



LTD PARALYMPIC JUDOKA

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INTRODUCTION

This publication is an addendum to the Long-Term Athlete Development Model (LTDM) – “Judoka for Life” released by Judo Canada in 2022. It offers more extensive information on the needs of Visually Impaired (VI) judoka and how they differ from the needs of able body judoka.

The “Judoka For Life” proudly promotes inclusion and full integration in sport programs of all Canadians regardless of their level of ability. This noble principle is implementable providing that program leaders and participants are all aware of the support needs of a VI person and how to address them. Sport can play an important role in helping individuals to develop a new and positive self-image as well as enhance their self-concept.. Sports can be an opportunity for them to feel part of a team and, share their passion for sports with sighted athletes. This can impact their social development at any stage of their lives and will also impact development of their sighted teammates who learn about diversity, empathy and tolerance.

Stakeholders in a sport include participants/athletes, coaches, parents, administrators, spectators, sponsors as well as supporting provincial, national and multisport organizations. With so many partners across a vast country with different demographic composition, system integration and alignment are a major challenge.

It is recognized that Judo leaders will enable and determine successful inclusion of VI judoka in integrated environments. An open mind and a big heart are required to address the support needs. Empathy demonstrated by leaders is the example for the able-bodied participants who partner with the support needs participant. Empathy demonstrated by the ability to listen and to hear, followed by compassion demonstrated by the actions taken to address the support needs are great educational platform for tolerance and acceptance of diversity for all participants in judo.

It is also important to emphasize that Visually Impaired judoka are athletes just like other athletes involved in judo programs and should be treated as such. Their individual desires, goals, level of engagement, talent, emotional intelligence, abilities, etc. will differ as much as these differ in other segments of the population.

OVERVIEW OF VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Visual Impairment (VI) reference in this document applies to any person classified in Canada as legally blind. and whose reduced vision or blindness is caused by damage to the eye structure, optical nerves, visual pathways or visual cortex of the brain. VI can be either congenital (present from birth) or acquired later in life.

What is important when considering judo as an activity choice for a Visually Impaired person:

Consideration # 1: Medical condition

Determination by a medical professional on whether Judo is safe for the VI candidate and if yes, at what level of intensity. Some medical conditions may prevent an athlete from engaging in high intensity activity, and it is therefore important to have a medical clearance for a VI athlete before proposing to them the competitive Judo Paralympic pathway:

- **Glaucoma** - is a condition that damages the eye's optic nerve over time and can lead to blindness. If the athlete you're working with has glaucoma, keep in mind that intense physical exercise increases the risk of worsening glaucoma, since that activity is associated with a temporary increase in intraocular pressure.
- **Diabetic retinopathy** - occurs when the blood vessels in the retina burst or are damaged and the blood leakage causes swelling or oedema in the retina. This condition is usually the result of poorly controlled type 1 or 2 diabetes. In athletes with proliferative diabetic retinopathy, strenuous activity may precipitate vitreous hemorrhage or tractional retinal detachment. These athletes should seek medical guidance before anaerobic exercise and physical activity involving straining, jarring or Valsalva-like manoeuvres.
- **Disruption in circadian rhythm** - For athletes with total vision loss, the circadian rhythm is longer than 24 hours. This can cause sleep disturbances and affect strength and reaction times.
- **Risk of dehydration** – some athletes with a VI may be unable to self-monitor hydration by checking urine colour and volume, and this can lead to a risk of dehydration.
- **Risk for retinal detachment is common** - Athletes who are at risk for retinal detachment should avoid contact sports like goalball and judo. If they choose to play those sports, they should use head protection.
- **Medications** - Athletes with a VI and glaucoma may be prescribed eye drops (acetazolamide, beta blockers), which are prohibited substances requiring Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs). Similarly, insulin prescribed for glycemic control in athletes with diabetes and VI also require a TUE in those VI athletes who choose to engage in competitive combat sport activities.

Consideration # 2: Physiological impacts of a VI

While athletes with a VI usually have unaltered physiology, the following must be considered when working with VI athletes:

- Energy expenditure - For athletes with a VI, the metabolic cost of physical activity is often much higher than for sighted athletes. This may be due to increased residual muscle tension from performing complex functional tasks in the sporting environment without visual feedback
- Fatigue - Increased energy expenditure has the potential to cause early fatigue. This may predispose athletes with a VI to a higher risk of tension-related muscle injury
- Walk asymmetry - Athletes with a VI may present with asymmetric or altered walk and biomechanics due to potential decrease in postural stability and proprioception.

Consideration # 3: Common illnesses and injuries for athletes with a VI

- Due to a decrease in protective reflex, athletes with a VI have a higher risk of suffering injuries related to falling or running into objects and other athletes. Similarly, they may have a higher incidence of lesions to the limbs during training and daily activities.
- In general, the greater the visual impairment, the higher the prevalence of injury.

