.
4	Within the feedback, coaches will place more importance on things within your control as a player in the three months. I.e your ability to learn, demonstration of fighting spirit to get on the mat and try out your new techniques, skills, tactics. Also your self awareness, your commitment to training, coachability and your natural physical and mental resilience.
5	If you are successful, a plan is made to move forward and all findings from the meeting can be built into any further development plan to enhance your learning ongoing. If you are unsuccessful at progressing to the next stage, coaches will provide feedback or a plan with a timeframe around how you could change that outcome in future.
6	If the sport is not for you, that is OK too! AT staff or your trusted coach will reach out to hear any constructive feedback around what we could do better during the <i>explore</i> phase.



Once you and your coaches confirm your ongoing journey in Para Taekwondo you will,

- You continue training in HP club environment, contributing up to \$50 per week for access, *we need to support our local clubs which are the pillars of our sport.*
- You learn to expand your range of attacking, counter-attacking and defensive repertoires and begin to apply personal strategies to suit your strengths and protect both your own weaknesses and your impairment. You train to enhance required setups, a range of kicking techniques, effective tactical stepping and can apply them as skills in sparring.
- You form a plan with Club/AT to progress in the graded belt program toward a black belt, *this may take 12 – 30 months* but is crucial for quality development and the martial art experience.
- You form a plan based on agreed urgency (high-medium-low) with AT for gaining international classification to meet AT and partner needs for categorisation
- You receive an offer to join the **National Para Development Pathway Squad (NPDPS)** *with some additional financial subsidy and access to two or more camps a year, interstate opportunities (match plays) and some performance support guidance.*
- Para player, Coach and AT staff create a performance plan (IPP) to periodise athlete development and target tournaments based on your readiness to compete.
- You are aware of and pursue *emerging categorisation* level.
- Dependant on your state, you may gain access to some performance support (i.e. State HP Para Units or Talent Support Plan style programs through Network Institute Network (I.e. the state institutes and academies of sport) VIS, QAS, NSWIS, SASI, WAIS, TIS, NTIS).



Look to the next page for a summary of the NPDPS squad, where you will be recognised as on track toward Paralympic representation and gain access to inspiration, Para specific coaching, performance support, guest speakers, tournament support and more!

National Para Development Pathway Squad

Purpose of the Squad	Camp Based Approach	Activities at Camps	Outcomes for the Athlete
• <i>Connection</i> of Para athletes, coaches and staff • <i>Para specific</i> coaching and performance support • <i>Inspiration and motivation</i> • Develop an ‘<i>all in</i>’ and team <i>learning culture</i> • <i>Accelerate TKD skills and tactical</i> development • Launching and testing technical projects • <i>Educating</i> around para athlete campaigns, classification processes, rankings, qualifiers • <i>Introduce</i> athlete planning (IPPs) for outcomes aligned to the TKD Para Performance Profile.	Two x one week camps a year, TBC Mid Year and November. Location: AIS Canberra, or Combat Centre, Melbourne • Athletes provided NPDPS uniforms • Athletes to receive subsidy to attend camps though must have some ‘skin in the game’ • Athletes and coaches develop individual plans based on the Para Athlete Development Guidelines (PADG) to work in conjunction with club and support elements • Check ins at each camp to assess progression against plans	• Introduction, Induction and ‘<i>Ways of working</i>’ • Classification opportunities • Intro to ‘What it takes to win’ factors • Education on campaigning, performance support and planning. • Skills work 1:1 para coaching • Fitness Testing • Sparring and ‘Match Play’ • Access PSS systems • Guest speakers – Inspiration • Create and Review plans • Coach Development • Athlete feedback	• <i>Readiness</i> - An athlete that is more prepared for fighting • Provisional and International Classification completion • Para connection and belonging • System awareness – i.e Categorisation, selection • Better technique, adaptive skills and faster development • Fitness benchmarking • Sparring under Para rules • Athlete’s gain a clear plan for development and classification • Better informed Para specific coaches and support staff

Provisional Classification (on demand)

International Classification (Plan for)



Explore	Train	Fight	Win
Match Play (organised by AT and club coaches)	Club, NPDPs and National Tournaments	3-4 International Tournaments (Regionally/1x G6+ benchmark)	6-8 International Tournaments (3+ benchmark G6+)

12 – 30 months - Para Athletes must obtain a black belt for *foundational technique, skills and the eligibility to compete internationally*

As you continue to progress as a Para athlete toward your goals, you will gain your black belt and begin to compete regularly in domestic and international tournaments. Your tournament results can compare against agreed benchmarks for eligibility for higher levels of support through the process of **categorisation**.

