

## Para Triathlon Info for Event Organizers

### BACKGROUND

Canada has a strong international presence in para triathlon. We have some of the best athletes in the world who are inspiring Canadians with disabilities to try our sport. Triathlon Canada is developing a pool of events across Canada that we can promote as being open and accessible to para-athletes at any level.

**Most events can easily incorporate a para triathlon competition!** Not all courses are ideal for all para classes, but we are hoping to shift away from an “all or none” attitude towards promotion of para triathlon. Instead, we have created a way to clearly designate events geared towards each class. Our goal is to have at least one event for each para triathlon class in every province as a start and continue to build up our portfolio of para races from there.

### DESIGNATION & PROMOTION

Event who are willing to host para triathlon competitions and are approved by their Provincial Sport Organization (PSO) are eligible to use the following badges to help identify and promote their event. The available classes shown on the badge will be adjusted to match the hosting ability of the event.



### UNDERSTANDING PARA TRIATHLON

Some education is required to help race organizers better understand how to be inclusive. The following provides details on para triathlon classes and what is needed to support them.

Community para triathlon events are typically organized as an “open” para triathlon competition. This means that all athletes designating as para are competing together in a single category. However, there are some basics to understand in order to run a great para triathlon event.

Classification is the process through which athletes are designated into specific competition classes. This is only necessary for elite competitions, but this provides a great way to understand what kinds of adaptations may be required to host para-athletes at any level. Para triathlon includes three broad classes:

- 1) Standing class (PTS)
- 2) Visually impaired class (PTVI)
- 3) Wheelchair class (PTWC)

### **STANDING CLASS (PTS)**

This is made up of athletes with a variety of upper or lower limb impairments. Some require specialized prosthetics or slightly modified equipment. Others require no support at all. Typically, those who fit within the standing class can be easily integrated into any existing age group competition.

If an athlete is using a lower limb prosthetic or requires a walking aid (crutches etc.), they may need to be able to access their equipment at the swim exit. This can be as simple as a chair set close to the swim exit where they can leave their equipment and then stop to get set up to head into transition. It is also helpful to have a chair available in transition at the athlete's bike rack.

Some assistance may also be required to get out of the water. This can be a designated swim exit volunteer, or someone designated by the athlete (friend, family member, etc.). If assistance is required to exit the water, typically the athlete is provided with a coloured swim cap that will make them easy to identify.

### **VISUALLY IMPAIRED CLASS (PTVI)**

This class is made up of athletes with partial or full visual impairment. These athletes require the support of a guide to compete and use some specialized equipment including a tandem bike. Space in transition for the larger bike as well as some awareness around tight turns on the bike course are the primary considerations for race organizers to keep in mind. Depending on the severity of the visual impairment, uneven surfaces on the run course may also be something the athlete requires additional information on prior to making the decision to compete.

The athlete and their guide compete together for the full duration of the race. The athlete will arrange to find the guide themselves and ensure the guide has the skills to ride a tandem safely. A tether is used during the swim and run components. The guide is not competing for their own result, so they should not be charged a separate entry fee.

### **WHEELCHAIR CLASS (PTWC)**

This class is made up of athletes with lower limb paralysis. Like the other classes, there is a range in severity of impairment that may alter the modifications or support required. These athletes typically use specialized equipment on each component of the event as follows:

**Swim Course:** Wetsuit pants to provide buoyancy and leg braces to hold the limbs together are used on the swim course. There is no temperature cutoff applied to these athletes when it comes to the use of these wetsuit pants as the buoyancy support is needed regardless of temperature.

Support will be required to exit the swim course. This can be designated swim course volunteers (two), or personal handlers identified by the athlete. There is some skill required in lifting an athlete properly and

ensuring the athlete is comfortable with the arrangement is critical. If available, a sling is used to help support lifting the athlete. Typically, a coloured swim cap is provided that will make them easy to identify.

A space near the swim exit where the athlete's day chair can be left is often needed. Once transferred the athlete then makes their own way into transition. If the terrain is steep or unstable a handler or volunteer can assist them. Depending on how the connection to transition is set up this may need to be managed differently and some additional support may be required by the athlete's personal handler.

***Bike Course:*** A specialized bike called a handcycle is used to complete the bike course. These are very low-profile bikes which makes them hard to see by other cyclists and vehicles. A flag should always be attached to the back of the handcycle to make it more visible. The turning radius is also larger than a standard bike, so some awareness on the set up of tight turns is needed.

***Run Course:*** A racing wheelchair (or "racer") is used for the run course. This is usually a tri-pod style wheelchair to make it more stable. Paved surfaces are required and some consideration on the width of the path is also needed to ensure there is enough space.

***Transition:*** The space in transition needs to be large enough to accommodate all the various equipment outlined above. A personal handler is required (provided by the athlete or a race volunteer) to help transfer the athlete in/out of the handcycle and racing wheelchair. This person stays at the bike rack and is often given a bright vest to make them easy to identify.

## **OPEN PARA CATEGORIES**

The start for an open para category requires as little as an extra 10 minutes in an event timeline. All para-athletes start together regardless of class 10 minutes ahead of the first age group wave. The start format should be an in-water start (not from a beach or pontoon).

## **OTHER OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS**

Para categories exist across all triathlon and multisport disciplines. One of the biggest barriers for new athletes coming into the sport is access to all the specialized equipment a full triathlon requires. This is particularly true of tandem bikes and handcycles. The inclusion of an aquathlon or "splash and dash" is a fantastic way to introduce para-athletes to the sport while avoiding this key barrier.

## **QUESTIONS**

If you have any questions about making your event accessible to Para-Athletes, please contact Tristan Camp-Lagueux [Tristan.Camplag@triathloncanada.com](mailto:Tristan.Camplag@triathloncanada.com).