Building Bridges

MANUAL FOR WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Barcel'hona Sports Events from Spain, together with Association of wheelchair basketball clubs from Serbia, Club for Youth Empowerment 018 (KOM 018) from Serbia, Portuguese Basketball Federation Federação Portuguesa de Basquetebol from Portugal, Irish Wheelchair Association from Ireland and Association for sport activities of persons with physical disability – wheelchair basketball Hope Sport (WBC HOPE SPORT) from North Macedonia implements project "Building Bridges" in order to foster international cooperation in the field of wheelchair basketball. Sport serves not only to promote healthy habits but also stands out as a valuable instrument for fostering social integration and the inclusion of individuals. Engaging in sports helps bridge personal differences, making it easier for people with disabilities to integrate and become part of the communities. Project objectives are:

1) To increase the competences and knowledge of the coaches who work with basketball players in wheelchairs,
2) To create opportunities for athletes in the wheelchairs and
3) To raise awareness and give visibility to wheelchair basketball and increase sporting activity among people with disabilities.

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1.1 THE HISTORY OF WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Wheelchair basketball, now recognized as one of the most dynamic and popular sports for people with disabilities, was developed after World War II as an ideal form of social rehabilitation for war veterans. The individual most credited with the creation of wheelchair basketball and the broader integration of sports into rehabilitation for people with disabilities is **Dr. Ludwig Guttmann**, founder of the Paralympic Movement and director of Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, Great Britain.

At this hospital, the first official sports competition for athletes with disabilities on the European continent was organized in 1948 under the name **Stoke Mandeville Games**, a precursor to the Paralympic Games, which also featured wheelchair basketball. Although a version of the sport, then known as "wheelchair netball," was played unofficially prior to this, the first official wheelchair basketball game took place on **September 25, 1946**, between teams from two American hospitals: Corona Naval Station in California and Framingham Hospital in Massachusetts. The number of teams grew rapidly, as did the global popularity of the sport. Wheelchair basketball, as it is known today, became one of the core Paralympic sports after its inclusion in the 1956 International Stoke Mandeville Games, and later at the first Paralympic Games held in Rome in 1960.

The sport is now governed by the **International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF)**, which oversees all international competitions in accordance with standardized rules (Official Wheelchair Basketball Rules), equipment regulations, and player classification systems. Wheelchair basketball is a fast-paced, team-based sport played by individuals with physical disabilities, with both men's and women's competitions held at national, continental, and global levels under the IWBF. The IWBF currently collaborates with 108 national wheelchair basketball organizations, which are organized into four geographical zones: Asia Oceania, Africa, Europe, and Americas. In addition to senior-level competitions such as the European Championship, the World Championship, and the Paralympic Games, the IWBF also organizes youth competitions. These include world and continental championships for younger age categories, where the age limit is 25 years for women and 22 years for men.

1.2 WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL RULES

The rules of wheelchair basketball are largely aligned with those of traditional (standing) basketball played by individuals without disabilities. Each team is allowed five players on the court at a time, and a full team roster can include up to 12 players. The game is played in four quarters of 10 minutes each, with a 15-minute halftime break between the second and third quarters, and 2-minute breaks between the first and second, and third and fourth quarters.

Wheelchair basketball is played on a court of identical dimensions to that of standard basketball, 28 meters by 15 meters, and the basket is also set at the same height of 3.05 meters. The shot clock operates under the same 24-second rule as in traditional basketball, and coaches are permitted five timeouts per game: two in the first half and three in the second half, each lasting one minute. Scoring values and statistical records, such as points, assists, rebounds, and fouls, are calculated in the same way as in standing basketball. However, there are several adaptations in the rules to accommodate the use of wheelchairs and ensure fair play.

One of the primary differences involves the **dribbling rule**: when in possession of the ball, a player may push their wheelchair a maximum of two times before they must dribble, pass, or shoot. This "two-push" rule is a distinctive feature of wheelchair basketball and ensures that players do not gain an unfair advantage in movement without interacting with the ball.

Another key rule adaptation relates to **court boundaries**. Players must remain within the confines of the playing area and are not allowed to gain positional advantage by leaving the court, even partially, with their wheelchair.

In terms of equipment, the essential component for participation is a specialized sports wheelchair. Due to advances in technology, these wheelchairs are now built with lighter materials and improved manoeuvrability, enabling faster and more agile performance. According to official rules, wheelchair specifications must align with the player's classification rating. For example, seat height is regulated, with a maximum of 63 cm for lower classification players and 58 cm for higher classifications, and wheel dimensions must meet defined parameters to ensure safety and fairness.

1.3 CLASSIFICATION OF WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL PLAYERS

The classification system in wheelchair basketball, as in other sports for athletes with disabilities, plays a critical role in ensuring fairness and equal opportunity. It is designed to provide a level playing field by accounting for the varying types and degrees of physical impairments among athletes. Classification allows individuals with different functional abilities to compete in the same game under balanced conditions, thereby preserving both inclusivity and competitiveness.

In the early days of wheelchair basketball, classification was based almost exclusively on a neurological assessment of the athlete's impairment. This approach did not fully reflect an athlete's physical ability to perform basketball-specific movements. Over time, the system has evolved significantly.

Today, the sport uses the **Player Classification System (PCS)**, a functional classification model that offers a more precise and performance-based assessment. Rather than focusing solely on medical diagnosis, the PCS evaluates an athlete's functional mobility in a seated position, specifically, the range of motion, trunk control, and ability to perform sport-specific tasks. These functional limitations are analysed in three anatomical planes: sagittal (forward and backward), frontal (side to side), and horizontal (rotational). Classification is carried out by a panel of three to six trained classifiers, who assess players based on a combination of factors:

- Trunk stability and range of motion
- Basketball skills such as ball handling, shooting, and pushing
- Ability to manoeuvre the wheelchair efficiently

According to the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF), there are eight classification levels used in modern wheelchair basketball, divided into five primary classes and three intermediary subclasses:

- **1.0, 2.0, 3.0, 4.0, and 4.5 points** (primary classes)
- **1.5, 2.5, and 3.5 points** (intermediate classes), which accommodate athletes whose abilities fall between two adjacent classes

Each player is assigned one of these values, and the total classification points of the five players on the court for one team must not exceed 14.0 points in official international competitions. This ensures a balanced distribution of physical capacities on both teams and prevents dominance by players with minimal impairments. Here is a brief overview of the classification categories:

- **Class 1.0**: Minimal or no trunk control in the frontal plane; no active rotation; poor balance in both frontal and sagittal planes. Players rely on their arms to regain balance when leaning or falling.
- **Class 2.0**: Partial trunk control in the frontal plane; able to rotate the upper trunk but not the lower part; limited sagittal movement.
- **Class 3.0**: Good trunk stability and balance in the frontal plane, but limited sagittal plane movement (e.g., cannot lean forward or backward effectively).
- **Class 4.0**: Near-normal trunk movement with some restrictions to one side, typically due to impairment in one lower limb.
- **Class 4.5**: Full, unrestricted trunk mobility in all directions. These players have the least functional impairment eligible for wheelchair basketball.

The intermediate subclasses (e.g., 1.5, 2.5, 3.5) are used for athletes who exhibit a blend of characteristics from adjacent classes, allowing for more nuanced and accurate classification. This functional classification system ensures that success in the sport is determined by skill, teamwork, and strategy, rather than by the extent of a player's physical ability. It also reinforces the core values of wheelchair basketball as a truly inclusive and performance-based sport.

2.0 UNDERSTANDING PHYSICAL DISABILITIES IN WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Types of physical disabilities in wheelchair basketball

Eligibility to participate in Paralympic sports is based on the presence of a permanent physical impairment that falls within a category recognized by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the specific classification criteria established by the relevant sport's governing body. In wheelchair basketball, the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF) outlines specific types of eligible physical impairments in its classification system.

Wheelchair basketball is primarily intended for individuals with impairments affecting the lower limbs, though players with combined impairments of the lower and upper limbs may also be eligible. According to IWBF's classification rules, athletes must demonstrate an impairment that has a measurable impact on their ability to perform basketball-specific movements while seated in a wheelchair. The acceptable types of physical impairments for participation in wheelchair basketball include:

- Impaired muscle power: Reduced or complete inability to generate muscle force due to conditions such as spinal cord injury, muscular dystrophy, or spinal bifida.
- Impaired passive range of motion: Limitations or complete loss of movement in one or more joints, often due to contractures, chronic joint immobilization, or trauma. Conditions such as arthrogryposis also fall into this category.
- Limb deficiency: The complete or partial absence of bones or joints, either due to amputation caused by trauma or illness, or due to congenital limb malformations (e.g., dysmelia).
- Leg length difference: A significant discrepancy in the length of the lower limbs, typically resulting from growth disturbances, congenital conditions, or trauma.
- Hypertonia: Increased muscle tone that limits the ability to stretch or relax muscles. This condition may result from cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, or stroke.
- Ataxia: A condition involving lack of coordination and balance, caused by damage to the central nervous system. It may result from cerebral palsy, brain injury, stroke, or multiple sclerosis.
- Athetosis: Involuntary, slow, and fluctuating movements that interfere with motor control, often associated with cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, or stroke.

Each of these impairments must be assessed and confirmed by a classification panel, which determines whether the athlete meets the eligibility requirements and to which classification category they belong. Only individuals whose impairments have a demonstrable impact on their functional ability to play wheelchair basketball are permitted to compete at the national and international levels. These impairments impact each athlete differently, affecting how they push their wheelchair, control the ball, maintain balance, and execute tactical movements. For example:

- A Class 1.0 player with minimal trunk control may struggle with balance during rebounds or passes and might require additional strapping or targeted balance drills to remain stable during dynamic actions.
- A player with ataxia may face difficulties in making quick direction changes due to uncoordinated limb movement, which can be addressed through drills that focus on rhythm and repetition rather than speed.
- Athletes with hypertonia or athetosis may benefit from slower-paced exercises emphasizing control, timing, and reaction to stimuli.

Understanding these functional challenges is essential not only for classification but for creating effective and personalized coaching strategies. Coaches must go beyond a one-size-fits-all approach and develop individualized training plans that respect each player's functional capacity and learning pace.

Psychosocial and developmental dimensions

Participating in wheelchair basketball offers athletes more than just physical benefits. It fosters self-esteem, social integration, and a strong sense of identity. For many players, the sport provides a safe and empowering space where they are not defined by their disability but by their skill, teamwork, and determination.

Athletes with disabilities often face social isolation or reduced expectations in other areas of life. Sport becomes a transformative force, enabling them to redefine themselves and prove, to themselves and to others, what they are capable of. This contributes directly to their psychological well-being and overall quality of life.

A common misconception is that athletes with visible or more severe impairments are less capable or competitive. In reality, classification ensures that performance is measured through ability, not limitation. Some of the most tactically skilled and resilient players come from lower classifications, demonstrating that competitive success is built on strategy, teamwork, and adaptability. Promoting an inclusive approach means creating an environment where all players are respected for their contributions, regardless of classification.

This requires ongoing education for coaches, teammates, volunteers, and even spectators. Inclusion is not just about participation; it is about creating a culture that celebrates diversity, supports individual development, and fosters equal opportunity.

The role of sport in empowerment and rehabilitation

Since its origins in post-WWII rehabilitation efforts led by Dr. Ludwig Guttmann, adaptive sport has proven to be a powerful tool for physical recovery, community engagement, and societal change. Wheelchair basketball continues this legacy by offering athletes a platform to compete, belong, and thrive. By understanding the variety of disabilities present in wheelchair basketball, and how they interact with movement, coaching, and team dynamics, all those involved in the sport can contribute to an environment grounded in equity, professionalism, and respect. Coaches, in particular, carry a responsibility not just to teach techniques, but to create a team culture where every player is seen, heard, and valued.