Consideration # 4: Independence of athletes with a VI

- Do not assume that VI athlete cannot do something independently. Always ask whether your assistance is needed.
- By the same token ensure that VI athlete is not left alone to fend for themselves in unfamiliar locations or situations.

The challenges of daily life for the visually impaired

- For those of us who are not in the “Legally Blind” category it is difficult to realize/imagine/comprehend the way the world “looks” for the person who is deprived of the sense most relied on by the rest of the population. Humans are a visual species and the modern world around us was designed and built to accommodate the needs and desires of the sighted population. We can see the danger, we can see the beautiful and the ugly, we can see and differentiate between the clean and the dirty, the rich and the poor. Most of the time the way people dress will tell us to what social/religious group they belong, we can see the approaching car, the distracted pedestrian walking towards, the tree branch hanging too low, the hole in the pavement we are walking towards... etc. NONE OF THIS is available to a blind person and only some of it is available to the Visually Impaired.
- Studies have shown that people with various disabilities use their brains differently than those who are not challenged. In order to increase safety in their daily living environment, the person deprived of some sensory sensations may develop heightened mental capacity (i.e. memory) or somatosensory awareness (hearing, touch, temperature awareness, body position). These adaptations offer to VI some social tools to function in most situations relatively safely in a world that was not designed for them.

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT AND JUDO

The highest level of Judo competition for a visually impaired athlete is the Paralympic Games, and to participate in those games an athlete needs to be formally Classified. Classification is a process of determining the level of an athlete’s visual impairment to ensure that they compete against other athletes with a similar VI level, regardless of the cause of impairment. For the purpose of this guide the focus is on the VI conditions that are classified as eligible to practice judo and those among them who can compete in Paralympic judo.

As of 2022, not all VI judoka will qualify for eligibility to compete in Paralympic judo.

The eligibility to compete in Paralympic sports is determined based on the capacity to perform in competition in an able body environment. Research conducted by institutions contracted by the International Paralympic Committee has determined that some levels of legal visual impairment do not prevent judoka from successfully competing against non-visually-impaired competitors. As a result, there is a minimum eligibility standard for participation in Paralympic judo competition, and eligible athletes are placed in one of two classes. Criteria for the Classes are as follows:

J1 blind judoka	Acuity of vision	Less than or equal to LogMAR 2.6 in binocular vision (20/7962 in Snellen system).
J2 visually impaired judoka	Acuity of vision	between LogMAR 1.3 (20/400 in Snellen system) and 2.5 (20/6325 in Snellen system) with binocular vision
	OR	
	Visual field	binocular visual field of 60 degrees or less in diameter

WHAT IS JUDO

Judo is a grappling activity that originated in Japan. It is a legacy of Jigoro Kano (1860-1938) and was originally intended a physical education program for a newly emerging public school system in Japan. Today Judo is included in physical education curricula in many countries but it gained popularity when it was widely accepted as a combat sport in the Olympic, and later Paralympic, movements. Today Judo is practiced in about 200 countries, (number of member countries in the International Judo Federation) of which 50 are also members of the International Blind Sport Association. As an activity that requires constant partnership and cooperation between participants, judo offers a great opportunity for kinesthetic learning, making it a perfect activity for the visually impaired.



Judo as a paralympic combat sport

Judo is the most popular combat sport among Visually impaired players. The international Blind Sport Judo association includes over 50 member countries.

Judo was first included in the Paralympic Games in 1988 – male categories only. As of 2004 female judo is also a part of the Paralympic movement.

A number of Canadian judokas have enjoyed success in Paralympic judo with Pierre Morten leading this category with three Paralympic medals to his credit (1988, 1992 and 2000). Eddie Morten also medalled in 1988.

In the most recent Paralympic Games in Tokyo 2020, Priscilla Gagne won a silver medal, and she is the first Canadian Paralympic female judoka who succeeded at the highest international stage.

Judo as a life enriching activity

Competitive judo is not the only option available to visually impaired judoka. Judo offers a great spectrum of activities that enrich lives of many who are not interested or driven to engage in competitive combat sport. Judo originated in Japan and the culture and philosophy of that land are dominant in this activity. Judo uses a Japanese nomenclature for all technical skills as well as a traditional sport skill progression curriculum that offers unlimited spectrum of activities and a potential lifelong development pathway. It offers a social environment in which cooperation between partners, respect, friendliness, modesty and humbleness are practiced daily, becoming a part of life skills learning platform.

“NEED TO KNOW” WHEN DEALING WITH THE VI JUDOKA

- **KNOW YOUR ATHLETE’S CAPACITY** – the program leader must be aware of what their athletes are capable of. The spectrum of visual impairment is extensive. Know whether your athlete can see enough of the demonstration, how far away they have to be to see, what are the light conditions that affect their vision, can they orienteer themselves to hear well, do they see

shadows, do they detect light, does bright light affect them, etc. All these nuances will impact the necessary adjustments in how to treat your VI athlete both on the mat and in other life situations.

