



INTERNATIONAL TABLE TENNIS COMMITTEE

CLASSES 1 – 5 REVISION - PROPOSAL

The Medical Committee does not consider that the reduction of wheelchair classes is synonymous to the reduction of athletes of the existing classification system.

The Medical Committee proposes to bring the dividing borderline area between the new class 3 and 4 to the level of T 10/11. The new class 4 starts at T 12.

The assumption is that at this level of function of the upper abdominal muscles and the corresponding back muscles do not have a functional input on rotation of the trunk. The assumption is that their effect on rotation is too small and too weak, in order to move the heavy mass of the upper body.

The Committee checked these differences by observing and testing the rotation of a typical class 3 athlete, a borderline 3/4 athlete and a typical class 4 athlete.

These observations demonstrated that in the forearm swing of the existing class 3, existing borderline area and T 10/11, there was no initial rotation of the trunk. The body stayed in contact with the backrest of the wheelchair although there was some movements caused by reaction forces due to the swing action.

These observations are useful as well in cases of incomplete spinal cord lesions, polio or other impairments.

The presence or absence of balance is the main factor to distinguish between classes 3 and 4.

- An absence or a poor balance is characteristic of class 3.
Rotation if present is at slow speed.
- The presence of a fair balance is characteristic of class 4.
Rotation is at moderate to fast speed.
- Forward bending is not possible in class 3.
- Forward bending to a certain degree is possible in class 4.
- Lateral bending is possible in class 4 but hampered.

Diagram of trunk functions

Trunk Balance	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5
None	+*	+	+
Poor	+*	+	+
Fair	-	+*	+
Normal	-	-	+*
Trunk Rotation			
Slow	+/-	+	+
Moderate	-	+	+
Fast	-	+/-	+
Trunk Bending	-	+/-	+

+* = main distinguishing characteristic

Studies on classes 4 and 5

A comparison of the competitions between class 4 and class 5 in the open events at the '96 Paralympics and the '98 World Championships showed that class 5 did not necessarily win over class 4.

An explanation for this maybe that the class 4 athlete is more experienced in maneuvering the wheelchair.

An other factor maybe that the class 4 athlete's table tennis skills are on par with class 5.

Conclusion

We feel that this classification revision will result in an equitable situation for the new class 4 athletes.

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