



# **PARATRIATHLON**

## **Race Director's Guide**

*Incorporating the Paratriathlon Category at your Race*

Produced by Triathlon Canada – Paratriathlon Committee

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# Race Director's Guide

## *Incorporating the Paratriathlon Category Effectively and Easily at Local Multisport Events*

This is a guide designed to walk Race Directors through the process of including the Paratriathlon category into existing or new events.

### 1. What is the Paratriathlon (formerly AWAD) Category?

Paratriathlon refers to Athletes with a Disability competing in triathlon. The term AWAD stands for Athlete With A Disability. There are currently 6 disability categories that make up the 'AWAD division'. Please see Appendix A for the categories and rules that apply to AWAD athletes.

### 2. Will it be difficult to incorporate AWADs?

It may seem difficult at first, but with this guide you should find it easy to create an accessible race that will be safe, fair and enjoyable for everyone involved.

### 3. Do I need to change my race course for AWADs?

You may WANT to make a change or two but it is not imperative. Certain obstacles will be difficult to overcome for certain categories of disabled athlete – this guide will provide the answers race directors need to handle course related questions.

To make this guide as easy to understand as possible I have divided it into five sections:

1. Communication
2. Registration
3. Race Planning
4. Post-Race
5. Results

## COMMUNICATION

Your brochures, website, registration forms and online registration materials should clearly reflect that you are welcoming Paratriathletes, and that your race is an AWAD friendly race.

The goal is to let the world know that you have considered the few extra things required to service the needs of disabled athletes. This will solidify your reputation as a good, responsible, inclusive community event, which will, in turn, result in more registrations and a more attractive vehicle for sponsorship.

**On websites:** You can include a tab or a link to a page with information regarding Paratriathlon. You may include extra information pertaining to your race, a copy of the Rules of Paratriathlon, a contact e-mail address for special concerns etc. I have provided much of this material in Appendix A and B.

Some races have even included descriptions or video clips of transition, key course elements etc. This may augment your current online maps and course profiles and will be a benefit to all athletes.

The more info you include, the fewer questions you will need to answer later.

**On brochures:** A simple phrase like:

*The Spring Valley Triathlon is pleased to offer a division for Athletes with a Disability. See website for further details.*

**Electronic:** In emails to your athletes (newsletters, race announcements etc.) you should mention your Paratriathlon Category and include a phrase like this:

*We are proud to offer a Paratriathlon Category for disabled athletes – encourage someone to sign-up today!*

## REGISTRATION

### What do I put on registration forms and online registrations?

After the standard sections of the form: Name, Address, Age etc. Include the following:

Are you a Paratriathlete (athlete with a disability)? Please circle: YES NO

If YES please describe the nature of your disability:

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For a list of official Paratriathlon categories please click [HERE](#)

(Link to ITU Categories: <http://www.triathlon.org/?call=TWpVMg==&sh=keep> )

### How do I organize the Paratriathlon Categories?

Paratriathletes are separated by gender but are not separated into age groups . For example there is no 20-25 Wheelchair division. There is a Male and Female Wheelchair Division.

### What do I tell the timing company?

The timing company likely has experience with AWAD divisions.

- You will likely not have an athlete for every category. Just as you may or may not have a Male 70-75 age grouper you may or may not have a Male TRI5 athlete.

Once your registrations are in you will tell the timing company that you have (for example):

-Two Male TRI 2 competitors  
-One Female TRI 4 competitor

This will allow them to process results correctly and identify athletes as part of the correct category.

### What about the results? What if there aren't any?

Even if you have no AWAD athletes ask the timing company to show an AWAD heading in the results and write "No Competitors" or leave it blank.

All athletes look at results – the heading alone may be enough to encourage a prospective AWAD to think "I will be there next year."

## RACE PLANNING

Your goals in planning the AWAD part of your race are no different than for all of your other competitors:

- Safety
- Fair Competition
- Fun

Further, you want the AWAD race to integrate seamlessly with the rest of your race-day so that you minimize headaches.