- **KNOW YOUR ATHLETE’S GOALS** – do not assume anything, get familiar with realities that the athlete is dealing with outside of the judo environment. These realities will often determine the athlete’s goals and the ability to accomplish them.
- **KNOW YOUR ATHLETE’S HISTORY** – Providing that the athlete or the guardian agrees to it, learn what is the reason for the VI condition. The age or stage of onset that the visual impairment occurs will have an effect on the individual’s physical, psychological and emotional development.

Communication with a VI person

- Like any interaction between people, it is about assessing a situation and behaving appropriately.
- Address the athlete by name and if needed by light touch on the shoulder if you want to indicate that your message is for that person in particular.
- When approaching a person or a group, always say who you are by name. You may have to do this more than once to allow them to become familiar with the sound of your voice.
- Use simple and straight forward language for instruction. Be clear and concise on what you are asking for, use prescriptive rather than descriptive language – see example 4 bullets below.
- Be aware that facial expressions in many VI persons may not be consistent with facial expressions of sighted persons – they may not have learned them.
- Be aware that voice intonation offers additional cues to the VI person.
- Be aware that VI person very often can hear sounds that are not detected or ignored by you. Many VI persons can hear conversations conducted quite a distance away and distinguish specific sounds from a multitude of sounds surrounding them.
- When instructing on skills or daily activities do not use mathematical terminology – like degrees. Instead use clock face instruction: i.e. “take two steps forward to your right at 1 o’clock” – as oppose to “move two steps towards the window” or “two steps forward at 30 degrees”. Or when setting a plate: “6 o’clock potatoes, 12 o’clock turkey, your glass of water at 3 o’clock next to your plate”.

Traveling with a VI person

- Ensure proper hydration of athletes - they are not able to detect the colour of urine to detect dehydration however more experienced judoka may be able to detect dehydration with the smell of the urine – this however, can be impacted by intake of vitamins – so properly scheduled hydration is a key.
- Ensure that you know their eating habits – what they like and what they don’t tolerate. Ensure that athlete is capable of handling their own plate when assisted when dealing with a blind person for whom you prepare meals in a self serving buffet setting. If not – prepare the meals for them.
- Ensure to have supply of melatonin (approved by the WADA and without prohibited ingredients) when traveling across extensive time zone changes, and ensure that it is effectively administered.
- Check hotel rooms for items that might have been missed and left unpacked when athletes were packing for departure.

The role of guides and sparring partners

Guides and training partners are critical to the development of the VI Judoka and must be made aware of their support needs. A good training partner in judo may be the most important factor in a potential

enjoyment of judo by the VI practitioner. Highly empathetic individuals are the best partners for the VI judoka.

- Do not offer uninvited assistance. Always ask first whether assistance is welcomed.
- Do not grab the VI when trying to guide them. Offer an elbow or shoulder to the VI judoka for them to take hold. Ask which side they prefer to be guided on. If you are dealing with a VI child, offer to them a hand – they may prefer it.
- When guiding, make sure you are always one step in front of the person that you are guiding. Ask if they are happy with the pace.
- When guiding, communicate at all times, describing what is around them and explain any changes in ground surface. Make sure the individual is aware of staircases as you approach them.
- When approaching a seating area, place their hand on the back of the chair. They will be able to sit down by themselves.
- As you walk through doorways or other narrow spaces, make sure the visually impaired person is behind you. Be careful and make sure they don't hit or get hit by the door when it swings back.
- Explain any loud noises if they occur.
- Keep your guiding arm still and relaxed. Don't start waving it about.
- Be aware of obstacles - give the visually impaired person adequate room around it and if necessary add verbal information – i.e. low hanging tree branch on the left or ridge in a sidewalk ahead.
- When assisting in judo training – all of the above plus – be aware of the other judoka on the mat, avoid crowded spaces.
- Before throwing a VI person on the mat – ensure that they are no longer afraid of “space”. VI beginner in judo often has to overcome a fear of falling because they do not see where their body is going and when the impact of the fall is about to happen.

LTD IN JUDO FOR A VI PERSON

Awareness of judo for VI person.

Judo is not a mainstream sport in North America. This is recognized as a challenge for the VI population who are not aware that the opportunity to join judo programs exists for them in several hundred judo clubs dispersed all over Canada. With numerous initiatives by Judo Canada and our Provincial/Territorial partners we are addressing this challenge to ensure that the VI community in Canada has much greater knowledge of and access to judo programs.

Initiation judo programs were launched in schools for VI populations in Longueuil QC and in Brantford ON. An annual summer program for VI children was launched at the National Training Centre in Montreal QC. VI judo promotional pamphlet is being distributed to all our Provincial/Territorial partners, Canadian National Blind Institute and all registered judo clubs.

