



International Dragon Boat Federation
Para Athletes Commission

Considerations for Coaching Paradragons

Nigel Bedford

Chair – IDBF Para Athletes Commission

27 January 2021





International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Topics

1. What is a Paradragon?
2. Governing rules
3. General considerations for coaching
4. Adaptive equipment
5. Competitions



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

What is a Paradragon?

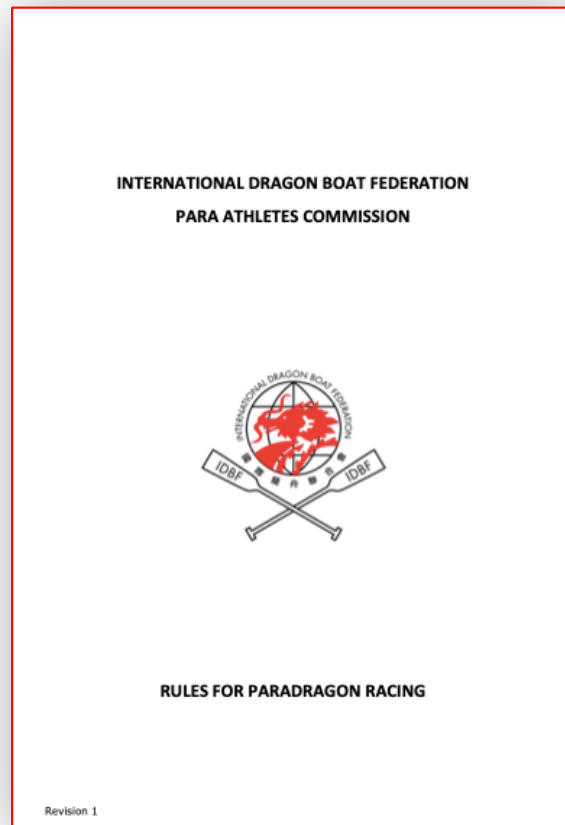
Paradragons is the term used by IDBF to describe paddlers who have some form of physical, psychological, neurological, sensory, developmental or intellectual impairment

IDBF: Rules for Paradragon Racing



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Rules for Paradrragon Racing



- *Published 5 October 2020*
- *Replaced 'Framework Rules for Paradrragon Competitions' Rev 5*
- *Supplements 'normal' race rules and regulations*



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

The philosophy behind the rules

- Open to anyone with any 'impairment'
- Open to any age
- Open to any gender

The rulebook integrates all three aspects so as to provide a way in which disparate groups of paddlers can race, fairly, against each other.



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Race categories

PD1

All paddlers must be impaired

PD2

	Total Paddlers	Minimum impaired
Standard	20	10
	19	9
	18	9
	17	8
	16	8
Small	10	5
	9	4
	8	4

Drummers and helms can be unimpaired





International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

General considerations

1. Separated (only Paradragons), or integrated?
2. Challenges vs rewards
3. Safety
4. Safeguarding



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Specific considerations

1. **Embrace** the opportunity!
2. Be ready to be **confronted**.
3. **Recognise the individual**, not the impairment
4. **Communication and reassurance**
5. **Collaboration**
6. Have similar expectations of them
7. Give them **leadership opportunities**
8. Foster **independence**
9. Seek **advice**



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Other considerations

1. Do they think they are “disabled” or does society think they are?
2. Take care with membership applications – many won’t want to declare ‘impairments’
3. First impressions must be positive
4. Get as much information as you can before their first session
5. Be informed about medical needs (medication, therapies, exercise routines to avoid)
6. Actions speak louder than words (by you, and by others)
7. Check the practicalities (including insurance)
8. Check out funding sources!
9. In integrated training, be aware of ‘centre of attention’ issues
10. Try to get better paddlers to mentor newbies



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Coaches' qualities

1. Be open-minded
2. Embrace any apprehension - don't be afraid and don't doubt your coaching ability
3. Recognise you do not know everything and the paddler may actually help you become a better coach!
4. Treat impaired paddlers as athletes
5. Determine ability → identify skills needed to improve → coach!
6. You are not there to be a carer
7. Think through how you might deal with behavioural challenges, pace of learning etc
8. Example



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Cerebral palsy

Condition arising from damage to the motor areas of the brain that can occur before or during birth, or later on in life through a traumatic head injury, stroke or similar condition. Causes variable impairment of the coordination, tone and strength of muscle action, impacting on posture and movement.