The following guidelines are designed to achieve these goals with a minimum of fuss - they will bring the service level of your race to an international caliber (or higher) where AWADs are concerned.

1. **Familiarize yourself with Section P of the ITU Competition Rules.** This is the section pertaining to Paratriathlon. Example: Paratriathletes are allowed to wear wetsuits regardless of the water temperature.
2. **Start communicating with your athletes. Do this by phoning or e-mailing each AWAD athlete as soon as possible after they register. At current levels you are unlikely to get more than a handful of Paratriathletes at your race.** Tell them “We are excited to have you at our race and we want to make sure that any questions or concerns have been answered.” If you have a difficult section (say an offroad run route) and a wheelchair athlete has signed up this will be your chance to inform them about your course. Just say “Let me tell you a bit about our course....”
3. **Inform athletes.** Race directors are often concerned with athletes signing up that will not be able to complete the course – especially disabled ones. Your duty is to inform the athlete accurately about the course (through your website, even on the phone or by e-mail) – beyond that the athlete takes responsibility for completing the challenge..
4. **Allow extra space in transition.** Paratriathletes often require extra space in transition for wheelchairs, prostheses, crutches etc. Also a fold-up chair is a good thing to provide so that athletes can sit to make adjustments to equipment and/or switch into wheelchairs/handcycles
5. **Consider a separate swim wave. This is not required.** Many races send AWADs off first – by as much as 10 or 15 minutes. This will minimize the minor traffic jam that can occur as handlers assist disabled athletes out of the water. It also gets athletes out onto the course sooner and thus off the course sooner.
6. **Swim Buoy Placement.** If your swim features more than one lap with a marker on the beach/shore consider allowing AWADs to swim around a buoy close to shore without having to exit the water. This works best with a separate wave.
7. **Place the Paratriathlon transition area as close to the swim exit as possible.** Handlers may be carrying some athletes, others may be using crutches to get to their leg prosthesis. This distance should be as short as possible. DO NOT make the route through transition shorter than it is for everyone else – just place these athletes closest to the water.
8. **Swim Caps.** Give Paratriathletes a different colour swim cap – to assist lifeguards, officials and organizers as they keep track of the athletes in the water. Also this helps with #5 above.
9. **Handler Accreditation.** The rules (Appendix B) allow for 2-3 handlers per athlete. These people are allowed to assist the athlete with matters pertaining to their disability and transitions and/or course obstacles. These people need to have wristbands or race numbers with the letter ‘H’ or some such identification to allow them access to transition and other ‘athlete only’ areas of the course.
10. **Bike Course.** It is very likely that your bike course will need no adjustment at all. Any road course that is reasonable for triathlon should be navigable by handcycle as well. Any anomalies – like a curb or off-road section, ramp or train track should be well-marked and mentioned in the course description.
11. **Transition - general.** Make sure that any fenced areas through which athletes pass are large enough to accept a handcycle and/or wheelchair.
12. **GET AT LEAST ONE WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE PORTA-POTTY.**
13. **Awards.** Do not forget awards for the winners/podium finishers of your Paratriathlon Category. Even if there is only one.... Just the same as if you had one 80 year-old.

**Special Considerations.** In general, you do not need to do more than steps #1 - #13 above. In some circumstances you may need to use discretion for certain aspects of your race i.e. if you have a long walk from transition to the swim start you may want to allow for a shuttle for the AWAD athletes. Or, if you do not allow athletes into transition for periods of time you may want to relax that rule for AWADs.

## POST-RACE

Consider asking the Paratriathletes you had for feedback on your race. Find out what worked and what didn't work. Obviously their comments might be tainted by their performance (as with all athletes) but hopefully you can get some useful information to build into next year's plan.

Ask them if they know any other AWADs that might be interested in competing next year. Show your passion for providing opportunities and a great race experience and they will always come back and bring others.

## RESULTS

The race results are the timing company's job. Let's analyze the results you can expect as a Race Director when you include the AWAD Category.