Priscilla Gagne – Canadian Paralympic Silver medal winner from Tokyo is delivering a message of the positive impact of judo on her life via multiple clinics at judo clubs across Canada as well as in schools where children learn about judo for the first time.

Multiple educational resources for coaches and parents are made available via PTSO's and NSO Websites.

Regardless of these initiatives, in consistency with the roots of judo we are committed to the Japanese Kaizen philosophy which promotes continuous improvement. New approaches and information impact

our decision making to new scientific and sport specific data, observations and research. We are continuously evolving and searching for positive change in promotion, ongoing education and modifications of programs to adapt to the needs and expectations of all VI persons.

Many pathways for a VI Judoka in Canada.

Judo may be many different things to different VI participants. There are multiple possible development pathways for a judoka as well as many different goals that participants in judo programs may pursue. The LTDM recognizes this reality. The graphic illustration of such reality is reflected in the chart below.

The reality of today's judo for a VI person in Canada is that most VI participants join judo "accidentally" at various stages of their life. It is also a common occurrence that VI judoka who join the competitive – Paralympic practice of judo, remain in this stream for longer than their peers engaged in competitive judo in the Olympic stream. For this reason, the LTDM for the VI person is much more diversified than the LTDM for an able body athlete.

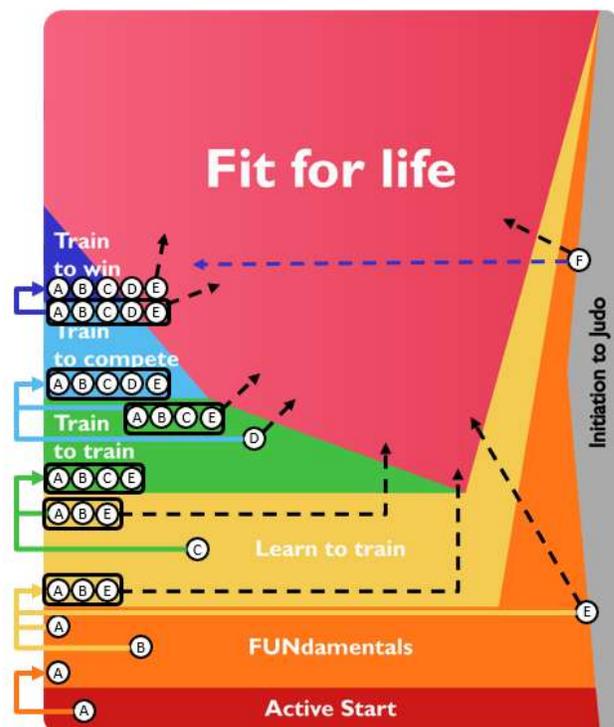
For example:

- Athlete "A" starts judo at the age of 6
- Athlete "B" starts judo at the age of 9
- Athlete "C" starts judo at the age of 11
- Athletes A, B and C aspire to stay on the HP pathway, but they may, for a variety of reasons, depart from it at various later stages of development to pursue the Fit for life goals.
- Athlete "D" starts judo at the age of 14 and is coming from a different sport. The athlete is dedicated to pursue the HP pathway but may also decide that the Fit for life is a better option.
- Athlete "E" started judo in a small community club at the age of 9 but is driven to be an Paralympic Champion and pursues this goal, but also may decide to pursue the Fit for life pathway.

VI Athlete "F" was initiated to judo much

later in life and still has an option to pursue the Paralympic dream. Such

occurrence is very unlikely in able body judo but it is achievable in Paralympic Judo. For example Priscilla Gagne started judo at age 23 and won silver medal in Paralympic Games at the age of 35



Start – Familiarization with judo development stage

Majority of VI participants at this development stage will be children. However, regardless of the age the VI person joins the sport, the objectives and goals for the first few years of judo experience will be very similar for all participants. In terms of objectives, this stage of development of VI judoka is similar to objectives proposed for the Pre-specialization stage for able body participants. The difference is in the proposed timelines, the promotional requirements for judo specific skills consolidation and the coaching approach to how to address challenges.

Main objective of this program is to offer an enjoyable, safe and stimulating environment to all participants. It is expected that in fully integrated environments VI persons will need much more time than majority of able body participants to accomplish the required level of expertise in almost every aspect of physical activity.