3.0 COACHING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

Wheelchair basketball is a sport with specific characteristics that require an adaptation of the general principles of sports coaching. Although it shares many similarities with conventional basketball, its practice is influenced by factors such as the functional classification of players, the specifics of wheelchair mobility, and a strategy tailored to each athlete's individual abilities.

This chapter will address the essential principles that should guide the coach's work in wheelchair basketball, ensuring a structured and effective approach to the technical, tactical, and physical development of players.

3.1 ADAPTATION OF TRAINING TO WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Comparison of conventional vs. adapted sports system

To work on wheelchair basketball training, it is essential to begin by understanding the main differences between the conventional sports system and the adapted sports system. In the conventional system, resources are allocated from the early stages to learning the sport, promoting the athlete's specialization and development with an eminently competitive focus. In contrast, adapted sports prioritize mass participation and the inclusion of athletes who are born with a disability or acquire an injury that prevents them from practicing the sport in its conventional form. This system allows players to evolve from diverse sporting experiences, which directly impacts their development process and training methodology.

Key differences between Conventional Basketball and WBB

Another key factor for designing appropriate training sessions is understanding the differences between the two sports:

Aspect	Conventional Basketball	Wheelchair Basketball
Displacement	Running and changing pace with your feet.	Propulsion with the hands and changes of direction with the chair .
Defense	Using lateral shifting and weight shifts .	It does not exist Lateral shifting . Positioning the chair and anticipating contact.
Player classification	Do not exist restrictions functional .	Point system (1.0 - 4.5) based on ability motor .
Specific regulations	Rules FIBA standard .	Changes to rules such as dribbling , contact and time of possession IWBF rules

Importance of functional classification in training planning

 Although we may argue that wheelchair basketball is actually a basketball, the internal logic of our sport shows us that there are regulatory elements that differentiate the two types of basketball. The coach's understanding and mastery of these elements will determine the team's range of tactical possibilities. We will base our work on three regulatory elements:

1. **Movement Limitations** : Wheelchair basketball players must compulsorily have a lower body injury that prevents them from pivoting on their foot axis .
2. **Functional classification** : Each player has a functional classification, which is derived from the player's range of motion in the wheelchair (in what planes they can perform different motor skills). This classification will range from 4.5 points for players with a greater range of motion (distal amputations, prostheses, etc.) to 1 point for players with the most limited range of motion. The ranking will increase by half a point with greater volume of action (1 / 1.5 / 2 / 2.5 / 3 / 3.5 / 4 / 4.5)
3. **Regulation of total on-court points**: The functional ranking of players on the court must not exceed 14 points in national team competitions and 14.5 in club competitions.

With this concept explained, in wheelchair basketball, we train, play, and plan tactical actions based on the functional characteristics of the players in a rotation. This means that team strategies must be designed considering the distribution of players according to their functional classification, leveraging individual strengths to optimize team performance.

Coaching considerations based on functional classification

-Classification players (1.0):
- Greater difficulty maintaining pelvic stability and chair action volume.
- They cannot lean forward or sideways without losing stability and often rely on the chair back to stay upright.
- Their movements are primarily focused on their arms, and they require additional support to pass or control the ball in the air.
- Upper body control during the shooting phase is limited, so they must quickly move their hands to the wheels to avoid losing balance.
- Training chair fundamentals without ball to generate the necessary action potential to aggressively defend any player on the court, regardless of their score.
- Train chair fundamentals on offense to create the necessary path for higher-scoring players to have advantageous shooting opportunities.

-Classification players (2.0):
- They have greater pelvic stability and mobility, so their range of motion in the chair is greater.
- They can lean slightly forward, recovering the action without needing full hand support on wheels, so the chair's backrest loses its presence.
- They can twist their torso to receive or pass the ball, having a better view of the team and a greater range of motion with the ball in their hands.
- Training chair fundamentals without the ball to generate the necessary action potential to aggressively defend any court player regardless of their score, shooting on the move, and changing direction with the chair.
- Train offensive ball fundamentals (triple threat) so the player can generate offensive advantages to deliver the ball to the free player.

-Classification players (3.0):
- Minor deficit in the player's pelvic stability.
- Players with good trunk control in an upright position and the ability to lean forward and turn.
- They have difficulty leaning laterally without additional support, difficulty receiving laterally in the air, and recovering without hand support while rolling.

- Train chair fundamentals without the ball to generate the action potential necessary to aggressively defend any court player regardless of their score. Practice shooting on the move and changes of direction with the chair.
- Train chair fundamentals to create space between defenders and benefit from direct or indirect blocking.
- Train offensive on-ball fundamentals (triple threat) to enable the player to generate offensive advantages to get the ball to the open player.
- Train off-ball fundamentals to receive and shoot quickly, or receive and attack the defender on the ball to generate an offensive advantage.

-**Classification players (4.0/4.5):**
- They do not present pelvic instability.
- Players with the greatest volume of action in the chair.
- They have almost complete trunk control, allowing them to lean forward and to the side with energy and without losing stability.
- Training chair fundamentals without the ball to generate the action potential necessary to aggressively defend any court player regardless of their score. Practice shooting on the move and changes of direction with the chair.
- Practice chair fundamentals to create space between defenders and benefit from direct or indirect blocking.
- Train offensive on-ball fundamentals (triple threat) so the player can generate offensive advantages to get the ball to the open player.
- Training off-ball fundamentals to receive and shoot quickly, or receive and attack the defender on the ball to generate an offensive advantage.
- Training chair fundamentals without the ball to enter the court near the basket, either independently or by taking advantage of the scoring class.

 Coaches must structure their training sessions taking these differences into account, ensuring that each player trains specifically according to their abilities and limitations. The players' functional classification will also determine which players should be on the court when competing. Remember that this score must not exceed 14 points in national team competitions and 14.5 in club competitions.

With this concept explained, in wheelchair basketball, we train, play, and plan tactical actions based on the functional game characteristics of the players who make up a rotation. We define the concept of rotation as the set of players on the court whose score adds up to the maximum score allowed on the court. Currently, the main rotations in national teams can be (4/3/3/2.5/1.5 - 4/3/3/3/1- 4/4/3/1.5/1.5 - 4/4/3/2/1 - 4/4/2.5/2.5/1), we can see how in the last decade the presence of the intermediate classes in the rotations have taken on a differentiating role.

3.2 SKILL DEVELOPMENT TECHNIQUES IN WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Chair control

Wheelchair control is a fundamental aspect of wheelchair basketball (WCB). It involves various technical skills that allow players to move efficiently and strategically on the court.

Basic skills:

Another key factor for designing appropriate training sessions is understanding the differences between the two sports:

- Pushing the chair and changing direction in a controlled and efficient manner.
- Offensive and defensive control in 1-on-1 situations.
  - **Defensively**: Ability to stop the chair against players with similar functionality.
  - **Offensively**: Attacking the defender's back and overcoming them.
- Use of chair control with changes in pace, direction, acceleration, and braking, oriented according to the direction of the play.
- Chair control for effective use in team play:
  - **Defensively**: Correct positioning to jump the pick and reach defensive help.
  - **Offensively**: Advanced skills such as proper orientation to generate advantages with blocks (pick) and tilting techniques .

Laterality

Laterality refers to a player's ability to use both sides of the body and both hands equally effectively in the game.

Levels of laterality development:

1. Predominant use of the strong side to perform technical game actions (movements and triple threat).
2. Use of both sides in the execution of game actions, regardless of defensive pressure in training and matches.
3. Use of both hands for ow-complexity motor actions (dribbling and movement separation), but without using the non-dominant hand to make lay ups.
4. Ability to make dynamic receptions with both hands and orient the chair in both directions for efficient speed actions. In defensive pressure situations, the player continues to prefer his strong side.
5. Full use of both hands in all actions, including lay ups and advanced passes.

Ball control and dribbling

Ball control in Wheelchair Basketball is crucial to maintaining the fluidity of the game and executing effective movements without losing control of the chair.

Key aspects of ball control:

- Do not dissociate ball control from chair control; dribbling can be symmetrical or supported by the legs.
- Performing combined actions:
  - Stopping dribble linked to technical actions such as shooting or passing.
  - Changes of direction with controlled ball, dissociating dribbling and chair movement.
  - Stopping with a high or low dribble, with difficulty maintaining continuity of the dribble when changing hands, either forward or backward.
- Ability to execute these actions under pressure in training and competition.

Pass and decision-making

Passing accuracy and quick decision-making are essential to the dynamics of Wheelchair Basketball's game.

Key elements of passing and decision-making:

- Choosing the appropriate type of pass based on the situation and defensive pressure.
- Controlling timing and space to optimize offensive fluidity.
- Ability to read the defence and react quickly to maintain possession and generate scoring opportunities.

Catching and shooting

Catching and shooting in Wheelchair Basketball require a combination of coordination and efficient chair orientation to maximize shooting effectiveness.

Key aspects of catching and shooting:

- Receiving techniques in motion with efficient adaptation of chair orientation.
- Adjusting the shot according to game conditions and defensive pressure.
- Ability to execute shots in a variety of situations (stationary, on the move, with defense).

Communication in the game

Communication is a key factor in Wheelchair Basketball, as it allows for better coordination in offensive and defensive strategies.

Keys to effective communication:

- Use of verbal and non-verbal cues to coordinate plays.
- Clear communication on defence for quick adjustments and assists.
- Coordination with teammates to optimize the execution of blocks and tactical movements.

Evaluation table of the technical skills of the Wheelchair Basketball player.

Criterion	Level 1 (Low)	Level 2 (Intermediate)	Level 3 (High)
Chair mobility	Difficulty moving and changing direction.	Basic control, but with limitations in changes of direction and speed.	Complete control of mobility, with efficient changes of rhythm and direction.
Ball control	Loses control easily, difficulty handling the boat.	Moderate control, although with failures under pressure.	Excellent ball control in motion and in real game situations.
Decision making	Delayed decision-making and poor passing effectiveness.	Correct decisions, but with room for improvement in execution speed.	Quick and effective decision-making under pressure.
Reception and shooting	Difficulty receiving and adjusting the shot.	Good adjustment when receiving the pass, but with inconsistencies in the shot.	Smooth reception and precise shooting in different game situations.
Communication	He/she doesn't communicate with his/her classmates.	Occasional but ineffective communication.	Constant and effective communication to coordinate the game.

3.3 EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH PLAYERS

Effective communication is a fundamental component of success in wheelchair basketball. It enhances coordination and teamwork, reduces the likelihood of errors during play, and improves both understanding and reaction time among team members. When communication flows smoothly, the game becomes more efficient, and all participants feel included, informed, and respected.

One of the primary goals in fostering communication is to ensure clarity. On the court, communication should be short, precise, and easily understood. Phrases like "Cut," "Defence," "Rebound," or "Block" are far more effective than lengthy instructions, especially in high-pressure situations where quick decisions are needed. Coaches are encouraged to adopt this approach as well, using clear and structured language when giving tactical directions, such as "Jump to the help," "Press the point guard," or "Close the baseline." In addition to verbal cues, coaches often rely on visual aids, such as tactical boards or hand signals, to reinforce key instructions.

Beyond spoken language, non-verbal communication plays a crucial role in wheelchair basketball, particularly in loud or chaotic environments where verbal instructions may be missed. Gestures, hand signals, eye contact, and facial expressions all help convey information quickly and effectively. For example, players may use a nod or pointed glance to indicate a change in direction, while eye contact can serve as a powerful tool for coordinating passes and anticipating movement.

Gestural communication is also important in interactions with referees. Standard FIBA signals are used to indicate fouls, violations, and substitutions, while players may raise a hand to request a substitution or acknowledge a call. Coaches also develop their own system of non-verbal signals for side-line communication, helping players adjust tactics without interrupting the flow of the game.