1. **"It's the right thing to do."** This is a generally accepted thing in triathlon these days. If you haven't done it already you should.
2. **Inspiration.** There is a special "inspirational" quality about triathlon that we have all experienced. Athletes with a disability embody the "never quit" attitude that makes triathlon special. You want these athletes at your race creating inspirational moments.
3. **Positive image.** You will enhance your race's reputation as a good community citizen. This will help you attract competitors and sponsors.
4. **Media.** Media outlets love disabled athletes. Their stories are often inspirational (see #2 above) and regularly get into local papers, and local news coverage. When you call the local paper and local news station you just need to mention how excited you are to have a disabled athlete competing this year.... That will usually be enough to pique the interest of the local writer/news editor.

Media training:

- Talk about your excitement in welcoming athletes with a disability
- Refer to them as athletes first
- Don't go on about "the effort involved to accommodate" etc.
- Try to mention the athlete's performance as well as their "story" or "inspiration" i.e. "She is a great swimmer too!"

## APPENDIX A

### Paratriathlon Competition Categories □2009

Physically Challenged Competition Categories shall be established based on physical disabilities. Medical evidence and/or classification should be provided for National and International events. The six categories are as follows: □□

**TRI 1** - Handcycle: Paraplegic, Quadriplegic, Polio, Double Leg Amputee. Must use □hand cycle on bike course and racing wheel chair on run. □

**TRI 2** - Severe leg impairment including above knee amputees. Athlete must ride bicycle and run with above knee prosthesis (or similar prosthesis) or run using crutches. □

**TRI 3** - Les Autre: This category includes athletes with Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy, Cerebral Palsy, double leg amputee runners or paralysis in multiple limbs. These athletes will ride a bicycle and run. They may use braces or prosthesis if required. □

**TRI 4** - Arm impairment including paralysis, above elbow amputees and below □elbow amputees, or impairment in both upper limbs. Athletes may use prosthesis, brace or sling on the bike and/or run. □

**TRI 5** - Moderate leg impairment including below knee amputees. Athlete rides bicycle and runs with prosthesis. □

**TRI 6** - Visual Impairment, legally Blind (20/200 vision with best corrective vision). A handler of the same sex is mandatory throughout the race. Athlete is tethered during the swim. Athlete uses a tandem bicycle and may be tethered during the run. □

**Resource:** <http://www.triathlon.org/?call=TWpVMg==&sh=keep>

## **APPENDIX B**

### **ITU COMPETITION RULES 2008**

#### **P ATHLETES WITH A DISABILITY (AWAD)**

##### **P.1 General**

Athletes with Disabilities, as defined under ITU rule P.2 will be governed by all International Triathlon Union (ITU) competition rules with the following specific modifications.

Prior to attending the ITU World Championships all Athletes with a Disability are required to provide a doctor's letter to their National Federation, outlining their degree of disability.

Athletes are required to be classified by an ITU designated classification officer to ensure athletes are assigned to the proper category.

For an athlete to be eligible for categories TRI1, TRI2, TRI3, TRI4 and TRI5, the athlete must have a minimum disability of 15% impairment of a limb.

##### **P.2 AWAD Competition Categories**

Physically Challenged Competition Categories shall be established based on physical disabilities. Medical evidence shall be required as to disability and classification. The six categories, as of 2007, are as follows:

**TRI 1 - Handcycle:** Paraplegic, Quadriplegic, Polio, Double Leg Amputee. Must use hand cycle on bike course and racing wheel chair on run.

**TRI 2 - Severe leg impairment** including above knee amputees. Athlete must ride bicycle and run with above knee prosthesis (or similar prosthesis) or run using crutches.

**TRI 3 - Les Autre:** This category includes athletes with Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy, Cerebral Palsy, double leg amputee runners or paralysis in multiple limbs. These athletes will ride a bicycle and run. They may use braces or prosthesis if required.

**TRI 4 - Arm impairment** including paralysis, above elbow amputees and below elbow amputees, or impairment in both upper limbs. Athletes may use prosthesis, brace or sling on the bike and/or run.

**TRI 5 - Slight leg impairment** including below knee amputees. Athlete rides bicycle and runs with prosthesis.

**TRI 6 - Visual Impairment**, legally Blind (20/200 vision with best corrective vision). A handler of the same sex is mandatory throughout the race. Athlete is tethered during the swim. Athlete uses a tandem bicycle and may be tethered during the run.