Guiding Principles & Objectives for Familiarization programs

- Programs planned and delivered by NCCP Certified Instructors.
- Safety is a priority.
- For young VI children, but also for any VI newcomers who may feel insecure, they need to feel welcomed. Make sure whatever warm-up game is played can be played by a blind person too. If the VI person feels alienated, left out, forgotten or they detect that what is happening in relation to their activity is an “afterthought”, they are not likely to stay in the program.
- Plan for an adequately long time to accomplish objectives. Majority of VI participants will take double or longer the time to develop some level of competency in basic movement skills. If it takes up to 12 weeks with twice a week practice for an able body individual, it may take 24 weeks (or longer – sometimes much longer) for a VI individual.
- Focus on overcoming the “fear of space” – breakfalls for the VI is a much greater challenge than for the sighted person. Practice falling down blindfolded and imagine that you had to learn this skill without having any visual cues.
- Focus on development of core and neck strength and endurance. These muscle groups are vital to offer a safe backward breakfalls.
- Activities should be non-exclusive and foster participation whenever possible.
- When children are under the age of 6, (or older with high support needs) are involved in program, whenever possible engage their parents/caregivers as assistants in delivery of training sessions.
- Focus on the development of Motor skills:
 - Balance
 - Coordination
 - Agility
- Teach and develop fundamental judo movement skills starting with movement on the ground (crawling, rolling, shrimping), followed by standing judo movement skills (Tsugi-ashi, Ayumi-ashi, Tai-sabaki, tumbling, etc.)
- Encourage practicing other fundamental movement skills outside of the judo program (running, jumping, swimming, etc.).
- Pay deliberate attention to the development of mental and life skills: self-confidence, friendliness, humbleness, goal setting, politeness, respect and mental toughness.
- Offer sports programs full of fun, challenging and frequently changing activities.
- Participants must be in motion for at least 80% of the time in the dojo.
- At all times enhance participants feeling of well-being, confidence, and self-esteem by offering positive feedback and reinforcement.
- Encourage healthy habits of 30-60 minutes per day of organized physical activity.
- Develop suppleness and flexibility exercises to be incorporated in games that also emphasize coordination and agility.
- Introduce games addressing cognitive development:
 - Memory games
 - Decision-making games
 - Self-control games
 - Mimicking games

Judo-Specific Objectives

- Basic Ukemi in all directions – remember that for the VI person it may take a full season before they are comfortable with breakfalls.
- Basic judo fundamental movement skills.
- Learn basic Osaekomi-waza and escapes.
- Learn basic Nage-waza as per the Judo Canada Kyu syllabus. However, remember to adjust a choice of techniques to the level of ability and confidence of the VI participant. Nage-waza techniques that can be taught with Uke in kneeling position should be prioritized.
- Introduce modified Ne-waza randori.
- No lifting Nage-waza techniques if these are introduced to children prior to puberty.
- Judo-specific skills must be adapted to accommodate different skill and ability levels. I.e. do not teach to fully blind person techniques that require a high eye/hand or eye/leg coordination (i.e. Deashi-barai).
- Grading of VI participants must be adjusted to their level of abilities. However, when programs are delivered in a fully integrated environment, grading should be done at the same pace as it is offered to the other participants.
- Maximum Kyu grade for participants in the Familiarization programs is a green belt.

Framework

- Participation 1-2 times/week for a time of 45-90 minutes in duration each.
- Emphasis on Ukemi and Ne-waza. Time allocations:
 - 60-70% Ne-waza in year 1 to be gradually moved to 50% in year 2 and down to 40% in year three
 - 30-40% Tachi-waza in year 1 to be gradually moved to 50% in year 2 and down to 60% in year three
- Modified randori: Ne-waza only in year one.
- Tachi-waza randori: to be introduced only when the VI participant does not display a fear of falling.
- Skills:
 - Motor skills 35% gradually reduced to 20% by year three
 - Judo 55% gradually increased to 70% by year three
 - Other (cognitive, mental) 10%
- Basic motor skill exercises with judo exercises where possible.
- During breaks in the season (summer vacation or winter break) promote sports that develop fundamental movement skill that cannot be developed on the mat (i.e. swimming or skating)
- Introduction to competition may take place during this stage but only if an adequate competitive field is available. Format of the competition must be consistent with the principles of Developmental appropriateness and follow Judo Canada policy – available here: [**Sanctioning Policy and Tournament Standards**](#)

Special consideration for VI persons who are involved in the Familiarization judo programs during puberty.

If you have in your programs VI judoka who are between the ages of 11-15 (girls) and 12-17 (boys) you have to adequately address the development needs of these athletes. The period of puberty offers a unique opportunity for development of athletic capacities. For more specific information see the Generic “Judoka for Life” available here: [Long Term Athlete Development Model – Judo Canada](#)

Strategic retention action

All programs should enhance the judo community's understanding of the needs of the VI participant, and to constantly improve services. At the end of each season we ask judoka to complete a satisfaction survey available here: [End of Season Questionnaire Template \(judocanada.org\)](#)

NOTE! Depending on the nature of the survey VI judoka may require help completing the survey.

Stay and Succeed in judo

Once the VI judoka decides to stay in judo post the familiarization development stage, the objectives of programs offered to them will depend on their personal goals.

