

# World Para Athletics: RACERUNNING

Enhancing Athletes with High Support Needs participation in World Para Athletics



## History

RaceRunning was founded over 25 years ago, and was an exhibition event at the 1998 IPC Athletics World Championships in Birmingham. The concept of RaceRunning was originally developed in Denmark and was designed for foot pushing wheelchair classes. It provides athletes with High Support Needs, who cannot compete in a racing wheelchair and/or ambulant run, the “unprecedented” opportunity for aerobic competition on the athletics track.

RaceRunning is a form of assisted running. The RaceRunning frame is on wheels, which supports the athletes and allows them to successfully ambulate.

At present RaceRunning is promoted internationally by CPISRA, it features on the athletes’ program at their World Games and has its own World and European Championships. It has been included at various IWAS World Games since 2011.

The current classification system was developed by CPISRA and is currently exclusively for athletes with hypertonia, ataxia or athetosis who cannot functionally run.

For those less familiar with RaceRunning, an introduction can be found under:  
<https://youtu.be/oQuPOErGMBc>.

## Athlete Participation Rates

Over the last decade CPISRA and Parasports Denmark have been working in partnership to develop RaceRunning, delivering significant growth in participation worldwide. At the July 2017 World Championships, held in Copenhagen, 100 athletes from 13 countries competed. Over 50% of the participating athletes were female. In the last 4 years, 17 countries have competed in international competitions. There are estimated to be over 500 RaceRunning athletes, across 30 countries across IPC regions. This participation growth has been achieved almost entirely from grassroots activity and demonstrates the participation potential.

## Quality of Athletes Competing

In addition to increasing the numbers of athletes participating, the CPISRA and Parasports Denmark partnership has also worked with participating nations on improving the quality of athletes

competing, and the coaching provided to these athletes. Because of this partnership there has been a sea change in attitude of both athletes and coaches. A decade ago Racerunning was very much a recreational sport. Today, top international athletes train with the same intensity and professionalism as other talented Para-athletes. This is reflected in World Records for the various distances having significantly improved over the last decade and equally important, the increased depth of quality in the rankings. A pointer to further potential improvement is the fact that most current world record holders are aged between 16 and 24 years of age.

The quality of coaching has also improved. More recognised Athletics coaches from both ambulant and wheelchair track are becoming involved. The effect of this is that the athletes are being provided with a better quality of coaching and training programmes, resulting in a positive effect on the performances of the athletes competing.



In addition to competition, RaceRunning provides recreational opportunity and considerable health and social benefits from participation. Such opportunity and benefits for high support needs individuals is resulting in a wide range of individuals with impairments undertaking RaceRunning and an increasing involvement of health professionals.

### **Background to Announcement**

World Para Athletics and CPISRA have been in discussions over recent years about increasing the participation of athletes with more severe coordination impairment (meeting criteria for Athletes with Support Needs) in World Para Athletics track events. The basis of the current proposal is to recognise RaceRunning as an athletics track discipline and a replacement for the actual T31 and T32 classes.

Following initial dialogue, World Para Athletics requested CPISRA undertake both physiology research and evidence based classification research. Since then CPISRA have worked in partnership with the IPC and with researchers from Edinburgh University and Queen Margaret University.

As the outcome of all this, and considering positive interim reporting of the findings now results in World Para Athletics presenting a proposal to the IPC Governing Board to recognize RaceRunning as a World Para Athletics event as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018. Initially this will be based on the current CPISRA RaceRunning classification system, while CPISRA continues its work on the development of an evidence-based classification system that is in alignment with the provisions of the 2015 Athlete Classification Code.

### **World Para Athletics European Championships 2018**

In the initial phase, World Para Athletics will introduce a selective RaceRunning program at the World Para Athletics European Championships 2018, scheduled to take place in Berlin in August 2018. Details on events and qualification standards will be released shortly.

NPCs will be able to license RaceRunning athletes with World Para Athletics from 1 January 2018 onwards.

### Future Development

Going forward, World Para Athletics, with the support of CPISRA, will work in consultation with NPC's and National Athletics Associations to further develop RaceRunning. This will include a programme of (regional) RaceRunning workshops and events.

World Para Athletics will be responsible for all aspects of the pathway of high performance RaceRunning athletics for those classes within the World Para Athletics programme, including classification and officiating. CPISRA will be responsible for the further development of RaceRunning as a recreation and for promotion of its well-being aspects. CPISRA competitions will complement the programme offered by World Para Athletics. As such, CPISRA and its National members will play a role in grassroots development and will be encouraged to work with NPCs and regions to develop RaceRunning at the grassroots.

Post Berlin 2018 further activities will be adopted through to 2021 to include RaceRunning events. Beyond 2021 the progression of these events and classes will be dependent on similar scrutiny to that of other events and classes currently recognised by World Para Athletics.



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