

Athlete Advisory Group Election

Nominees 2017

World Para Swimming

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Introduction

For the first time in 2017, National Paralympic Committees were invited to nominate one candidate for election to the World Para Swimming Athlete Advisory Group (AAG) at the Mexico City 2017 World Championships.


The mission of the AAG is to represent the views of the entire Para swimming athletes' population, including all impairment types, looking for equal gender representation, and making their voices heard within World Para Swimming. The group will also provide advice to the Sport Technical Committee (STC) and World Para Swimming Management Team, promote a "healthy image" and "fair play", promote and foster the worldwide development of Para swimming and attend or host athletes' meetings at major sport competitions.

World Para Swimming will appoint the Lead of the Athlete Advisory Group who shall serve a four-year term (2018-2021) and represent AAG during STC meetings as requested, as well as liaise on behalf of the AAG with the STC and the World Para Swimming Management Team.


Election Procedure

All athletes accredited for the Mexico City 2017 World Championships are allowed to vote for five (5) of the nominees presented below. Elections will take place 1 to 2 December (09:00 – 21:00) in the Athletes Service Area near the drop-off point/entrance. Unfortunately, the election tool does not have audio support for vision impaired athletes.


1 Matthew Levy (AUS)

Sport Class(es)	S7, SB7, SM7	
Last Participation at Paralympic Games	Rio 2016	
World and Regional Championships	World Championships: 2006, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2017	
Why do you wish to run for elections?	I wish to run for election for Swimming Athlete representative because I believe that as a community we are able to enhance our influence as a group rather than individuals by constructive collaboration of ideas. To have a voice and help shape the direction in some way of Paralympic Sport will only help future generations to experience what I have for the last 15 or so years as a Para Athlete.	
What special skills, background and expertise do you have for this role?	Dedicated & Determined: Continued Paralympics service; 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016 and also through my work with various volunteer organisations for the last 15 years.	
What makes you a proud Paralympian?	<p>Since my first Paralympics Games in 2004, the exposure and the sense of community has grown. To enter Athens 2004 as a young 16 year old and attend Rio as a 29 year old.</p> <p>I am proud to be a Paralympian knowing that the definition of disability is not something that should be hidden, but celebrated.</p> <p>To see the respect athletes have for each other, professionalism for their sports and the fun and enjoyment they have for what they are doing is nothing short of amazing.</p>	


2 Sven Decaesstecker (BEL)

Sport Class(es)	S10, SB9, SM10	
Last Participation at Paralympic Games	Rio 2016	
World and Regional Championships	World Championships: 2015, 2013, 2010, 2009, 2006, 2002 Regional (European) Championships: 2015, 2014, 2011, 2009, 2001, 1999	
Why do you wish to run for elections?	I wish to run for elections as my sport's Athlete Representative because in the many years I have been a Paralympian I have seen the sport evolve. It has become more professional, but it also still has a lot of challenges. That's where I want to try to improve the sport as my sport's Athlete Representative.	
What special skills, background and expertise do you have for this role?	I have an Master in Political Sciences, I have been in my town's city council, and as an athlete with a career of over 17 years I have a lot of experience with the sport.	
What makes you a proud Paralympian?	Every Paralympian has had to overcome huge difficulties, whether it is an accident, a disease, or a disability at birth. Not only overcoming these difficulties but also using his abilities to shine through Paralympic sports is an amazing achievement. Being part of that movement is what makes me a proud Paralympian.	