If VI participant chooses to pursue the “fit for life” pathway, their level of involvement in judo will remain at a volume similar to that during the familiarization development stage.

It is important to realize is that VI athletes interested in pursuing the High-Performance pathway can enter elite programs at chronological ages that are dramatically different from the standard pathway of an able-bodied judoka. There are numerous examples of VI judoka who started in judo in their 20ies and succeeded at the highest international level several years later. There are also examples of Paralympians who pursued judo for many years for recreational and other purposes and decided to “give it a try” in the Paralympic competitive stream.

If VI judoka chooses to pursue a competitive career in Paralympic judo, their training programs will be to a certain degree consistent with programs offered to able body judoka involved in elite training. The competition pathway is however very different and adjusted to the contextual reality of Paralympic judo. Paralympic judo offers extremally limited domestic tournaments due to the lack of depth in the movement. This reality results in a unique situation where the international events calendar serves as the only meaningful competition option for the most advanced Paralympic judoka, as well as for the next generation of competitors.

Once a Paralympic judoka demonstrates commitment and results in competition displaying the necessary capacities to compete successfully at the World Championships and Paralympic Games, focus will then be shifted to offer them optimal programming and enabling such athlete to perform at the highest level.

To meet the needs of athletes competing at this level, requires highly specialized coaching, facilities, and athlete services, as well as athletes' commitment to the set goals. It must be emphasized that competing at the Paralympic level requires a lifestyle choice that is not easily accepted by many.

Administrative and Strategic Objectives

The vision of Judo Canada is to be the overachieving judo nation preparing Canadian judoka to win medals at the World Championships and Olympic/Paralympic Games. The essential elements are put in place and aligned so that participants can pursue this objective in a safe and ethical manner and excel to the extent of their abilities.

To support this vision, some key strategic objectives are set:

- Ensure that Paralympic judokas have their support needs addressed when involved in competitive and High-performance programs.
- Competitive and high-performance programs are under supervision of competent coaches who are NCCP certified and who pursue further available professional development to meet the highest world standards.

- Ensure recognition of volunteers who work with VI judoka involved in Paralympic competitive stream.

Guiding Principles & General Objectives of judo programs involving Paralympic judoka

- Determine the level of support needs for each VI judoka in the program. Determine whether the VI judoka requires constant or only occasional guide during training sessions.
- Determine whether the training environment – dojo- is safe and suitable to address support needs of a judoka. Address barriers whenever possible.
- Individualized training and competition planning involving the athlete and their support personnel – coaches, parents, clubs, etc.
- Deliberate attention to the development of mental and life skills: self-confidence, friendliness, humbleness, goal setting, politeness, respect and mental toughness.
- Observe VI athlete development through a “Trauma Informed Lens” - do not judge but try to understand the source of behaviour.
- Patiently catalog the known barriers impacting daily life and training of the VI judoka and address these to the best of your and your community’s ability.
- Deliberate and persistent emphasis on the participant active engagement in the activity on both motor and cognitive levels.
- Pay specific attention to athletes whose growth spurt did not end yet. Focus on keeping the late maturing athlete in the sport.
- Introduce periodization matching the needs of the athlete to the International calendar of events.
- Optimize fitness to reach standards required to compete at high-level international events as per the physical testing Judo Canada guide [U18-Physical-testing-EN-1.pdf \(judocanada.org\)](https://www.judocanada.org/~/media/Files/Physical-Testing/Physical-Testing-EN-1.pdf).
- Determine which sport-specific skills are best suited for each individual Paralympic judoka in your program. Do not hesitate to experiment.
- Holistic approach to training combining physical, psychological, social and cognitive aspects.
- Optimize advanced mental preparation strategies - concentration, self-activation, visualization, relaxation, positive internal dialogue.
- Optimize and monitor development of additional capacities (physical, motor, mental) paying attention to individual predispositions and weaknesses.
- Master skills and constantly develop and improve new skills and techniques.
- Refinement of a Mental training strategy to establish an ideal mental performance state.
- Introduction on managing requirement of competing internationally (i.e. dealing with Jet lag, nutrition in different food cultures, vaccination requirements, passport and visa requirements etc.).
- Athletes are mentored and educated on weight management and proper nutrition.
- Instill a pride to represent Canada on the international stage.

Judo-Specific Objectives

- Consolidate and optimize Tokui-waza needed to succeed at International Stage:
 - 3-4 effective technical sequences in Tachi-waza
 - 2-3 effective techniques/sequences in Ne-waza
- Focus on tactical training through deliberate drill training (attack, defence, transition from Tachi-waza to Ne-waza)

- Volume of training, including strength training and conditioning, adjusted to the seasonal needs, individual needs and individual capacity (health status and age of the athlete)
- Increased volume of interval training for aerobic power (i.e. judo high intensity randori with competition time specific with work to rest ratio of 1:1).
- Increased frequency of interval training for anaerobic lactic capacity with periods of max intensity exercises up to 2 minutes long and with work to rest ratio of 1:4.
- Development/monitoring and refinement of all psychological factors leading to ideal performance state.
- Refine existing Tachi-waza (offence and defence) and Ne-waza (offence and defence) techniques adjusting their execution to needs as determined by competition intelligence.