Combining verbal clarity with strong visual communication strategies not only enhances team performance but also reinforces an inclusive team culture where every player, regardless of their communication style or ability, can participate fully. Effective communication empowers athletes to make faster, smarter decisions and strengthens the cohesion that is essential for success in competitive sport.

3.4 MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES IN WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Motivation plays a central role in athletic development and performance. One of the most effective methods for guiding and maintaining player motivation is setting SMART goals, goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. In wheelchair basketball, this approach supports structured progress and encourages athletes to take ownership of their development.

A SMART goal should be:

- Specific – Clearly define what is to be achieved.
- Measurable – Include criteria to evaluate progress.
- Achievable – Realistic and possible within the player's capabilities.
- Relevant – Directly contributes to basketball performance.
- Time-bound – Set within a defined timeframe.

For example, a player may set a goal to improve their free throw shooting percentage from 60% to 80% over a three-month period by practicing 50 shots daily and recording the results for weekly review. Such structured goals help maintain focus, increase motivation, and provide a clear path to success.

Positive reinforcement is another essential motivational strategy. Recognizing both individual and team progress, through verbal praise, small incentives, or constructive feedback, strengthens player confidence and contributes to a supportive team atmosphere. Celebrating milestones and gamifying training sessions further enhances engagement. Motivation should also be adapted to the player's experience level:

Beginner players are typically motivated by fun, inclusion, and basic skill development. Coaches can:

- Foster a friendly and supportive environment
- Celebrate small achievements to build confidence
- Use simple, achievable goals such as improving chair handling
- Integrate playful dynamics to maintain interest

Intermediate players are driven by competition, skill refinement, and teamwork. Coaches should:

- Introduce challenging goals like speed and accuracy
- Encourage local tournaments or in-team competitions
- Provide structured feedback and reinforce tactics

Advanced players seek high performance and recognition. Recommended approaches include:

- Set long-term goals tied to championship participation
- Offer specialized, individualized training
- Incorporate mental training and reinforce discipline

3.5 COMPREHENSIVE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Comprehensive player development in wheelchair basketball involves an integrated focus on physical preparation, technical skills, tactical understanding, and psychological resilience. Each area plays a unique role in shaping the athlete's performance and long-term progress.
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Physical training aims to build:
- *Cardiovascular endurance* for sustained intensity during games
- *Upper-body strength* to propel the wheelchair and perform actions like passing and shooting
- *Agility and coordination*, necessary for rapid direction changes
- *Injury prevention* through balanced conditioning programs

Technical development focuses on mastering:
- *Wheelchair handling* – smooth turns and quick movements
- *Dribbling and control* – adapted to the player's capacity
- *Passing and shooting* – from various positions and in motion

Tactical learning involves:
- Effective court positioning and spacing
- Movement off the ball to create opportunities
- Strategic defensive and offensive execution

Psychological support helps players strengthen:

- Confidence and self-esteem
- Stress management in competitive environments
- Communication and team collaboration

Wheelchair basketball is also a powerful platform for emotional well-being and social inclusion. Players often experience increased self-confidence and resilience through personal and team achievements. The structure of team sport creates a safe and supportive space where athletes can express themselves and feel valued. Participation also fosters integration and connection beyond the team. However, greater awareness and investment in inclusive sport are still needed to fully realize its potential as a tool for empowerment and societal change.

4.0 COACHING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

Training planning in Wheelchair Basketball is an essential process to ensure the proper development of players throughout their sports careers. This document provides a framework based on long-term sports development models, considering the specificities of players with disabilities.

The structuring of the training process in basketball, and more specifically in wheelchair basketball, must consider methodological progression based on the athlete's playing level. This process is based on the progressive acquisition of basic and specific motor skills, the development of physical capacity, and tactical understanding of the game. Training planning must follow a structured periodization that allows players to efficiently advance in their sports development.

Training phases according to level of play

Phase 1: Fundamentals

Objective: To introduce players to the dynamics of training, establishing appropriate sports habits and promoting the development of general motor skills.

- Development of basic motor skills (BMS) in a wheelchair.
- Specific work on global coordination abilities.
- Use of a methodology based on motor games to understand the internal logic of wheelchair basketball.
- Physical conditioning training focused on general endurance and muscular balance.
- Duration: 12 weeks with 3 technical sessions and 2 physical preparation sessions per week.
- No introduction to competitive systems.

Phase 2: Learning to train

Objective: To integrate players into specific group training sessions and strengthen technical specialization using the competition chair.

- Development of specific Wheelchair Basketball coordination capabilities.
- Introduction to basic tactics with and without the ball.
- Progressive exercises from 1x1 to 4x4.
- Focus on 75% of tasks for improving muscle mass and specific motor skills (SMS), leaving 25% for competitive tasks.
- Physical program focused on strength endurance.
- Duration: 12 weeks with assessment of technical-biological foundations (TBF).

Phase 3: Train to train

Objective: To comprehensively develop the player's motor structures and enhance specific motor patterns.

- Combination of coordination, cognitive, and conditioning training.
- Inclusion of specific tactical training with real-time decision-making.
- Introduction of play with 2-on-2 to 5-on-5 systems.
- Implementation of full-court individual defense.
- Intensification of physical work with emphasis on muscle development.
- Active participation in competitions.

Phase 4: Training to compete

Objective: Optimize player performance under competitive pressure.

- Improve technique in real-game situations and under physical and emotional stress.
- Consolidate coordination, cognitive, and conditioning work.
- Development of specific tactical systems.
- Differentiation between training and match planning.
- Balanced distribution (50%) between structured training and competitive tasks.
- Individualized physical preparation program adapted to the playing position.
- The team's competitive level as a criterion for progress to the next phase.

Phase 5: Training to win

Objective: Maximize individual and team performance to achieve competitive excellence.

- Specialization in advanced tactical systems.
- Development of match strategies adapted to different game contexts.
- High-intensity training focused on real-time decision-making and problem-solving.
- Optimized physical preparation according to each player's role and position.
- Constant performance evaluation through data analysis and applied technology.

Wheelchair basketball training must be structured according to a progressive model that ensures the player's comprehensive development. The periodization of the process must be aligned with individual and team goals, adapting to the physical, technical, and tactical needs of each phase of athletic development. The transition from one level to another must be rigorously evaluated to ensure that the player possesses the necessary skills to meet the challenges of the competition.

4.1 WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL TRAINING SESSION DESIGN

The design of a wheelchair basketball training session should follow a structure that ensures the technical, tactical, and physical development of the players. Below is a sample session structured into different phases:

1. Warm-up phase (15-20 min)
   - Joint mobility and specific muscle activation.
   - Wheelchair movement exercises with changes of direction and speed.
   - Ball control and handling while moving.

2. Technical phase (20-30 min)
   - Specific wheelchair technique work: pivots, braking and acceleration, 1-on-1 shadows.
   - Development of individual technical fundamentals (dribbling, passing, shooting and receiving).
   - Application of the technique in progressive situations (global exercises).

3. Tactical phase (25-30 min)
   - Decision-making exercises in game situations.
   - Application of basic tactical concepts (blocks, cuts and defensive assists) in small-sided games from 2-on-2 to 4-on-4.
   - Work on playing systems with numerical disadvantage and superiority.
   - Development of offensive and defensive strategies in half-court and full-court situations.

4. Competitive phase (20-30 min)
   - Small-sided games with application of the concepts developed.
   - Conditional matches with specific objectives.
   - Assessment of decision-making and adaptation to the competitive context.
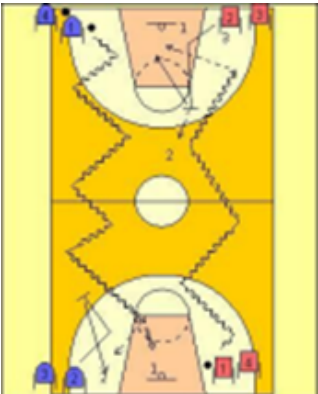
5. Cool-down phase (10-15 min)
- Specific mobility and stretching exercises.
- Active recovery and injury prevention work.
- Reflection on the session objectives and performance analysis.

This session model should be tailored to the individual needs of the players and their current level of play. The combination of technical, tactical, and physical aspects will allow for progressive and effective development within the training process.

4.2 WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL SESSION MODELS AT BEGINNER LEVELS

SESSION 1: WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL BASIC FUNDAMENTALS

Development of the offensive pick and roll individual tactic	
	- Work on the basics of offensive blocking. - Work on spatial occupation in relation to your mobile device, teammates, and opponents.
SESSION OBJECTIVES: 10'	"2X2 BLOCK CONCEPT" Description: Explanation of the basic concept of the 2-on-2 screen, with and without the ball. Key concepts: • Spatial perception • Basic orientation of the Blocker chair • Continuation of the Blocker's Block (Pick and Roll & Pick and Pop) • Basic action player blocked.

15´	**"CONCEPTUAL ASSIMILATION WHEEL 2X"0** Description dribbling circuit exercise , we introduce a player in the background who performs the blocking action. We will number 3 moments of the blockage : 1. Pick and roll band 2. Pick and roll Background 3. Off-ball re-screening (coach as passer) Maximum correction point in the orientation of the chair and at the moment of blocking.	
7´	**"SHOOTING EXERCISE IN PAIRS"** Description: A player with the ball throws and rebounds, while the teammate is in a basic catch and throw position. Coaches will use this drill to observe the basic throwing position and arm and hand completion, making appropriate corrections. Objectives: • Improve basic throwing position. • Improve the technical gesture of mid-distance throwing	
15´	**"2X2 CONCEPTUAL ASSIMILATION WHEEL"** Description: Same as the previous exercise, but we introduce pressing individual defense, with the aim of creating spaces and being able to carry out direct blocks and re-blocks.	
7´	**"SHOOTING EXERCISE IN PAIRS"** Description: A player with the ball throws and rebounds, while the teammate is in a basic catch and throw position. Coaches will use this drill to observe the basic throwing position and arm and hand completion, making appropriate corrections. Objectives: • Improve basic throwing position. • Improve the technical gesture of mid-distance throwing	

15'	**"2X2 SQUARE"** Description: Players are placed as shown in the graphic, occupying the four corners. 1. The ball leaves the backcourt and is passed to the opposing backcourt, the first player to pass goes up to defend, the receiver goes to the center of the court and goes up to defend. 2. The half-court player initiates the attack with a diagonal advantage for the block and follow-through action. The ball player must make the decision to enter or pass based on his or her advantage.	
10'	**"PAIRS SHOOTING COMPETITION"** Description:One player with the ball shoots and rebounds, while the other player is in a basic catching and shooting position. Coaches will use this exercise to observe the player's basic shooting position and arm and hand completion, making appropriate corrections. Objectives: • Improve basic throwing position. • Improve the technical gesture of mid-distance throwing	
10'	**" STOP"** We begin the warm-up with an exercise focused on mastering the starting stop. All players move freely around the field. When the coach calls "STOP," the player must stop abruptly, taking into account body position and the orientation of the chair. We perform several variations of the exercise: 1. Defending the defence 2. Same with one arm up to point a shot or receive the ball in the zone. 3. Same with two arms up in the back recovery to work on postural balance.	
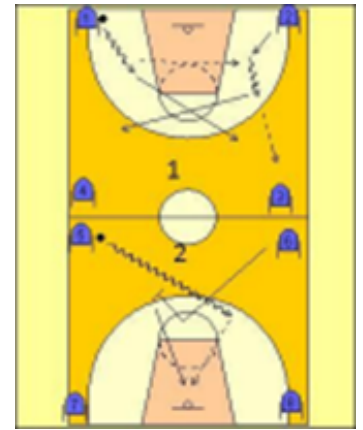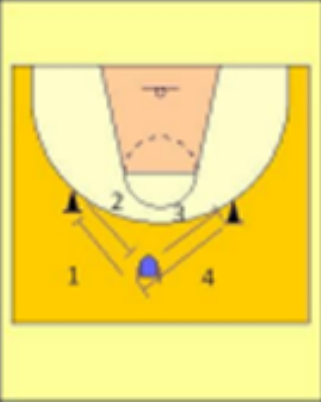
10'	**"V & U"** The players are distributed individually on the field two meters from a reference line, we continue with the work of stopping the start, drawing a V, starting from the reference point. We perform different variations of the exercise: 1. Raising a hand 2. Raising the two We carry out the same start-stop work in the same way, drawing a U, and emphasizing "defending the defence."	
10'	Stretching as a whole group	