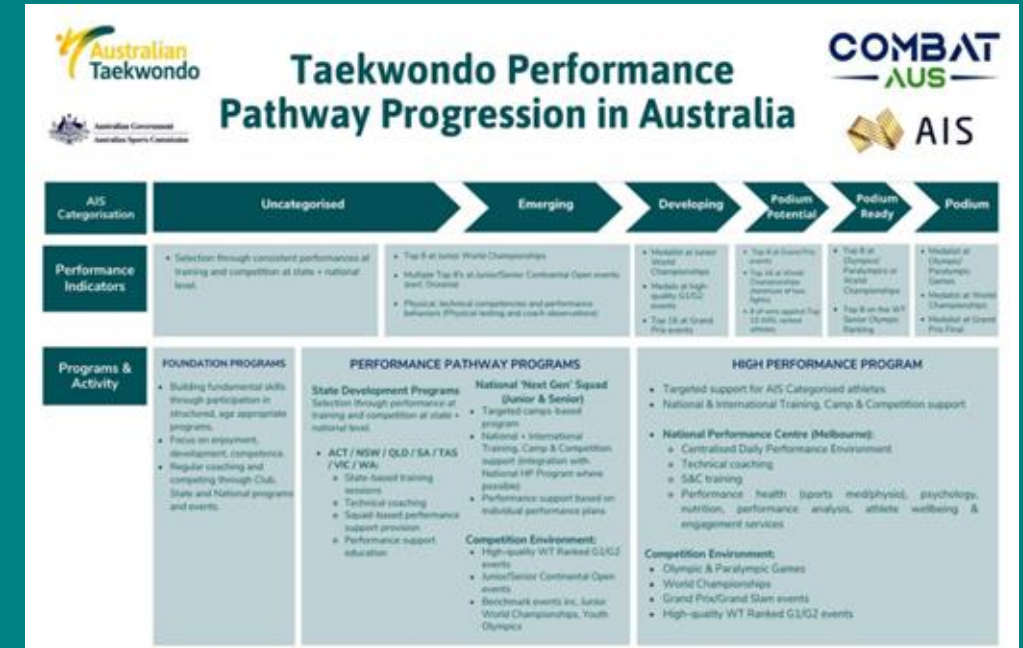
Purpose of Categorisation

As you just saw in the Para Performance Pathways map, **Categorisation** is a structured framework led by the **Australian Sports Commission** and then ‘sportified’ by Australian Taekwondo and other national sporting organisations to identify and support athletes with the **greatest potential to achieve international success**, especially at the **Paralympic Games**. Categorisation is a progressive level based framework i.e *pre-categorised, emerging, developing, podium potential, podium ready and podium*.

Your categorisation level typically correlates to your stage, abilities and results within the sport and it is also indicative of higher levels of resources (direct funding for para athlete expenses, coaching, performance support and more) being offered by Australian Taekwondo and its partners.

For AT and its partners, categorisation is conducted annually in the final quarter of each calendar year by AT and will take effect from January the following year.

On the next page we begin to look at categorisation progression at a high level and what it means to Fight and Win as a senior Para TKD athlete.



Fight! If you progress through categorisation and reach 'Developing' level, you are meeting AT led subjective and objective benchmarks and you will gain more focused support to expand your campaign. As you learn to **fight** and contest more tournaments, it leads to higher stressors in terms of training load, travel, life balance and finance. Wellbeing and performance Psychology support will play a larger part here. AT has an excellent resource - AWE athlete support and mental performance in competition (MPC) .

What does it look like on campaign internationally in the National HP Squad?

- Closer work with AT national technical lead, your coach and an interdisciplinary performance support team to discuss and action athlete Individual Performance Plans (IPPs) – *each quarter*
- Meeting higher level physical benchmarks through consistent strength and conditioning programming and regular fitness testing
- Fine tuning the capability and symmetry of technique and demonstrating you can apply it as a skill in sparring effectively
- Enhancing pre fight analysis and strategy to know your opponent and self
- Repeatable tactical processes to know what skill or combination to apply and when, based off reading the contest.

How many tournaments and at what level?

Domestically – Regional/National Tournaments and deliberate individual match plays
International events mid year – I.e. Oceania Championships, Asian centric focus initially

Readiness assessments with AT/Coaches for Para World Championships and Asian/European Para Championships (main annual benchmark events)

How many tournaments – 4 minimum tournaments while at developing to podium potential categorisation.



Win – Podium Ready/Podium

- **Detailed Campaign Plan** – aligned with existing IPPs
- **Key Coaching and support team** (Physical prep lead, physio, wellbeing) working closely with Para athlete
- **6-8 International tournaments** per year
- **Performing efficiently at major benchmark events** like World Para Championships and Paralympic Games



Join us at Para Taekwondo!

Supportive Community

Join a supportive, elite martial arts community striving for Paralympic excellence. Feel empowered to safely learn your craft and be motivated to *train, fight and win* for Australia.

Explore Your Potential

Whether you're new to martial arts or have existing experience, now is the time to explore your own potential in the Para Taekwondo performance pathway, toward an exciting home Paralympic games at Brisbane, 2032.

Start Your Journey today!

Take on the challenge and start your own Para Taekwondo journey today. Contact Jerry at Australian Taekwondo for a friendly chat and guidance on getting involved in a safe and inclusive sport.



Jerry Moraitis

Para Technical Lead

jerry.moraitis@austkd.com.au

M: 0401 447 777