Framework

- Judo specific training as needed based on a period of preparation, development stage and age of the athlete:
 - 3-6 times/week:
 - 3-5 times randori
 - 2-4 times technical
 - 5 to 8 hours/week judo-specific:
 - 60 - 80% Tachi-waza
 - 20 - 40% Ne-waza
 - 60 -120 minutes/practice
 - Off-season should not be more than 2 weeks at a time to prevent detraining effects, and 2 shorter breaks of 1 week each.
 - Randori training of high intensity 80%+ MHR (maximum heart rate).
 - Up to 48 weeks of training per year.
- Overview:
 - 40% general training (includes basic strength training skills, mental training skills, nutrition, warm-up, cooldown)
 - 60% competition and competition-specific training. Minimum 120 hours (1.5h of randori/week) for U18 and 180 hours in later stages (3h of randori/week for athletes during their peak performance capacity years and reduce to 1.5 – 2 hours for athletes past their peak performance capacity years)
- Introduce routines to be developed and internalized by each Paralympic judoka: warm-up, hydration, cool-down, stretching, post-exercise nutrition, etc.
- Number of tournaments per year as dictated by availability and World Ranking qualification needs. For developing athletes recommended volume is 20 contests per year at a minimum.
- Frequent participation in high-level international camps.
- Multiple periodization pending competitive individual needs
- Individualized training plan: strength training, energy system development and cross-training to develop specific/targeted areas.
- Develop recovery and regeneration routines including appropriate nutrition plan.
- Frequent testing of physical capacities.
- Data collection on Tournament results, training and recovery.
- Prepare athletes for Doping Control requirements

Teaching and Coaching tips for working with athletes with VI

- General: Patience is a key! Visually impaired athletes will not progress at the same pace as the able body judoka.
- Keep your mind and heart open.
- Educate yourself - workshops or seminars should be recommended for athletes and coaches to understand their roles as they enter this stage.
- When available use help of the “Integrated Support Team” (sport science and sport medicine, mental training experts, S&C coaches, training partners and guides).

SAFETY CONCERNS

Dojo, Shaijo, hotel, etc.

- Assist the VI judoka in familiarization of the dojo or any new environment (shaijo, hotel room, change room, washrooms, etc). Lead them all around and ensure that they touch and “feel” the space. Pay attention to potential obstacles that are obviously visible to a sighted person but may be dangerous to the visually impaired.
- If possible, ensure that the level of lighting in the dojo is always the same – this is particularly important to visually impaired judoka who have some level of light perception.
- Don’t take things for granted – always check for changes in the environment. VI participants are most vulnerable when changes are introduced to an environment that they have become familiar with – i.e. new rest area with steel benches where the athlete is walking to and from the water fountain...
- Place a sound device at a specific location in the dojo. Blind judoka will use this sound to orienteer themselves. The preferred device is a “Metronome” which will always offer the same signal to the participants.
- Use tatami with two highly contrasting colours or/ plus different structure on the surface. Blind judoka will orienteer themselves based on the familiarity of where these different mats are in the dojo. If not possible uses bright tape to designate a workout area for the VI person with some vision.
- Remove all obstacles from the activity area.
- Keep equipment in a well-defined area and inform the participants of the location.
- Remove noise distractions.
- Ensure that the VI person is familiar with the fire and other safety hazards, and evacuation protocol. At each session designate a guide to assist the VI person in case of emergency.
- When using training equipment, if possible, use equipment of a bright and contrasting colours.
- When appropriate, ask the judoka and they will tell you what makes them feel unsafe.

Safety in training - tips

- Adapt the training environment wherever possible to the support needs of judoka. Be aware of safety concerns for VI judoka that do not exist in programs for able-bodied athletes. Be conscious and aware of this reality.
- Many VI persons will experience challenges with spatial awareness. This will result in a fear of falling. Be extra patient when working on overcoming this fear.

- Emphasize safety first. Ensure that the VI judoka has no “fear of space” before progressing to Tachi-waza techniques.
- Do not use training format during warm up or drills when judoka move simultaneously in opposing direction. Sooner or later the VI judoka will collide with someone.
- Mobility of VI judoka, in particular blind judoka, is often limited compared to able body judoka. However, just as in able body students you will find a huge spectrum of talent. Adjust your goals and expectations to the goals of the VI person.
- During various exercises VI person may become disoriented and will need a verbal cue to re orient themselves.
- When practicing randori – designate spotters who will intervene when a potentially dangerous situation occurs – i.e. experienced judoka who can anticipate that specific actions may result in a collision of two pairs of practicing judoka.
- Schedule regular water breaks to ensure adequate hydration, especially for players who have other conditions, such as diabetes.