4.3 SESSION MODELS AT ADVANCED LEVELS
SESSION 1: TACTICAL DEVELOPMENT SESSION PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Basic Exercises	Description	Time
1x0 four-elbow wheel	Each player, with a ball, leaves the center of the court to look for an elbow and perform a change of pace + finishing action. We divide the drill into 5 blocks: 1. Drives to the basket, on the move or with a braking dribble. 2. Drive with a chair turned toward the opposite corner. 3. Change of pace at the elbow, 45-degree exit, stop, and shoot. 4. Change of pace at the elbow, 45-degree exit, stop, fake + base dribble, and shoot. 5. Change of pace at the elbow, 45-degree exit, stop, fake + elbow dribble, and shoot.	Block divided into 1' of individual technique from Block 1 to Block 5, + 30" sprint + 30 **"** individual shooting with fatigue. Partial Time : 1' + 30" +30" TT: 10'
1x1	In pairs, we shoot from a desired position until we miss. When the signal is heard, the player with the ball attacks the opposing team. All players share the court, so spontaneous blocks may occur. Defenders try to warn the other defender of a 1v1 to avoid being blocked. We count points; the winner receives a Chair. Skill to the loser.	5 Blocks divided into 30" of shooting + 1'30" of 1x1
2x1 +1	Rhythm drill where we work on decision-making in defense and offense, a mid-court drill to enhance intensity. Two players defend in tandem, the first player touches the coach's hand at mid-court, and the attackers move out to play the 2-on-1. The player who touched the coach recovers on defense.	5 2' defense blocks per pair.
nxn	We divide the group into two teams: the group on the left will be the ten, the group on the right will be the ones. A number 32 is called, and three players from the left play against two players from the right to score a basket. The players will receive the ball after running at top speed; the one who arrives first receives the pass from the coach.	4 Blocks of 5'. The losing team works a Chair Skill

SESSION 2: TACTICAL DEVELOPMENT SESSION PERFORMANCE LEVEL

BASIC EXERCISES	DESCRIPTION	TIME
FREE THROW EFFECTIVENESS	In pairs. Free throw shooting, alternating every other shot. The goal is to make 10 free throws in a row, alternating two for each player. If I miss one, I switch players and start from scratch.	Maximum time 6 minutes, the first couple to achieve this closes the exercise
20-SECOND TABATA ACTION + 8-SECOND REST	At the signal and marking the times of action and rest we do the following exercises: sprint forward and backward, "V", go to the ground and get up, short impulses forward and backward, U turns , tilting to one side 180 and tilting	2 sets of 5 minutes repeating the exercises
DEFENSIVE RESPONSIBILITY 1X1 WITHOUT THE BALL	Round-robin gate work with gates made of cones. Three sets in pairs, we're racking up wins. Without the ball.	45 seconds of work per "fight" Adjust work to 30 minutes
1X1 DEFENSIVE RESPONSIBILITY WITH THE BALL	All players are paired up on the court, using a 1-on-1 ball to attack either basket. When the coach gives the signal, they change direction of attack/defense, which requires paying attention to signals from the sidelines and anticipating the opposing player's actions. Self-screening is used with the rest of the players. We aim to finish in positions close to the hoop.	12 minutes of partner swapping
LAUNCHING EFFECTIVENESS FROM THE SIDE	In pairs, make 20 side shots without a backboard (10 on each side) alternating shots per player. I shoot at the basket, I rebound and pass to my partner to shoot. On the 6 rings	The first person to score 20 baskets will rotate to the next basket. Maximum drill time: 25 minutes.
OFFENSIVE SUPERIORITIES	2x1, 3x2, 4x3, and 5x4 drills. Attackers position themselves on the baseline and defenders position themselves on the free kick line. Training in attack and defense, with priority given to man-on-the-ball and recovery.	To implement 10 counterattacks from each superiority. Maximum time 30 minutes
5x5	2 rotations:	4 times of 3 minutes

4.4 PROMOTING TEAMWORK AND LEADERSHIP

Creating a strong team spirit

Team spirit is a fundamental element for success in sport because it allows athletes to achieve higher performance than they could individually. Collaboration, communication, and mutual support allow performance levels to be raised in favour of a common collective achievement. Fostering a positive and cohesive environment will not only benefit performance on the field but will also contribute to the emotional well-being of the group.

How to foster team spirit? Team spirit is fundamentally based on trust and communication, creating a sense of unity. Therefore, fostering trust, promoting communication, creating a supportive culture, working together toward a common goal, supporting each other in times of success and adversity, and celebrating achievements will strengthen relationships among team members and improve collective performance.

To build team spirit, there are effective strategies and valuable tools that will help us improve group dynamics. We have compiled them in four points that we develop below:

Group cohesion drills

The following drills are beneficial for strengthening team spirit because they work on key aspects such as communication, trust, and cooperation.

1.Relay race with pass

Objective: Improve communication and teamwork.

How to do it: Divide the team into two groups. Players must advance on the court, passing the ball between them without letting it touch the floor. The team that completes the course first without making mistakes wins.

2.The Passing Clock

Objective: Improve passing accuracy and build trust among teammates.

How to do it: Players form a circle and pass the ball to each other in a set order. The pass must be made as quickly as possible without dropping the ball. Additional balls can be added to increase the difficulty.

3.The Rope challenge

Objective: Encourage teamwork and synchronization.

How to do it: Pair players up by tying their chairs together with a rope. They must move together around the court, passing and shooting. The importance of communication and a shared rhythm is reinforced.

4.Block Defense

Objective: Improve cohesion in defense.

How to do it: Divide the team into defenders and attackers. The defenders must move in sync to close spaces and hinder the opposing team's advance. How they work together to maintain a solid defense is evaluated.

These drills not only strengthen team cohesion but also help develop key skills for the game.

Team roles based on functional characteristics and abilities

In wheelchair basketball, team roles are assigned based on technical abilities, the players' functional classification, and their personal characteristics.

1.Functional Roles (based on playing position)
Point Guard: Controls the pace of the game, distributes the ball, and organizes plays.
Shooting Guard (Shooter): Specialist in mid- and long-range shots.
Small Forward: Versatile player who can score, defend, and assist in transition.
Power Forward: Supports defense, rebounds, and the inside game.
Center: Main reference in the paint, key in defense and rebounds.

2. Roles according to functional classification
In wheelchair basketball, each player receives a functional classification from 1.0 to 4.5 (based on their mobility and stability).
Low-classification players (1.0 - 2.5): Generally defenders or playmakers.
High-Ranking Players (3.0 - 4.5): They tend to play offensive roles and have greater mobility on the court.
Score Balance: The team on the court cannot exceed 14 points, adding the ratings of all five players.

3.Roles based on skills and personality
<u>Leader</u>: Motivates the team and makes key decisions in the game.
<u>Defensive Specialist</u>: Responsible for marking key opposing players.
<u>Fast Transition Player</u>: Ideal for quick counterattacks.
<u>Scorer</u>: A player with great scoring ability, especially in decisive moments.
<u>Team Player</u>: A player focused on assists and tactical support.

Developing trust between players

Trust is key to team success. It is considered a fundamental asset for avoiding siloed work, fostering collaboration, strengthening teamwork, and increasing team member commitment. When there is trust, players voluntarily step forward, embrace a common purpose, take risks, and help each other. Therefore, developing trust between team members is essential for collective performance, cohesion, and group satisfaction. What does a team need most to develop trust? There are key strategies for fostering it:

1. Open and transparent communication
Foster an environment where players can express themselves without fear of judgment. Players must feel that their opinions and needs are heard and valued by the coach and teammates. For this reason, trust is closely linked to the concept of communication. Hold regular meetings to discuss expectations, roles, and goals. Practice active listening between teammates and coaches.

2. Building relationships off the court
Organize team activities outside of training, such as dinners, recreational outings, or team building activities. Foster camaraderie through games and trust exercises (e.g., partner challenges or teamwork).

3. Clear definition of roles and responsibilities
Role clarity is vital for players to feel comfortable and can prevent uncertainty or resentment toward the coach from affecting their development. Each player should know their role within the team and feel valued for their contribution. When a player's role within the team doesn't meet their expectations or desires, clear justifications for why and areas to work on to improve their role can help maintain the player's trust in the coach. Ensure everyone has opportunities to participate and develop.

4.   Mutual support and a culture of respect
 Support can be considered in relation to both emotional support and a player's belief that the coach has the ability to improve their performance. Like trust, respect must be developed over time. It is important to recognize that respect must be earned and is provided by players, not demanded by coaches.

5.   Example from the coach and team leaders
 The consistency of the coach's message and behavior are important parts of building this trust. To generate it, coaches must ensure that their words are always reflected in their actions. In psychologically safe environments, the relationship and dialogue between coach and player always goes both ways. A similar relationship must exist between the team leader and the rest of the team; trust in a leader by the players is essential to creating a climate of safety and motivation. A leader who displays dedication, professionalism, and passion inspires their teammates. Trust isn't built overnight, but with consistent effort, the team can become a stronger and more united unit.

Conflict resolution and ego management within the team

Conflict resolution and ego management within a sports team are essential for maintaining a harmonious environment and maximizing collective performance. Conflicts within the team can arise for a variety of reasons, including:

1. Poor communication
A lack of clear and effective communication can lead to misunderstandings and tensions within the team. For example, a lack of clear communication about roles and expectations can be a common source of conflict.

2. Quest for power
One of the factors that most contributes to tension within a team is the struggle for control and influence. This ultimately undermines a team's positive atmosphere.

3. Lack of leadership
A lack of strong and decisive sports leadership within the team can lead to disorganization and discord, both among coaches and players.

4. Change of Leadership
Sometimes, changes in team leadership can destabilize the team's dynamic.

Having a good conflict prevention strategy will facilitate problem resolution and help maintain unity. Below are <u>some key conflict resolution strategies</u>:

1.   Encourage open communication
-Establish a space where players can express their concerns without fear of retaliation.
-Individual or group meetings to address issues.

2.   Identify and diagnose problems
-Recognize the attitudes that cause conflict and explore possible solutions. It is important to understand each party's motivations before intervening.

3.   Coach or captain mediation
-A neutral leader can facilitate the conversation and help find solutions. Use active listening and empathy.
-If consensus cannot be reached, put the issues to a vote.

4.   Establish team norms and values
-Create an internal code of conduct that includes respect, responsibility, and cooperation.
-Enforce rules fairly and equitably.

5.   Strengthening team spirit
-Turn disagreements into opportunities to strengthen the group's unity. This process can be done through group cohesion exercises or dynamics to improve trust.
-Effective conflict management contributes to a climate of respect and mutual understanding, and proactively addressing conflicts will help prevent them from escalating into bigger problems.

<u>Managing egos </u>is another of the major challenges facing a coach or team leader. To do so, we can rely on the following points to resolve the issues that arise:

 1. Define clear roles. Ensure that each player understands their importance within the team, regardless of their role.
 2. Emphasize the common goal. Remember that the team's success is above individual achievements. Celebrate collective contributions instead of highlighting only individual figures.
 3. Recognize everyone's efforts. Praise not only the stars, but also those who do the "dirty work" on the field.

