

Para-Nordic Race Event Guidelines

Paranordic ski races are organized exactly the same as able bodied races – an athlete skis a course, gets a time, and is ranked accordingly. Para-Nordic skiers with different impairments normally compete in one of three groups: sitting, standing, or visually impaired. Depending on an athletes impairment their result within the group is calculated by factoring their race time by a percentage assigned to the impairment class. Para-Nordic skiers can also easily be integrated into able bodied races together in the same category or as separate categories if there are enough athletes.

Cross Country Canada abides by the International Paralympic Committee Nordic Skiing (IPCNS) rules and regulations. IPCNS rules follow the same requirements as able bodied rules with some variations and additional requirements. There are also a variety of considerations to be aware of and take into consideration when organizing Para-Nordic races.

Visually Impaired/Blind Skiers (B1-B3) – ski with two skis, two poles and together with a guide

Guides:

- In addition to providing visual and/or auditory guidance around the course, the guide is also responsible for the safety of the visually impaired competitor. He/She may lead or follow the visually impaired competitor or ski alongside. The guide is treated as a competitor with respect to most rules (technique, obstruction, etc).
- For B1 athletes, a guide is obligatory. For B2 and B3 athletes, a guide is optional.
- Guides normally wear a yellow/orange bib printed with a “G” (for “Guide”) or other form of identification.
- A competitor may use more than one guide during the same competition but only one at a time. A guide may stop, take a rest or a shortcut, and rejoin their athlete at a different point in the course, providing they do not obstruct any other competitors. The athlete must complete the full course.
- Guiding must be by voice only. Audio communication between guide and competitor is permitted and the guide may use an amplifier (except in the biathlon range zone of silence).
- Excessive music or noise at the start line can create confusion for a visually impaired skier, particularly B1’s.

Holding

- Normally, no physical contact between guides and athletes with a visual impairment is allowed during the race except for safety reasons when the guide is allowed to hold the athlete (normally by one arm or one pole). This typically occurs in fast down hills, corners and in the shooting range but may take place anywhere on the course at the discretion of the guide and athlete. (Designated holding zones no longer apply)
- During holding, it is forbidden for the guide to hold up, to push or to pull the competitor even on the downhill sections. After a fall a guide or a marshal may hand a B skier their skis and/or poles.

Start

- Most athletes will not see the starting clock. The starter should inform the athlete of the timeframe before the start. A start horn is also helpful. The starter or marshal may place a hand on the athlete’s shoulder and lift the hand when they should start. This is only used when there is no start wand, otherwise there should be no contact.
- The starter should physically assist the athlete with positioning at the start gate including placing the poles ahead of the start gate which the athlete may not be able to see.
- The athlete must be behind the start wand but the guide can be in front, beside or following the athlete.
- There are no set distance requirements for the guide in front of the start wand and their athlete.

Finish

- For all B classes the time is recorded when the competitor crosses the line. No time is recorded for guides.
- The guide may cross the line ahead of or behind the athlete. They will advise the athlete when to stop and how to avoid potential hazards at the finish line such as other athletes lying on the ground.
- It is important for the finish line area to be clear of coaches or volunteers. Leave sufficient stopping space at the finish line.

Course

- When standing/able and VI classes are on course together it is important that skiers and other guides do not pass in-between a guide and their athlete.
- A guide may assist their skier scrape their skis or apply wax if required during a race due to changing snow conditions.
- Course selection should avoid dangerous downhill with high speed curves. Obstacles (such as trees or posts) along side downhill corners on course should be removed or protected with mats if a skier could collide with it.

Standing Skiers (LW2-9) - ski standing with two skis but may use one, two or no poles

Standing category skiers must abide by the same rules as the able-bodied race events with some minor exceptions.

- Should an LW5/7 (impairment in both upper arms, does not use poles) athlete wish to scrape their skis or add wax during a race due to changing snow conditions, they may be supported by a team official that may apply the wax.
- The same applies to ski exchange boxes in long distance races.

Sit skiers (LW10-12) – sit in a sitting position using a sit ski or sled fixed to two skis and propel themselves by double poling

Start line;

- Sit skiers may not know when they are cold. It is important to ensure they have an area to stay warm prior to a race. Blankets are also a good idea to have on hand for those that are in line waiting to race and at the finish line.
- The competitor must have his bindings & chest behind the start line.

Track;

- LW10-12 competitors who crash off course may be assisted back onto the course by coaches or officials but must re-enter the race at the same place.
- If a sit skier has fallen on course, they need to ask for assistance before an official can assist them back up.
- If a sit skier is going uphill, stops and starts moving backwards, an official should stand behind the sit skier and prevent backsliding using their leg. The sit skier **MUST** continue on their own steam/propulsion. The official is **NOT** allowed to push the sit skier.
- LW10-12 athletes are not allowed to use one or both of their legs to steer or brake the sledge during competition.
- In the case of any ski exchange, the competitor must do it outside the track (or designated exchange box) and may be supported by a team official.

Sit Ski Course Homologation

- While standing and visually impaired skiers can ski on standard able bodied courses, course selection for sit skiers requires the following considerations:
 - Course should include uphills and downhills. Flat courses are not ideal and provide no chance for rest.
 - Uphills should in general not be steeper than 10 - 12 % gradient
 - A-hills should not be too long (not over 200 m in length)
 - Downhills should have straight run-outs preferably with a slight uphill to break the speed, the hills should not be steeper than 12 – 14 % gradient
 - Corners and turns should be placed where the speed is slow. Corners on flat part of the course should optimally not be less than 90 % angle (larger angle required for downhill corners). This applies in the stadium as well, for example for lapping or into the shooting range. (NOTE: If you as a standing skier are poling without using the legs, the skis should easily follow the track both in curves/bends in flat parts and also in down hills – if we have to “work” with the legs, a sledge will have problems). Banking can help the skier make a sharp or a high speed turn. The minimum radius of a turn in a flat section or downhill section shall be 15m.
 - See IPCNS Homologation Guide for more information (link below)

Venue considerations

- Venues need to consider accessibility needs of Para-Nordic athletes, particularly with respect to wheelchair users. Ensure they can make it to and from the parking lot to the warming/wax/accessible toilet facilities and start/finish areas.

For more information visit the IPCNS website;

<http://www.paralympic.org/nordic-skiing/rules-and-regulations>

or

The Cross Country Ski de fond Canada website;

<http://www.cccski.com/Para-Nordic.aspx>