Teaching judo – tips

- Experience being VI. Listen to instructions and try to replicate it with your eyes closed. Practice randori blindfolded.
- Ensure that VI judoka has a partner who understands their support needs and who is willing to help them. You need to find partners who demonstrate a high level of empathy.
- Kinesthetic and tactile learning are the BEST options available to VI judoka. If possible, use the Paralympic judoka as uke when demonstrating techniques to able body judoka in integrated environment.
- Use as few verbal or visual prompts as possible. These become distractions rather than teaching tools.
- Simplify judo techniques. Focus on the large outcome of action rather than on details of particular movement. Do not correct details unless what is happening may be unsafe to participants. You can accomplish that by describing the motion (Kinematics) in simple terms – i.e. move backwards two steps, create space for your opponent to be thrown by... stepping on a supporting leg at 10:30 o'clock to the left... etc. Then explain what causes the movement (Kinetics) – i.e. why is your opponent being thrown... you block with your leg and you pulled the upper body with your arms... This way, once the VI judoka conceptualize this concept, they will be able to replicate it.
- Look for natural tendencies of the VI judoka. I.e. if an athlete demonstrates a relative ease in tai-sabaki – teach rotational techniques; if the athlete has difficulty to rotate Teach straight forward or backward techniques that do not involve rotation.
- Avoid techniques that require a high level of eye hand/ eye leg coordination – i.e. Deashi-barai, especially to fully blind judoka.
- During warm up use a precise language to describe next exercise or format of the exercise – i.e. “rolling forward ukemi left and right with two steps in between”.
- Design and adopt a technical progression inspired by the National Kyu Grading Syllabus taking into consideration athlete’s support needs.
- Assume that VI persons will not be able to see a demonstration well enough or at all. Verbalize all movements with precision and, when necessary, physically move them through the correct motion.
- Athletes need to orientate themselves correctly (to ensure they are facing the correct direction) before taking part in an activity and may need help doing so.
- They may not know when they are standing too close to a fellow participant.

- Encourage “play and feel” discovery learning and intervene only when safety of participants is a concern. Observe the VI person and look for natural tendencies. Once you determine what they are, focus on enhancing them.
- Remember that individual differences must be addressed. So if a judoka (child in particular) is able to safely take the next step, the coach has to be able to detect it and ensure that the child is working in the “challenge” zone and not in the “I am bored” zone.

Coaching VI competitors - tips

- The basic training principles for VI persons are the same as for able body athletes. The most important principle is individualization. Each athlete will have different needs, goals and capacity. These must be taken into consideration in the training process.
- Coaching will vary based on the skill level of the VI participant, their level of visual impairment, medical conditions, age, etc.
- Competition field intelligence is a key performance factor in the VI environment. Drill training is very effective in preparation of VI competitors providing they focus on specific solutions to be employed versus specific opponents.
- When working in fully integrated environments, all other athletes and coaches must be aware that VI persons are part of the training environment, and to avoid being a danger to them.
- Coaching Paralympic judoka will often include management of all demands for their career (school, work, sponsors, media, etc.) as well as exploring with the athlete, aspects related to their post-sport career.

Competitions

- Offer a competitive pathway option to a judoka for whom such options exist. Be aware that low numbers of participants with specific classifications of impairment make it difficult to offer meaningful competition domestically. When possible, a mock-up event should be offered where able-bodied athletes will compete with the VI judoka according to the sport rules designed to address the support needs.
- Once a disabled judoka enters the competitive or High-Performance stream, they should be treated as any other elite level athlete providing that their needs are addressed. This means addressing all aspects of the daily training environment to ensure that their training is developmentally appropriate.
- The role of “life skills” of a VI judoka has a much greater impact on the potential for success at the international level than it is for an able-bodied judoka. The support structure around the athlete, level of education, ability to function without assistance, capacity to reflect on life and self-evaluate, will play much more of an important role than the technical, tactical, psychological, or physical key factors for success in sport.
- Modified tournament standards are available in the **[Sanctioning Policy and Tournament Standards](#)**.

Further information is available at:

- **[Including All Kids: Children with Support needs in Judo](#)**
- **[A Guide To Visually Impaired Judo - YouTube](#)**
- IBSA Judo Website: **[Home - IBSA Judo](#)**

REFERENCES:

- CS4L: LTDM 3.0
- Sport Canada: Long Term Athlete Development Model.
- Judo Canada LTDM: “Judoka for Life”
- UK Judo: Guide for Paralympic Judoka
- Canadian Deaf Sport Association: LTDM for Deaf
- Coaching Association of Canada: Learning module on Coaching athletes with a disability