3 Phelipe Andrews Melo Rodrigues (BRA)

Sport Class(es)	S10, SB9, SM10	
Last Participation at Paralympic Games	Rio 2016	
World and Regional Championships	7 medals in Paralympic Games, 9 in World Championships and 9 in Parapan American Games.	
Why do you wish to run for elections?	I wish to run because I believe I can contribute for the development of the Para swimming. It will be possible to add at the discussion my background experience as a medallist who had participated in many competitions all over the world in the last decade. I had lived the cultural and economic differences from living in America and abroad, therefore I can help by inviting the reflection about the growth of the Paralympic Movement as well. It will be an honor to be part of the Group who will represent athletes from many nations and fight for the best of sport and for the new generation.	
What special skills, background and expertise do you have for this role?	Despite being a swimmer since a child, I have a degree in Physic Education and I already coached able and disabled athletes for one year. I am secure about my background in Sport and I have almost ten years of engagement with the Paralympic Movement. I am currently studying a degree in Leadership & Management. It will be a great opportunity to share a technical, scientific and practical knowledge from my life experience. To be part of the Athletes Advisory Group is a relevant chance to be even more helpful and to engage other athletes with the Paralympic Movement.	
What makes you a proud Paralympian?	I believe a Prod Paralympian is someone who can offer a positive message through his activity. I aim to share my experiences as a Paralympic athlete so people can face life in a better way, by understanding and trying to see beyond impairment not focusing on obstacles. It is possible to step up and be someone, to make a difference in other people's lives. I want to encourage whoever needs and this support is worth more than a gold medal to me.	


4 Nicholas Guy-Turbide (CAN)

Sport Class(es)	S13, SB13, SM13	
Last Participation at Paralympic Games	Rio 2016	
World and Regional Championships	World Championships: 2017, 2015, 2013 Pan American Games: 2015, 2011 Pan Pacific Games: 2014	
Why do you wish to run for elections?	I wish to run for Elections because I believe that many swimmers don't know about the power they have to influence decisions taken in their sport. I want to grant every single athlete an opportunity to express themselves, so they can be confident that their opinions and concerns are important for the sport to evolve in the right way. I would also like to make sure, as a young athlete, that the next generation of swimmers has a voice in the development of their sport, so that their values and expectations can be used as the core of Para swimming in the following years.	
What special skills, background and expertise do you have for this role?	I am bilingual, fluent in both French and English. I have been designated as one of Canada's team leader for the 2017 World Para Swimming Championships, so I am confident that other athletes can trust my abilities and can share with me their concerns. I had the opportunity of organizing a conference for a course at Laval University in Quebec about Ethics in Sports in 2016, even before entering University. From 2010 to 2012, I had the privilege to be the spokesperson of the Élan foundation in Canada, which is working towards improving the autonomy of individuals living with a disability.	
What makes you a proud Paralympian?	I am proud to be part of a fast-growing movement that is not only inclusive, but also ready to show the world the potential and dedication of every athlete by putting their disabilities aside. I am extremely honoured to be part of a group of athletes that wants a fair field of play, and that is constantly challenging the stereotypes and misbeliefs created by the general population by striving for excellence on an everyday basis.	


5 Antti Latikka (FIN)

Sport Class(es)	S13, SB13, SM13	
Last Participation at Paralympic Games	Rio 2016	
World and Regional Championships	European Championships: 2011, 2014, 2016 World Championships: 2010, 2015, 2017	
Why do you wish to run for elections?	I want to get know people in World Para Swimming that are behind the decisions that affect directly to us, athletes. I want to point them out the knowledge about the system and marketing visibility potential in athletes of the best sport. I also want to develop easily approachable environment where even bad English speakers or shy would not hesitate to contact to AAG. I have also shown interest for this since Glasgow 2015 and Funchal 2016 when I attended athletes meeting and contacted David Smetanine about this.	
What special skills, background and expertise do you have for this role?	I am currently working on Bachelor of Sports and Leisure in Lapland University of applied sciences and have strong academic knowledge from Finnish high school and Helsinki university. I have also be representative of example NPC Finland and National Swimming Association in different events to develop and promote Paralympic movement in Finland. Due to my reasonable long career, I have developed many strong connections in Finland and Nordic countries as well as some international friends. Many have said me that I am very empathetic, likeable, trustworthy and skillful listener.	
What makes you a proud Paralympian?	I am Proud Paralympian because I aim for the top by respecting my body's limits and all the other athletes. I am proud also to never using doping and being honest, open and positive in front of media. I have learned to stand up for myself and despite all accessibility issues fulfill my double career with university stage degree. Lastly, I am extremely proud (from the beginning) to be part of NPC Finland's visibility development program ParaSchoolDay, where we promote parasports and improve understanding of disability.	