4. Encourage humility and positive leadership. Players with big egos can be motivated to assume leadership roles with responsibility and by example.

5. Promote rotation of roles. Avoid dependence on a single player, allowing everyone opportunities to shine.

6. Personalized motivational techniques. Depending on the players' personalities, we find that some need public recognition, while others prefer private conversations. Adapting to each personality helps manage egos.

4.5 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Identifying and fostering players with natural leadership in a sports team is key to improving performance and team cohesion. As coaches, we must observe and recognize the often innate "abilities" of our players to identify those with leadership skills that can positively influence the team. If worked on properly, these players can become strong leaders who boost team performance and morale. We will recognize a player with natural leadership by:

- Their effective communication: They express themselves clearly, motivate their teammates, and give instructions on the basketball court.
- Positive influence: Players who inspire others with their attitude, effort, and commitment.
- They take responsibility: They take initiative in difficult times and assume accountability for results.
- Resilience and emotional control: They remain calm under pressure and help others do the same.
- An example on and off the court: They lead not only with words, but with actions, respecting coaches, teammates, and opponents.

Once we've identified the team leader(s), we mustn't forget about the other members so they can also offer their best and contribute their contributions to the team's success. To do this, we must teach all players to assume team responsibilities; everyone must contribute and feel valued for that contribution. To achieve this, it's very important that the player understands their role within the team, thus fostering a sense of belonging. They must understand how their effort and commitment affect the team. Again, we find it important to define roles and have clear expectations so that the player knows what we expect of them. To involve all team members, we must promote open communication and involve them in decision-making (planning and strategies), creating spaces where everyone can express their ideas and concerns. As part of the process for players to assume team responsibility, it is important to emphasize that mistakes are part of learning and that each player must be accountable for their actions without blaming others.

We previously discussed trust. In this section, it is also important to foster self-confidence and individual responsibility for the benefit of the team. To achieve this, we must reward responsible behavior, that is, recognize and highlight when a player assumes their responsibilities. Ultimately, if all players understand the importance of their role and feel responsible for the team's success, the group dynamic will be stronger and more effective.

Promoting internal communication between players on the court

Promoting effective internal communication among players on the court is essential for improving teamwork, coordination, and decision-making. It helps build a cohesive unit, enhances overall performance, and fosters mutual trust. Communication goes beyond simply calling for the ball or issuing commands, it involves creating a shared understanding of each other's strengths, roles, and intentions, especially in high-pressure situations where anticipation and rapid response are key. When players communicate consistently, they become more attuned to one another's movements, enabling them to support and react as a unified group. Internal communication develops through both structured training and live game experiences, and can be broken down into two primary contexts:

1. During training

Training sessions provide the ideal environment to develop communication habits. Specific drills can be used to reinforce vocal interaction, such as concept-based exercises that require players to speak in order to complete an action, for example, calling out defensive adjustments ("switch," "help") or offensive cues ("cut," "pass").
Players can be assigned communication roles according to their position. A point guard may be tasked with directing offensive plays, while a center may guide defensive organization. Consistent positive feedback during drills builds confidence and reinforces effective habits, which can later be transferred into competitive play.

2. During games

In the intensity of game situations, concise and recognizable verbal cues become critical. Teams often use short keywords to convey strategies or positional adjustments, such as "switch" for defensive rotation or "double" to initiate a two-on-one defence. Identifying vocal leaders on the court, those who maintain active, clear communication, can significantly elevate team coordination.

Non-verbal communication is equally important. Eye contact, body language, and standardized hand signals or gestures are tools that enhance synchronization and response time when verbal communication is limited due to noise or pace of play.

Enhancing collective decision-making through group dynamics

In addition to improving in-game communication, collective decision-making is a skill that can be intentionally developed through structured group dynamics. These methods encourage players to reflect, debate, and contribute to team planning and tactical execution.

Group dynamics can be integrated through various formats:

- **Warm-ups and small group drills** to develop coordination and mutual awareness.
- **Simulated high-pressure game scenarios** that challenge players to respond collectively.
- **Video analysis sessions**, where the team reviews its own games or professional examples, discussing what worked, what didn't, and how decisions impacted outcomes.

Some practical examples include:

- **Brainstorming sessions**: Players and coaching staff collaborate on identifying strategies to improve team performance, followed by group voting to prioritize actions.
- **Real-time simulations**: Hypothetical game situations are posed (e.g., "You're down by five with 3 minutes left—what's the plan?"), and players collectively decide and enact responses during training, followed by analysis.
- **Rotating leadership**: Assigning different players to lead parts of the training (e.g., warm-up routines, drill selection, or team motivation) fosters ownership, responsibility, and shared leadership across the group.

By combining consistent communication habits with inclusive decision-making processes, teams become more adaptable, united, and empowered both on and off the court.

5.0 TACTICAL CONCEPTS AND GAME STRATEGIES

This chapter presents core tactical principles in wheelchair basketball, including offensive and defensive strategies, team formations, and adaptations based on player classifications. Emphasis is placed on practical execution and in-game decision-making relevant to different playing situations.

5.1 OFFENSIVE STRATEGIES

Offence can be played with or without the ball and it is important that players learn to play effectively off the ball, to get themselves or a teammate free to receive the ball. It requires attacking players to read and react to what the defence presents them and make the most appropriate decision accordingly. In wheelchair basketball, it is essential that teammates work together to move the ball up the court, through passing and moving as a unit.

When working individually, players can get open by incorporating fakes and feints to get around their opponents and get open. Fakes include movements with the head, shoulder, chair, or ball, is a fundamental part of individual offence, and should be practiced so they become believable. Once open, the attacking player should face the basket, to receive the ball and get into triple threat position. A player in the triple threat position with the ball will have the option to shoot, pass, or dribble/drive to the basket. The defensive pressure and player position on the court will dictate which option is the most appropriate and breaks down as follows:

- Shoot option: used if the attacking player is in shooting range and on balance
- Pass option: used if another player is cutting towards the basket or to further advance the ball
- Dribble option: used to advance the ball to the basketball for a lay-up or to draw a defending player

When working as a team on offense, the following strategies can be used:

5.1.1 FAST BREAK

A fast break is a high-speed offensive strategy used to quickly move the ball up the court and attempt to score before the opposing team has a chance to set up their defense. It is an essential tactic in wheelchair basketball.

How a fast break works

A fast break typically happens in one of the following situations:

1. After a defensive rebound – A player secures the ball and immediately looks for an outlet pass to a teammate moving up the court.
2. Following a steal or turnover – If the defence forces a mistake or intercepts a pass, they can quickly transition into offense before the opposing team recovers.
3. After a blocked shot or missed basket – If the defence successfully blocks a shot or the offensive team misses, they can capitalise on the moment to push forward.

Key steps in a fast break:

1. Quick transition from defense to offense – The moment possession is gained; players immediately push up the court to create an attacking opportunity.
2. Outlet pass – A quick pass is made to a teammate positioned for the break, typically further up the court than the last defender (or in a position to get past them).
3. Spacing and filling lanes – Offensive players spread out in lanes to create passing options and avoid congestion. The fastest players lead the break, while others provide support, often setting picks to create more space and block a defender's path to the ball.
4. Decision-making – As they near the basket, the ball-handler decides whether to take the shot, pass to a teammate in a better position, or reset the offense if the defense has recovered.

Fast break variations in wheelchair basketball

- Two-on-one or three-on-two breaks – These situations occur when the offense outnumbers the defense, creating an easy scoring opportunity, often as a result of a successful back-pick or a turnover.
- Solo fast break – If a single player is significantly ahead of the defense, they may go straight to the basket for a layup or short-range shot.
- Trailer option – A trailing player stays slightly behind the fast break in case of a missed shot, allowing them to recover the rebound to set and shoot or reset the offense.

- Defensive players recovering – Defenders will sprint back to protect the basket, so fast break players must maintain speed to avoid potential blocks or contact.
- Pacing and energy management – Pushing at high speed requires significant effort, so teams must balance fast breaks with structured half-court play.
- Communication – Fast breaks rely on quick, clear communication to ensure players make the right passes and take advantage of scoring opportunities.

5.1.2 PICK AND ROLL IN WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

A screen or "pick" occurs when an offensive player attempts to block, or "screen", a defensive player away from the man he is guarding, thereby freeing up that player for an open shot or pass. Setting good "picks" is fundamental as they enable a teammate to become free and move into a good shooting position, also known as "rolling".

How the pick and roll works

1. Pick (screen) – One offensive player (the screener) positions their wheelchair in the path of a defender, blocking them and preventing them from following the ball handler.
2. Roll (cut to the basket) – After setting the pick, the screener quickly moves (or "rolls") toward the basket to receive a pass for a scoring opportunity.
3. Decision-making – The ball handler can either take an open shot, drive to the basket, or pass to the rolling player.

Executing a pick and roll:

Picking and rolling in wheelchair basketball relies on smart positioning, chair movement, and working with teammates to create an easy path to the basket or an open shot.

Key steps:

1. Setting the pick:
   a. The screener moves into the defender's path and positions their wheelchair at an angle to create an effective block.
2. Ball handler uses the pick:
   a. The ball handler dribbles close to the screener, forcing the defender to either go around the screen or get stuck.
   b. If the defender hesitates, the ball handler can take a shot or drive towards the basket.

3. The Roll:
   a. Once the ball handler moves past, the screener quickly turns and pushes toward the basket.
   b. The ball handler can then pass to the rolling player for an easy scoring chance.

Guidelines for successful picking:

- Ensure attackers are in a good position to set a pick. The person that picks usually gets the roll to the basket as per diagram.
- Player B sets a pick on player A's defender.
- Player A must be ready and stay in one location so that player B (the picker) knows where and how to set the pick.
- Separate from your team-mate, in a diagonal line, away from the basket. Know the position of power for you and your team-mate.
- Hold the pick until your team-mate creates space between you and the defence. The goal is to set up an easier shot for your teammate.

Why the pick and roll is effective

- Creates space – Helps the offense get open shots by disrupting defensive positioning and getting the offense closer to the basket.
- Forces defensive mismatches – If defenders switch assignments, it can create mismatches where a taller or faster offensive player gains an advantage.
- Works for all classifications – Can be adapted for both high-pointers (more mobility) and low-pointers (less mobility but strong positioning skills).

5.1.3 SPACING IN WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Spacing is a fundamental concept in wheelchair basketball that ensures offensive players are positioned effectively on the court. Good spacing helps teams create open passing lanes, driving opportunities, and high-percentage shots while making it harder for defenders to pressure the ball.

<u>Why spacing is important</u>

1. Creates offensive opportunities – Proper spacing allows ball handlers to move freely without being crowded by teammates.
2. Enhances passing and ball movement – Well-spaced players can pass quickly and efficiently, reducing turnovers.
3. Opens driving lanes – Players with good spacing can push towards the basket without defensive congestion.
4. Prevents defensive pressure – Spreading the floor forces defenders to cover more ground, making it harder to trap or double-team.
5. Maximizes pick and roll efficiency – Proper spacing ensures defenders can't easily recover after a screen is set.

<u>Key principles of good spacing</u>

1. Avoid overcrowding
   a. Players should maintain at least one to two wheelchair lengths between teammates to allow room for movement.
   b. Overcrowding can lead to defenders easily switching or blocking passing lanes.
2. Seal for teammates
   a. Players should use their chair to block a defender & create space for themselves or their teammates.
   b. To seal effectively, players position themselves between the defender & the ball.
   c. Good sealing helps in gaining a better position for pass, shots and driving lanes.
3. Set screens
   a. Set solid screens by positioning your chair to obstruct the defender's path. This creates open shots.
   b. Be sure to set legal screens & stay alert to the movement of both the ball and the defenders

1. Triangle and wide setups
    a. Teams often use a triangle or wide formation (3-out, 2-in) to keep passing options open and prevent defenders from collapsing inside.
    b. The spacing between players should create multiple angles for passing and shooting.
2. Balance the court
    a. Players should distribute themselves evenly, ensuring both sides of the court are active.
    b. A balanced offense makes it harder for the defense to focus on one side or one player.
3. Stay mobile and adjust
    a. Players should continuously work together to create space, moving into open areas when defenders leave gaps.
    b. Static positioning allows defenders to recover and pressure the ball more easily.