1. Constant and continual repetition and reinforcement can reduce coordination problems
2. Likelihood of slower reaction times to commands
3. Possible limb movement restrictions
4. Possible short-term memory loss
5. Possible speech problems – make sure you understand what is being said
6. Possible balance problems



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Intellectual impairments

A wide range of conditions and implications.

1. Liaise with carer beforehand on behavioural, medication and supervision needs
2. Treat adults as adults
3. Once at training, interact with the person, not with a carer
4. Try to use questions that can be answered easily with a 'yes' or 'no'
5. Keep instructions clear and simple
6. Be patient
7. Repetition, structure and routine are helpful



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Amputees

No two people with amputations are affected in the same way. Some amputees can function as well as any unimpaired person, while others are severely impaired.

1. Although prosthetics are designed to mimic limbs, technique adaptation is likely
2. Sometimes better to leave a prosthetic leg on the dockside!
3. Stump 'socks' can become swollen and uncomfortable during a session
4. Too much repetition can cause skin breakdown
5. Computer-aided prosthetics can be susceptible to water immersion



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Visual impairment

Some people may not be able to see anything while others can see something.

1. Just getting to training may be a challenge
2. Take particular care to identify and deal with safety hazards 'off the water'
3. Consider how to deal with seeing-eye dogs
4. Possible that a fully blind person has never seen anything and will need detailed descriptions of everything
5. A capsize could be especially traumatic – make sure there are strong swimmers seated near the person
6. A trusted 'guide' as a paddling partner can be reassuring
7. Words of command may need adjustment
8. Use of a drummer can be particularly helpful



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Hearing impairment

Some people may not be able to hear anything while others have limited hearing. Many fully deaf people experience greater social isolation than fully blind people

1. Possible need for someone who can 'sign'
2. Encourage others to 'keep the noise down' (hearing aids aren't selective)
3. Person may be able to lip-read so stand where you can be seen clearly
4. On land, use visual aids (eg whiteboards) to assist explanation of training drills etc
5. Coaching from drummer's seat makes you more visible
6. Words of command may be useless! Drummer may need to relay on visual commands
7. Have the person teach the club basic signing, especially dragon boat words



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Wheelchair users

Access and safety issues may dominate. Need for one or more people to accept responsibility for movement, and for boat loading and unloading.

1. Don't assume they can't paddle well!
2. Sit down when talking to them
3. Ask permission before touching wheelchair, crutches, walking frame etc
4. Don't assume their legs aren't weight-bearing
5. Check for abrasions, blisters and lacerations on hands
6. Possible limb movement restrictions
7. Possible issues with temperature regulation
8. Possible bowel and bladder control issues
9. Strapping or support in the boat may be needed



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can develop after experiencing traumatic events.

1. Be aware of potential 'triggers' (eg sounds, particular smells) → fight, flight or freeze
2. Plan to have to deal with an 'episode' on the water (eg intense distress, irritability, aggressive behaviour)
3. Try to have a secure, quiet space always available
4. Possible trouble concentrating on simple tasks
5. Possible lack of trust in you
6. 'Discipline' might be counter-productive – be supportive, use a calm voice and tone



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Equipment matters

Paddles

- Blade can be smaller than 202a (but geometry must be similar)
- Shaft can be shorter than 202a (but not cranked in any way)

Prosthetics / aids

Prosthetics and other aids are OK but must not:

- be computer-aided or
- generate power through automation, mechanics or other means

Seating

Adaptations to seating are permissible provided they are considered by IDBF:

- not to be a source of unacceptable risk to anyone in the crew; and
- only to facilitate participation (not confer material advantage)

refer Annex B of Rulebook



International Dragon Boat Federation Para Athletes Commission



refer Annex B of Rulebook



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Competitions

WNC - Hong Kong

- PD1 & PD2
- Standard boat and small boat
- No crew limitations

CCWC – Sarasota (USA)

- PD1 & PD2
- Standard boat and small boat
- Virtual clubs allowed
- No crew limitations



International Dragon Boat Federation **Para Athletes Commission**

Competitions

1. Paperwork!
2. Insurance
3. Travel to competition (leg-room, facilities, medication, duration etc)
4. Accommodation (access, meals, facilities etc)
5. Travel to venue (local hire, parking etc)
6. Medication & Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs)
7. Team area (close to WCs and facilities, relatively quiet, near marshalling)
8. Specific marshalling and/or boat loading?
9. Time!
10. Beware stressors (race planning, marshalling, boat loading, racing, ceremonies, parties)
11. Final race preparation – ‘zoning in’