6 David Smetanine (FRA)


Sport Class(es)	S4, SB3, SM4	
Last Participation at Paralympic Games	Rio 2016	
World and Regional Championships	Paralympic champion with 9 medals (2014 to 2016) 22 international medals 148 national gold medals	
Why do you wish to run for elections?	I was elected at the IPC Athlete commission in Beijing 2008 and within the French Olympic Athlete commission to represent the Paralympic movement. I am still within this commission. I was asked by the IPC classification research group in swimming to bring my background as a current swimmer to adjust the classification system and make it better. I think that this new opportunity to be involved in world para swimming as athlete representative should be a wonderful possibility for me to help it to promote a strong swimming development and to carry the voice of all swimmers.	
What special skills, background and expertise do you have for this role?	I really have a wonderful relationship with many swimmers as I can speak four languages. I am also managing the current swimming group we created in 2010 during the Eindhoven IPC World Championships. Since then, I was asked to organize the swimmers community with a meeting during every major event (Glasgow 2015 WC and 2016 Funchal EC). I attended the last IPC Athletes Forum in June to represent World Para Swimming. Contributing in the development of swimming and sport has always been an honor as an athlete and a way to bring back what sport game me!	
What makes you a proud Paralympian?	Once again, being elected at the IPC Athlete commission for 4 years was a great honour for me. But time was too short to bring all the changes to the level I and we were expecting. As competitor, I have realized how strong the impact on youth could be and I would like today to do more for this great sport and the whole IPC movement. I am proud to inspire people and show them that despite an impairment we, athletes, can have and reached the highest level of sport at the Paralympic games. The wonderful dream of being a champion is possible! My best souvenir Beijing 2008 podium 100m-50m freestyle	

7 Matthew Wylie (GBR)


Sport Class(es)	S9, SB9, SM9	
Last Participation at Paralympic Games	Rio 2016	
World and Regional Championships	European Championship: 2014, 2016 World Championships: 2017	
Why do you wish to run for elections?	I love my sport of para swimming, it is something I have been passionate about since watching the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games (the first one I can remember watching). I have loved all the involvement I have had whilst competing and representing my country and my sport. I believe that the voice of the athlete is paramount and that the athletes should be consulted on key decisions that will ultimately affect their sporting careers. I want to make a real difference. I believe I would be an asset to the Athlete Advisory Group and I am passionate about ensuring that the athletes have a voice and have a say. I strongly believe that we need to remove the taboo around talking about fundamental issues which affect our sport, such as doping and classification. I would also like to help the progress and have input into International Competition opportunities. Working together as one I believe we can make progress in tackling key issues which are currently affecting our sport.	
What special skills, background and expertise do you have for this role?	I have been involved in international level Para Swimming for a fairly short period of time, since 2014, although through my years as a developing athlete and in recent years I have really developed as a person becoming much stronger as a leader. Outside of my sporting career, I am pursuing a career in the legal profession, starting with a degree in Law. This background and legal way of thinking will allow me to raise and deal with issues that could intimidate other people. I am a happy to work on my own as well as being in large groups and I enjoy working with and listening to the views of those from different cultures who may promote different ways of working. I am approachable and an excellent communicator. I understand the current challenges that World Para Swimming face and I want to be	

	part of helping to resolve those issues. I believe the athlete's voice in sport is key and I am willing to listen and promote this voice.
What makes you a proud Paralympian?	I am proud to be part of the Paralympic movement; it represents much more than a competition every four years. The Paralympic movement encourages people to be the best they can be in all walks of life. The opportunity to compete in the Games, not only for your nation but for the movement is something that fills me with great pride. The Paralympic movement has brought disability into today's culture and shown it as a symbol of strength and equality. Young athletes with disabilities aspire to be Paralympic athletes, understanding the movement at a younger age than ever before.