Common spacing mistakes

- Bunching up – Too many players in one area makes passing and movement difficult.
- Crowding the ball handler – Teammates should create space rather than closing in, limiting passing options.
- Ignoring the weak side – Spacing should involve the entire court, not just one side.

5.1.4 MOVING THE BALL IN WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Effective ball movement is crucial in wheelchair basketball to break down defenses, create open shots, and maintain offensive flow. Since players rely on their arms for both pushing and dribbling, teams must emphasize quick decision-making, smart passing, and coordinated movement.

Ways to move the ball efficiently

1. Passing (primary method)
    a. Quick, accurate passes help maintain speed and prevent defenders from setting up.
    b. Common passes:

     i. Chest Pass – Fast and direct; ideal for quick ball movement.

     ii. Bounce Pass – Useful in tight spaces to avoid interceptions.

     iii. Overhead/Hook Pass – Used for long-distance passing or breaking full-court pressure.

     iv. Lob Pass – Helps get the ball over defenders, often to taller or more mobile players.

2. Ball reversals & swinging the ball
   a. Moving the ball from one side of the court to the other stretches the defense.
   b. A quick ball reversal forces defenders to reposition, creating open driving or passing lanes.

3. Fast break transition
   a. In fast break situations, one player quickly advances the ball while teammates sprint to get ahead.
   b. Passing is often faster than dribbling, so teams focus on quick outlet passes after rebounds or turnovers.

4. Pick and roll to move the ball
   a. A ball handler uses a screen (pick) and then either passes or drives while their teammate "rolls" to the basket.
   b. This forces defenders to make decisions and opens up passing options.

5. Give-and-Go
   a. A player passes the ball, then immediately moves into open space to receive a return pass.
   b. This method is effective for breaking tight defenses.

Key concepts for effective ball movement:
- Keep the Ball Moving – Avoid holding onto the ball too long, as it allows defenders to reset.
- Use Smart Angles – Passes should be made at angles that are hard for defenders to intercept.
- Communicate – Clear signals and eye contact help prevent turnovers.
- Protect the Ball – Players must be aware of defenders trying to intercept or block passes.

Common mistakes to avoid:
- Over-Dribbling – Wastes energy and slows down offensive flow.
- Telegraphing Passes – Looking directly at a target before passing makes it easier for defenders to steal.
- Holding the Ball Too Long – Leads to pressure from defenders and limits offensive movement.

5.1.5 TRANSITIONS AND CROSSING IN WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Transition play in wheelchair basketball refers to the shift between offense and defense, while crossing is a technique used to maneuver around defenders and take them off their path by forcing them to slow down, stop, or change direction. Both are essential for maintaining speed, controlling the tempo, and creating scoring opportunities.

1. Transitions

A team must quickly shift from offense to defence or defence to offense to maintain control of the game.

Offensive transition (fast break)

This happens when a team gains possession and quickly moves the ball up the court to score before the defence can set up.

Key steps:
1. A defender or rebounder makes a quick outlet pass to a teammate up the court.
2. Player's sprint using long, powerful pushes to create a numbers advantage.
3. The ball is moved quickly with passes rather than dribbles for speed.
4. A fast-moving player cuts towards the basket for a scoring opportunity.

Goal: Attack before the defence is ready!

Defensive transition (getting back on defence)

When the opposing team gains possession, the priority is to get back on defence and prevent an easy fast break.

Key steps:
1. Players turn quickly and push hard to get back into position.
2. One or two defenders "drop back" first to cover the key and stop an easy basket.
3. The rest of the defense organizes and picks up opponents.
4. Players communicate to avoid mismatches or leaving shooters open.

Goal: Stop fast breaks and force a half-court offense!

5.1.6 CROSSING IN WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Crossing is a technique used to get past defenders by getting between them and the basket, forcing them off their desired path on defense. Since wheelchair basketball doesn't allow sudden pivots like in standing basketball, crossing is essential for effective movement.

How to perform a cross:

Basic cross:

1. Approach the defender at an angle, putting your chair between them and the offensive basket.
2. Force them off their path, either towards a sideline, stopping them, or making them turn and change direction.

Crossing - beating full-court press:

1. If the defending team applies full-court pressure, use crossing the course movements to avoid being trapped.
2. Keep the ball moving to avoid getting stuck.

Why transitions & crossing matter

Transitions keep the game fast and dynamic. If a team can transition quickly, they can score before the defence is set.

Crossing allows ball handlers to navigate through defenders and maintain control of the offense.

5.1.7 MAN OUT IN WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Man out involves the offensive team back picking defenders to create a numerical mismatch. This advantage is realized by creating space and driving lanes. Use the man out strategy to create space & improve offensive flow. Utilising these offensive strategies will enhance your ability to manage the game and create scoring opportunities. Keep practicing and implementing these techniques.

When does "man out" happen?

Defensive players are prevented from getting back after a turnover, missed/made shot, an in-bound play, or rebound.

Offensive players maintain chair position closer to the offensive basket by picking/blocking defenders and then pushing ahead of them

How to execute a "man out" play

1. Create the numbers advantage
   - Following a change of possession (i.e. after a basket, in bound play, turnover) at least one player stops a defender from getting back over the halfway line, ideally by stopping their chair completely.
   - Communication is key! The lead player should signal to teammates that they have a man out.
2. Spread the floor for maximum space
   - Offensive players should avoid bunching together and set-up along the wings, with two players on each side.
   - Once the offense is set, the player holding the man out pushes across half court and receives the ball.
3. Make the defender commit
   - The ball handler should drive towards the basket, forcing the first defender to make a choice between stopping the drive or covering the pass.
   - A quick fake or hesitation move can make the defender hesitate.
4. Pass or finish the play
   - If the defender commits to stopping the ball handler, pass to the open teammate for an easy layup.
   - If the defender doesn't commit, attack the basket aggressively for a high-percentage shot.

Why "man out" is effective

- High-percentage shots: Creates easy layups or open shots.
- Puts pressure on the defence: Forces defenders to make quick, difficult decisions.
- Rewards fast transition play: Teams that push quickly in transition can capitalize on defensive mistakes.

5.2 DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES

Individual defence can be played either on or off the ball. It requires hard work, intelligence, & communication. Players must read and react to what the attacker presents them. Defenders should keep their hands on the driving wheels at all times and develop fast hand speed and quicken their reaction time. Generally defensive players should position themselves between the attacking player and the basket they are defending. Team defence requires players to adopt and apply good individual defensive principles and combine them with good communication, hard work and teamwork. Included in team defence are:

- Defending against pick & rolls and screens: Defenders must deny space to opponents while being careful to avoid collapsing into the key. If the opposition player is in position to pick, the defender should turn inwards to the basket and try to regain positional advance, typically between the offensive player and the basket they are defending.

- The Switch: When the offensive player sets a good pick, the defence is exposed which means that it may be necessary to call a "switch". Quite simply the two defending players will swap the players that they are marking.

- Zone Defence:
  - Zone defence is when each player is assigned the duty of marking a particular area
  - The most basic and reliable defence is known as 1-2-2. This formation sees the point guard positioned in the free throw area. The other two guards are positioned on the elbow of the key. The remaining two post players (ideally tall players) are positioned at the base of the key directly behind the guards.

- Man-to-Man:
  - Man-to-man defence is when each player is assigned the duty of marking a particular opponent

When working as a team on defence, the following strategies can be used:

5.2.1 PRESS DEFENCE (FULL-COURT OR HALF-COURT PRESS)

A press defence is a high-intensity strategy where defenders put immediate pressure on the offensive team as soon as they gain possession. It can be played in two main ways:

<u>Full-court press</u>

- Defenders pick up their opponents immediately after a made basket or before an inbound pass, with the intention of stopping them from advancing up the court.
- Players use their wheelchairs to block passing lanes and force turnovers.
- This is physically demanding but effective for teams with high endurance and speed.

Goal: Force turnovers, trap the offense, disrupt fast breaks, and slow down the offense.

<u>High line defence</u>

A high line defence means defenders position themselves further up the court, rather than staying deep near their basket, usually above the three-point arc.

<u>How It works:</u>

- Defenders create a horizontal line across the court, picking up their opponents as they approach the line.
- The aim of the high line is to maintain one, flat line, preventing the opposition from gaining territory for as long as possible.
- Defenders will switch, rotate and adjust their formation to keep 1-on-1 matchups.

Goal: Control the pace of the game, prevent the offense from getting close to the basket, and stop quick offensive transitions.

Risk: If the offense breaks through, they might have an easy scoring opportunity due to fewer defenders near the basket or by setting up effective picks and seals.

5.2.2 ZONE DEFENCE

In a zone defence, players guard specific areas rather than marking an individual opponent. It's useful for controlling space and helping weaker defenders.

How it works:

- Defences organise themselves in a 1-2-2 formation.
  - One defender plays at the top of the key, in the free throw area.
  - Two defenders line up near the elbow of the paint, guarding the top portion of the key
  - Two defence guard the key near the baseline (typically high-pointers)
- The top defender usually covers the ball carrier as they approach the 3-point arc.
- The pairs of defenders protecting the key work together to prevent the offense from entering the key through 1-on-1s, pick and rolls, or seals.
- Communication is key for defenders when switching who they're guarding and for telling teammates where the ball is.

Goal: Protect the basket, force outside shots, and control rebounds.

Risk: If the offense moves the ball well, they can force gaps in the zone.

5.2.3 DEFENSIVE TRANSITION

Transition defence is the ability to get back quickly and prevent easy fast breaks when the offense loses possession.

Key Steps:
1. Teammates work together to get all five defenders back in their defensive setup, ensuring no offensive players are closer to their basket.
2. The defence will often need to set picks to allow their teammates to get back, while simultaneously slowing down the offense.
3. Teammates need to communicate their position and if they need help getting back on defence.

Goal: Stop fast breaks and force the offense into a half-court setup.

Risk: If defenders don't get back in time, the offense can take advantage of open space.

6.0 ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT AND MODIFICATIONS

6.1 WHEELCHAIR

Wheelchair basketball chairs are specially designed for speed, agility, and stability. They differ significantly from everyday wheelchairs in terms of structure, materials, and performance features (see below). All equipment used by players must be appropriate for the game. Any equipment designed to give an unfair advantage (i.e. increased height) or items that may cause injury to other players (i.e. casts, hair accessories or jewellery) are not permitted.

Parts of a Wheelchair

Key features of a basketball wheelchair

- Lightweight frame – Typically made of aluminium or titanium to allow for quick movement and durability.
- Cambered wheels – The wheels are angled to improve manoeuvrability, stability, and turning speed.
- Anti-tip wheels – Positioned at the back of the chair to prevent tipping when making sharp turns or sudden stops.
- Adjustable strapping system – Helps players secure themselves based on their classification and level of mobility.
- Footplate and leg protection – Keeps the feet stable and reduces the risk of injury from impacts during play.
- Quick-release wheels – Makes transport and storage easier, allowing players to remove and attach wheels efficiently.

Chair suitability & fit

The right chair is key to performance and comfort. A good fit enhances mobility, while a poor fit can cause discomfort or injuries.

When selecting a chair, focus on:

- Seat width: Snug, not tight.
- Seat depth: Should support the thighs without cutting circulation.
- Backrest height: Lower for better mobility; higher for more support.
- Wheel camber: Wider camber improves turning and stability (18 degrees typically).
- Footplate: Positioned comfortably for movement without affecting speed.