### **P.3 AWAD Transition Area Conduct**

Athletes with a Disability shall be permitted the following in regard to outside assistance:

- a) No assist dogs will be allowed at any time.
- b) "Handlers" are specifically allowed to assist AWAD competitors by
  - Assisting/carrying athletes from the water to transition area.
  - Helping with prosthetic devices or other assistive devices.
  - Lifting participants in and out of handcycles and wheelchairs.
  - Removing wetsuits or clothing.
  - Repairing flats and other equipment.
- c) Securing qualified aides ("Handlers") shall be the responsibility of the athlete and all such handlers shall be identified to and receive credentials from the Race Referee at least one (1) day prior to the competition.
- d) It is intended that each athlete have adequate assistance. Therefore handlers are to be allotted as follows:
  - (i) One (1) handler for upper extremity amputees.
  - (ii) Two (2) handlers for lower extremity amputees.
  - (iii) Two to three (2-3) for non-ambulatory competitors (i.e., paraplegics, quadriplegics, polio sufferers)
- d) All handlers shall be subject to all ITU rules of competition as well as further instructions deemed appropriate by the Race Referee.
- e) Any action taken by a handler which propels the competitor forward may, at the discretion of the Race Referee, be grounds for a time penalty or disqualification (DQ).

### **P.4 AWAD Swimming Conduct / Equipment**

Artificial propulsive devices including (but not limited to) fins, paddles, or floating devices of any kind are not allowed. Use of such devices will result in disqualification.

Wetsuits are allowed at all temperatures.

### **P.5 AWAD Cycling Conduct / Equipment**

For Athletes with a Disability, the term "bicycle" used herein shall include bicycles, tricycles or handcycles.

All bicycles, tricycles, handcycles shall be propelled by human force. Arms or legs can be used to propel the cycle but not both. Any violation shall result in disqualification.

Bicycle specifications for AWAD competitors are outlined in ITU rules section E.3. Specifications with respect to handcycles and tricycles are outlined in the International Paralympic Committee's Cycling Rule Book.

Protective shields, faring or other device which has the effect of reducing resistance are prohibited.

There must be at least one working brake (generally on the drive wheel) capable of safely stopping the vehicle.

### **P.6 AWAD Running Conduct**

Athletes with a Disability may use prosthetics, canes or crutches to ambulate the course. The only acceptable footwear on the run course (aside from prosthetics) is running shoes.

AWAD competitors who perform the run portion this leg in a wheelchair shall be governed by all ITU rules with regards to safety.

Specifications with respect to racing wheelchairs are outlined in the International Paralympic Committee's Combined Athletics Rule Book.

### **P.7 AWAD Visual Impairment Category Conduct**

The following additional rules apply to blind athletes and their guides:

- a) Blind athletes must use a guide of the same gender in competition and (with few exceptions) must furnish their own guide.
- b) The blind athlete is to be tethered during the swim.
- c) The blind athlete and guide shall use a tandem bicycle.
- d) The blind athlete may choose to use an elbow lead, tether lead or to run free. The runner may receive verbal instruction only from his/her guide.
- e) No triathlete registered as an elite nor cyclist registered with a UCI trade team may participate as a guide.
- f) Paddle boards, kayaks, bicycles, motor bicycles or any other mechanical means of transport may not be used by guides on the swim or run.
- g) At no time may the guide "lead" or "pace" the athlete nor propel the athlete forward by pulling or pushing.
- h) Whether or not a tether is being used, the athlete and guide shall not be more than 0.5 meters apart at all times.
- i) As the blind athlete crosses the finish line, the guide must be beside or behind the athlete but not further than the required 0.5 meter maximum separation distance.
- j) Infringement of any these rules may, at the discretion of the Head Referee, be grounds for a time penalty or disqualification (DQ).

**Resource:** <http://www.triathlon.org/docs/competition-rules-20080601-vf.pdf?ts=1243018543>