8 Tamás Sors (HUN)

Sport Class(es)	S9, SB9, SM9	
Last Participation at Paralympic Games	Rio 2016	
World and Regional Championships	World Championships: 2013, 2010, 2006 Regional Championships: 2016, 2014, 2011	
Why do you wish to run for elections?	As a disabled swimmer I took part in many IPC competitions around the world. I observed everything inside and outside the pool, I've got friends from all over the world, discussed the issues with them, listened to the organisers and coaches, throughout the years I got to know this world properly. During my sport career I have started to study law as the dual career is very important. My aim is to motivate my sportmates to follow this model. I would like to know, understand and stand up the athletes' rights. I want to get involved in running my sport, and motivate others to engage in swimming.	
What special skills, background and expertise do you have for this role?	Thanks to my seventeen years competition experience, I understand the needs and doubts of the athletes as a good listener and communicator. Due to my legal studies I have learned how to stand up effectively for one's rights, and I am familiar with IPC regulations. I developed professional relationships which helped me to get a deeper insight. I believe that the persistence swimming has thought me, alongside with my commitment and enthusiasm would make me a useful member of the board.	
What makes you a proud Paralympian?	Being a two-times Paralympic Champion gave me irreplaceable experiences, and personal skills, such as resilience, empathy, self-discipline, strength, and much more without I would not be the same person today. I have learnt to respect my body and limits. My greatest pleasure was to win the gold medal in Beijing and in London, but I believe that the way was as important as the results I've reached. The responsibility is mine to show to the people how hard work is being a Proud Paralympian. Respect yourself and respect others is also a value I learned from these athletes.	


9 Inbal Pezaro (ISR)

Sport Class(es)	S5, SB4, SM5	
Last Participation at Paralympic Games	Rio 2016	
World and Regional Championships	World Championships: 2002, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2017	
Why do you wish to run for elections?	I care about this field and would like to try to contribute what I can from my experience for Para swimming. I would like to try to close the gap of uncertainty between the athletes, national teams and the IPC/Para swimming organization.	
What special skills, background and expertise do you have for this role?	I've been a swimmer all my life, and have been part of pic swimming for the past 18 years. I've seen the changes, and know the system.	
What makes you a proud Paralympian?	I believe in what being a Paralympian gives a person with a disability- aspiring for greatness	

10 Theresa Rui Si Goh (SIN)

Sport Class(es)	S5, SB4, SM5	
Last Participation at Paralympic Games	Rio 2016	
World and Regional Championships	World Championships: 2002, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2017	
Why do you wish to run for elections?	I used to be disinterested in anything that needed some form of responsibility but recently, I've been more interested and keen to be more involved. I would love to be able to be part of bettering the sport and be around like minded individuals.	
What special skills, background and expertise do you have for this role?	I'm passionate about things and topics that matter to me and I have been in my sport for roughly 2 decades so I've seen how it's changed, both for better and for worse. I recently came out publicly so I feel like i can provide a small representative voice for the LGBTQ athletes as well.	
What makes you a proud Paralympian?	I am very proud to be a Paralympian. My disability has been the key to opening a lot of doors for me in my life and I wouldn't have it any other way.	

11 Anna Eames (USA)

Sport Class(es)	S10, SB9, SM10	
Last Participation at Paralympic Games	London 2012	
World and Regional Championships	World Championships: 2006, 2010 Pan Pacific Games: 2011, 2014	
Why do you wish to run for elections?	Paralympic sport has always been a huge part of my life. I grew up attending meets throughout the world, and my experiences have shaped me to be the person I am today. I had my highest highs and my lowest lows through Paralympic swimming, and I would not trade a single moment. The life lessons I learned through sport are just as valuable, if not more, than the medals I won. I have been trying my best to stay involved in the sport, and I feel that joining the Athletes Advisory Group would be a great opportunity to stay involved and to give back to the sport that has always meant so much to me.	
What special skills, background and expertise do you have for this role?	As a competitive swimmer for over 10 years, I have a great sense of the needs of elite athletes and the mission of World Para Swimming. I was elected captain for many competitions, including the London Games. I advocated for my team and communicated effectively with athletes and staff. I recognized that my peers were putting much of their experience in my hands so they could focus on competing at their best. I believe the best leaders are the greatest listeners. Outside of the pool, I devote my life to empowering individuals and being their voice when they can't advocate for themselves.	
What makes you a proud Paralympian?	The spirit of the Paralympic movement makes me a Proud Paralympian. Individuals coming together from around the world with various backgrounds, beliefs, and values for a common cause. Then you add to that the fact that everyone has their own unique story of triumph and perseverance, it is just astounding to be surrounded by such amazing individuals and to be a part of something so much bigger than each of us.	