6.1.1 CUSTOMISATION FOR INDIVIDUAL PLAYER NEEDS

Each player has unique physical abilities, so basketball wheelchairs are customised to maximise performance and comfort:

- **Seating Adjustments** – The seat height and depth are modified based on the player's classification and trunk control.
- **Strapping Systems** – High-pointers (players with more upper body mobility) may require fewer straps, while low-pointers (players with limited mobility) often use chest, lap, and foot straps for stability (see more below).
- **Wheel Size and Positioning** – The size of the wheels affects turning speed and balance, and adjustments are made based on playing position, with high classification using larger wheels and low classification players using smaller wheels
- **Backrest Height** – Lower backrests offer more freedom of movement for high-pointers, while higher backrests provide additional support for low-pointers.

Strapping:

Strapping can be placed around a player's torso, lap or feet depending on classification. Players may use straps and supports to secure their body in the wheelchair or hold the legs together. When strapped correctly, basketball chair will respond as if it is a natural part of athlete's body.

High Pointer	Lower Pointer	Waist Strap	Chest Strap	Leg Straps	Foot Straps
lower torso, upper legs.	mid torso, feet & upper legs.	Size & position depend on trunk balance. Best to strap hips & abdomen.	For more severely impaired athletes.	Secure legs.	Keep feet & heels secure.

6.1.2 MAINTENANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure safety and performance, regular wheelchair maintenance is essential:

- Daily checks – Inspect tires for air pressure and damage, and check that straps are secure.
- Wheel and bearing maintenance – Clean and lubricate wheel bearings regularly to ensure smooth movement.
- Frame inspection – Check for cracks or structural weaknesses, especially after intense games or falls.
- Straps and padding – Ensure all straps are intact and padding remains in good condition to avoid discomfort or skin injuries.

6.2 ADDITIONAL ADAPTIVE TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES

In addition to the wheelchair itself, various adaptive tools and technologies can enhance performance, safety, and individual player comfort. These are particularly useful for athletes with limited hand function, reduced trunk control, or specific physical needs.

Quad grips – Quad grips on rims can assist individuals with limited dexterity to achieve a greater push

Handrims with projections (also known as "vertical handrims" or "peg pushrims") – These handrims are designed for players with limited grip strength or non-functional fingers. The protrusions allow the athlete to push the wheels without needing to fully grasp the rim, facilitating better propulsion and control.

Customized sports gloves for grip – Specialized leather or rubber gloves improve friction between the hands and the pushrims. They are particularly helpful for athletes with weak grip or sensory impairments, and they reduce the risk of skin injuries during intensive play.

Wheel spoke guards – Plastic or carbon fibre guards cover the spokes of the wheels to prevent hand injuries during rapid rotations. They also offer aesthetic and branding benefits, such as the option to feature team logos or colors.

Ergonomic seat cushions and anti-decubitus pads – Used to provide additional comfort and reduce the risk of pressure sores, especially for low-classification players who spend extended periods in a static seated position.

Customized pushrims – Pushrims may vary in material and diameter based on the player's hand strength, injury type, or personal preferences regarding speed and control. These adaptations support more efficient propulsion mechanics.

Anti-roll bars / lateral stabilizers – Additional rear or side stabilizers help prevent tipping during sharp turns or sudden stops. These are especially important for players with limited trunk stability, as they increase safety without compromising performance.

Digital performance monitoring tools – Though not widely used at amateur levels, elite teams may employ software or sensor-based systems to monitor speed, propulsion cycles, distance covered, or seating posture. These tools support training analytics and individual performance tracking and are increasingly used in research and national programs.

7.0 ETHICAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter addresses the ethical and legal responsibilities of coaches, staff, and institutions involved in wheelchair basketball. Ethical coaching goes beyond physical training—it includes respecting human rights, promoting safe and inclusive environments, and ensuring fair play. At the same time, legal obligations such as safeguarding, accessibility, and anti-discrimination frameworks must be understood and respected, particularly when working with athletes with disabilities. The following sections explore these responsibilities in detail, with a focus on good practice, compliance, and the principles that uphold the integrity of the sport.

7.1 ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF SPORTS COACHES

Respect for human dignity
Coaches must treat all athletes with respect and dignity, regardless of their personal background, identity, or ability. Discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, disability, or other status must be actively rejected, as emphasized in Article 1.4 of the IOC

Code of Ethics.
Promotion of a safe and healthy environment
Coaches are responsible for ensuring a training and competitive environment that prioritizes the physical and emotional safety of athletes. This includes planning appropriate activities, supervising training, and actively preventing injury risks (IOC Code of Ethics, Article 1.5).

Development of skills and citizenship values
Beyond technical performance, coaches have a duty to promote social and moral development, including teamwork, fairness, and personal growth. According to the European Sport Coaching Framework, athlete-centered coaching must protect and empower the integrity of each athlete.

Integrity and fair play
Coaches must maintain honesty in all actions and avoid manipulation of results or encouragement of doping. Abiding by anti-doping rules (e.g., WADA CoachTrue program) and avoiding corrupt practices are fundamental responsibilities.

Confidentiality
All personal and medical information shared by athletes must be handled with confidentiality, fostering trust and safeguarding athlete privacy.

7.2 LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF SPORTS COACHES

<u>Athlete safety</u>
Coaches must take all reasonable measures to ensure a safe environment. This includes risk assessment, equipment inspection, and emergency planning (European Sport Coaching Framework).

<u>Protection of minors</u>
Working with children and youth requires compliance with legal requirements such as criminal background checks, safeguarding training, and child protection policies. These measures help prevent abuse and promote ethical engagement in youth sport.

<u>Licensing and qualification requirements</u>
In many countries, coaching requires appropriate certification. For example, in Portugal, wheelchair basketball coaches are required to complete annual training clinics. National or federation-level regulations often determine the required qualifications for coaching in disability sports.

<u>Compliance with anti-doping regulations</u>
Coaches must educate athletes about prohibited substances and promote clean sport. As outlined in the IOC Code of Ethics (Principle 3.8), preventing doping is a shared responsibility of sports organizations and coaches.

7.3 ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN DISABILITY SPORTS

<u>Promotion of autonomy and independence</u>
In disability sports, coaching should aim to enhance each athlete's autonomy. This includes setting realistic yet challenging goals and providing tools for independence through sport. For many people with disabilities, sport is a key space for socialization and identity development.

<u>Adapted and inclusive training</u>
Training programs must be adapted to the individual needs of each athlete, whether they have physical, sensory, or cognitive impairments. As outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 30), inclusive coaching ensures equal access to instruction, participation, and resources.

<u>Creating non-discriminatory environments</u>
Coaches must actively combat ableism and ensure that all athletes receive equal opportunities to develop and compete.

7.4 LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN DISABILITY SPORTS

Accessibility and inclusion
Training and competition venues must comply with national accessibility regulations. Coaches are responsible for ensuring that athletes with disabilities can fully participate in all activities. This includes adjusting facilities, equipment, and support.

Equal opportunities and anti-discrimination
Coaches must ensure that athletes with disabilities are not excluded or marginalized. Article 30 of the UN Convention reinforces the right of children and adults with disabilities to equal access to recreational and sporting activities.

7.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF CLASSIFICATION IN DISABILITY SPORT

Eligibility and competition
To compete in IWBF-sanctioned events, every athlete must possess an official Player Classification ID issued by the IWBF. The classification process is conducted by a trained panel and considers each athlete's functional abilities. Players are grouped into classes (1.0–4.5), and team composition during a game cannot exceed 14 points.

Classification as a fairness mechanism
Classification is designed to ensure that outcomes are determined by skill, not the extent of disability. According to the IPC Classification Code, classification focuses on how impairments affect performance of fundamental sport activities, not on athletic achievement alone.

Functional sports classification
This system considers how disability affects movement in specific sports. In wheelchair basketball, it evaluates how an athlete's physical capacity impacts play—including trunk control, range of motion, and ability to execute skills like pushing, passing, or shooting.

Eligibility requirements
Athletes must have a lower-limb impairment that results in permanent and measurable functional limitation. The IWBF outlines seven Minimum Impairment Criteria (MIC) for eligibility, aligned with the IPC's International Classification Code.

7.6 DEVELOPING CLASSIFICATION EXPERTISE: ITOS AND EDUCATION

<u>Classifiers and technical staff</u>

National federations are encouraged to establish dedicated classification bodies (e.g., ITOS) and to promote education programs for classifiers. These include modules on:

- Introduction to Functional Classification
- Eligibility and Diagnosis
- Class Definitions and Assignments
- Observation and Re-evaluation Procedures

Training classifiers ensures fair competition and accurate categorization of athletes, supporting ethical and legal compliance at all levels of the sport.

Useful resources and links:

- [World Anti-Doping Code (WADA)](#)
- [IOC Code of Ethics](#)
- [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [European Sport Coaching Framework](#)
- [2021 IWBF Classification Manual](#)
- [UNESCO Report on Inclusive Physical Education](#)

8.0 EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

This chapter outlines essential practices for managing emergencies in wheelchair basketball. It includes prevention strategies, injury protocols, emergency response procedures, and facility accessibility. Effective preparedness ensures the safety and well-being of all participants and promotes responsible team and event management.

8.1 PREVENTION AND PLANNING

Effective emergency preparedness in wheelchair basketball begins with prevention. Prior planning ensures that players, coaches, and support staff can respond appropriately to injuries or medical incidents during training or matches.

Emergency action plan and basic supplies

Before any event, a written emergency plan must be in place, along with a fully equipped first aid kit. Essential items include:

- Sterile bandages and gauze
- Disinfectant and gloves
- Ice packs or cold compresses
- Scissors and adhesive tape
- Basic over-the-counter medications
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED), if available

Defining emergency roles

Clearly assign responsibilities in advance:

- Who calls emergency services
- Who provides initial care
- Who coordinates communication with family or staff

Basic first aid protocol

1. Assess the situation – Stop the game, observe the injury, and ask the player about symptoms
2. Act safely – Wear gloves, stay calm, and reassure the player
3. Call for help – In serious cases, contact emergency services and avoid moving the player if spinal or head injury is suspected

8.2 MEDICAL STAFF AND THEIR ROLES

According to IWBF and national federation standards, medical presence at competitions is mandatory.

Required personnel:

- Doctor or paramedic: Trained in sports medicine, responsible for serious injuries
- First aid responder: Can be a physiotherapist or trained coach for immediate intervention
- Ambulance service: Mandatory at high-level events for emergency transfers

Responsibilities before, during, and after the game:

- Before: Check emergency equipment and court safety
- During: Monitor incidents, treat injuries, and make return-to-play decisions
- After: Evaluate player recovery, recommend follow-up care

8.3 TRAINING LEVELS FOR EMERGENCY AWARENESS

Emergency awareness should be embedded at all levels:

Basic level (players and teammates):

- Recognize fatigue or pain
- Know when to stop training
- Communicate discomfort clearly

Intermediate level (coaches and trainers):

- Trained in sports first aid
- Monitor technique to prevent injuries
- Spot mental fatigue and stress

Advanced level (physiotherapists and medical staff):

- Diagnose overuse injuries
- Provide rehabilitation
- Monitor training load and recovery

8.4 COMMON INJURIES IN WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Upper body injuries:

- Rotator cuff tendonitis – Shoulder pain from repetitive movement
- Carpal tunnel syndrome – Tingling or pain in wrist/fingers
- Wrist and finger sprains – From impact or falls

Lower body and back:

- Pressure ulcers – From long periods in the chair
- Low back pain – Due to posture and trunk movement

Impact injuries and falls:

- Contusions and hematomas – Bruising from collisions
- Fractures/dislocations – In arms or fingers
- Concussions – Rare, but possible from falls

Exertion-related injuries:

- Muscle overload – From overtraining
- Dehydration and fatigue – From high physical demand

8.5 INJURY-SPECIFIC PROTOCOLS

Musculoskeletal injuries (sprains/strains):
- Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation (RICE)
- Medical check if pain persists

Fractures and dislocations:
- Do not move the limb
- Immobilize and apply ice
- Call emergency services

Head injuries (concussion):
- Keep the player awake and at rest
- Monitor symptoms for 24 hours
- Seek immediate care for vomiting or unconsciousness

Hand and wrist injuries:
- Apply ice, immobilize, and seek help for fractures

Pressure ulcers and wounds:
- Clean the wound, dress with sterile bandage
- Avoid pressure on the area

Choking or breathing difficulty (asthma, obstruction):
- Help use inhaler or perform Heimlich if needed
- Call emergency services if unresolved

Cardiac arrest or fainting:
- Call for emergency help
- Begin CPR: 30 compressions + 2 breaths
- Use AED if available

8.6 ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFETY IN SPORTS FACILITIES

Ensuring accessible facilities is part of comprehensive emergency preparedness.

Accessible showers:
- Large enough for wheelchairs
- No raised thresholds
- Grab bars and foldable bench
- Handheld showerhead
- Non-slip flooring

Accessible bathrooms:
- Door width: Minimum 80 cm
- Turning radius: 1.5 m
- Toilet height: 45–50 cm with side bars
- Open space under sink for wheelchair access
- Tilted mirrors for seated users

These measures are essential for comfort, dignity, and safety during both regular use and emergencies.

9.0 WORKSHOPS

The workshops presented in this manual are designed as flexible, interactive learning tools that complement and enhance the overall objectives of the "Building Bridges" project. Rooted in the principles of non-formal education and experiential learning, these workshops offer practical, inclusive, and easily adaptable formats for use in a variety of settings. They are intended for coaches, sport workers, educators, and facilitators working with athletes with disabilities, but can also be applied more broadly to raise awareness and build empathy within the general population.

The primary purpose of the workshops is to promote sensitivity and understanding regarding the experiences of persons with disabilities in sport. By engaging participants in participatory, reflective, and team-based activities, the sessions support the development of key competences such as communication, cooperation, trust-building, and inclusive thinking. Coaches and professionals working in wheelchair basketball can use these workshops to strengthen team cohesion and improve internal communication, while also reflecting on their own perceptions and attitudes toward disability, inclusion, and functional diversity.

At the same time, the workshops serve a motivational function for persons with disabilities themselves. Through accessible and empowering formats, participants are encouraged to explore their potential, build confidence, and discover the possibilities offered by sport and team engagement. The activities provide a safe and structured space to express emotions, reflect on barriers, and develop strategies for personal and collective growth. This makes the workshops suitable not only for training environments, but also for introductory community sessions, awareness campaigns, or team-building initiatives that aim to foster empowerment through sport.

Each workshop is modular and can be adjusted in terms of duration, group size, and depth, depending on the experience level of the participants and the specific context. Facilitators are encouraged to adapt the content to local realities, incorporate cultural references, and select elements from other chapters of the manual, such as motivational strategies, team dynamics exercises, or communication tools, as additional materials to strengthen the educational value of each session. For instance, technical skill development exercises or communication strategies from earlier sections can be intertwined into workshop debriefings or used to design follow-up tasks.

While the workshops offer structure, they are not prescriptive. Facilitators are invited to modify or combine elements based on the needs of the group and the specific learning goals they aim to achieve. Some sessions work best as warm-ups before formal training, others can be implemented as standalone modules during awareness-raising events, while others may fit into youth camps, sports education seminars, or team retreats.

Ultimately, the workshops aim to build bridges, between players of different classifications, between coaches and their teams, between individuals with and without disabilities, and between sport and society. They foster an understanding of sport as a space for belonging, solidarity, and human connection. In doing so, they contribute to creating an environment where every athlete, regardless of functional ability, is valued, included, and empowered to grow.

Session: Two thrust and one myth

Theme: Understanding disabilities / Sensitization of coaches and sports staff

Time: 45-60 minutes

Overview: This session aims to raise awareness among coaches and sports professionals about the abilities and diversity of people with disabilities. Through a creative and reflective group activity, participants will confront their assumptions, learn to challenge stereotypes, and build greater empathy and understanding.

Objectives:
·To challenge common misconceptions about people with disabilities
·To increase empathy and social awareness among sports professionals
·To foster critical thinking and reflection about inclusion and ability
·To prepare coaches for respectful and realistic engagement with athletes with disabilities

Materials:
·Prepared list of "2 truths and 1 myth" statements (printouts or slides)
·Flipchart or whiteboard
·Markers
·Paper and pens for participants
·Timer or stopwatch

Group size: 10-30

Preparation: The facilitator should prepare 10–15 short sets of statements, each with 2 truths and 1 false statement, about people with disabilities, their sports achievements, social participation, or technology (Handout). Statements should be surprising, credible, and thematically diverse (physical, sensory, cognitive disabilities). The facilitator must also be ready to explain each statement after discussion.

Instructions: Begin the session by initiating a brief group discussion. Ask participants how they define disability and what common assumptions they believe people have about persons with disabilities. Write their responses on a flipchart or whiteboard. Encourage participants to share freely and guide the discussion toward uncovering negative or limiting associations such as helplessness, tragedy, illness, dependence, or lack of ability. Acknowledge these perceptions and explain that the aim of the session is to challenge and expand these views through facts and lived experiences. Next, introduce the main activity: "Two truths and one myth". Divide participants into small groups of 3 to 5 people and

provide each group with a set of three statements related to disability and sport, use examples from the Handout or create your own. Explain that two of the statements are true, and one is a myth. Ask each group to read the statements, discuss their ideas, and agree on which one they believe is the myth. After a few minutes of discussion, ask each group to share their answer and reasoning with the rest of the participants. After each group presents, reveal the correct answer and provide a short educational explanation, using relevant data, examples, or statistics to clarify why the statement is true or false. Repeat this process with three to four different sets of statements, depending on the available time. Once all the statements have been discussed, bring the whole group together for a facilitated reflection. Invite them to consider what surprised them, which assumptions or stereotypes were reflected in their group's discussions, and how this activity might influence their future behavior or decisions as coaches, athletes, or community leaders. For the final part of the session, ask each participant to write down one personal action they will take or one belief they will reconsider as a result of what they learned. If they feel comfortable, invite a few participants to share what they wrote with the group. Summarize the most important learning points, emphasizing the impact of attitude on opportunity and inclusion.

Debriefing and evaluation: Conclude the session with a short debrief and evaluation. Guide participants through a discussion using questions such as:

·What did you learn today that you didn't know before?
·Did this activity shift your perspective on disability?
·How can you apply this new awareness in your coaching or team environment?
·Why is it important not to judge ability based on physical appearance?

Tips for facilitator:

·Choose statements that reflect real-life complexity, not just extreme achievements, but everyday experiences of people with disabilities.
·Be ready to correct stereotypes without making participants feel judged.
·Encourage participants to speak freely, but moderate carefully if someone expresses biased views.
·Create a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere.

Handout:

Set 1

A. Top wheelchair basketball players can execute a "wheelie" to balance on two wheels during a game, allowing them to pivot 360 degrees in place to evade defenders.

Truth: This might seem like a myth due to the perceived difficulty of balancing in a wheelchair during a fast-paced game, but elite players master wheelies to enhance agility, performing rapid spins to outmaneuver opponents, as seen in Paralympic matches.

B. Wheelchair basketball players are less likely to commit fouls because their mobility is restricted by the wheelchair.

❌ **Myth**: Wheelchair basketball is a high-contact sport, and fouls (e.g., charging, illegal use of hands, or chair contact) are common due to the physicality of the game. Players' mobility in modern sports wheelchairs is highly dynamic, and foul rates are comparable to able-bodied basketball, as evidenced by Paralympic data.

C. **Some wheelchair basketball players can shoot the ball with enough force to score from half-court, relying solely on upper body strength and specialized chair positioning.**

Truth: This could be mistaken for a myth because half-court shots seem implausible without leg power, but players like Patrick Anderson have demonstrated this ability, using optimized wheelchairs and exceptional arm strength to launch long-range shots.

Set 2

A. Some blind individuals can distinguish colors by touch, using specialized devices.

Truth: This sounds like a myth due to its sci-fi-like nature, but devices like the EyeMusic or Colorino translate colors into vibrations or sounds, allowing blind users to "feel" or "hear" colors with training.

B. All blind people rely on guide dogs to navigate public spaces safely.

✕ **Myth**: While guide dogs are valuable, many blind individuals use white canes, echolocation, or apps like Be My Eyes for navigation, and some prefer not to use dogs due to lifestyle or maintenance needs.

C. Deaf individuals can "feel" music through vibrations, enabling them to dance professionally in synchronized performances.

Truth: This might seem unbelievable, but dancers like Shaheem Sanchez use floor vibrations and visual cues to perform complex choreography, appearing in professional shows and music videos.

Set 3

A. Athletes with amputations can compete in professional surfing competitions.

Truth: This could be mistaken for a myth due to the balance demands of surfing, but athletes like Bethany Hamilton, who lost an arm, compete at high levels using adaptive techniques and equipment.

B. Wheelchair rugby players can reach speeds up to 15 mph (24 km/h) during matches, using custom chairs designed for impact resistance.

Truth: This seems like a myth due to the perceived limitations of wheelchairs, but "murderball" players use lightweight, reinforced chairs to achieve high speeds and withstand collisions.

C. Paralympic sports allow able-bodied athletes to compete alongside athletes with disabilities to promote inclusion.

✕ **Myth**: Paralympic sports are exclusively for athletes with disabilities, classified by functional ability. Mixed competitions may occur in informal settings, but not in official Paralympic events.

Set 4

A. All new assistive devices, like robotic exoskeletons, are universally compatible with every type of physical disability.

❌ **Myth**: This sounds plausible given technological advances, but devices are designed for specific conditions (e.g., exoskeletons for spinal cord injuries), and compatibility depends on the user's physical profile.

B. Some people with paralysis can control smart home devices, like lights or thermostats, using only their brain signals via non-invasive brain-computer interfaces.

Truth: This might seem like a myth due to its futuristic implications, but non-invasive BCIs, like those tested by Neuralink, allow users to control devices by thinking, with applications in home automation.

C. Individuals with motor impairments can use sip-and-puff technology to create digital art, producing detailed designs by controlling software with breath.

Truth: This could be mistaken for a myth because it sounds highly specialized, but artists like Greg Minielly use sip-and-puff devices to manipulate graphic design software, creating professional artwork.

Set 5

A. Some individuals with Down syndrome have successfully run their own businesses, with minimal support.

Truth: This might seem like a myth due to stereotypes about intellectual disabilities, but entrepreneurs like Collette Divitto (Collettey's Cookies) have built thriving businesses with tailored support.

B. All employers are required to hire a fixed percentage of employees with disabilities to meet diversity quotas.

❌ **Myth**: While some countries have disability employment incentives, mandatory quotas are not universal, and hiring depends on qualifications and accommodations, not fixed percentages.

C. People with autism can work as air traffic controllers, leveraging their ability to focus intensely on complex patterns and data.

Truth: This could be mistaken for a myth due to the high-stress nature of the job, but individuals with autism, when accommodated, excel in roles requiring precision, as seen in programs like FAA's neurodiversity initiatives.

Set 6

A. People with quadriplegia can skydive.

Truth: This seems like a myth due to the physical demands of skydiving, but programs like Skydive Ability use custom harnesses to enable safe jumps for people with severe mobility impairments.

B. All amusement parks provide fully accessible rides for persons with all types of disabilities, as mandated by international law.

❌ **Myth**: Accessibility varies widely, and while some parks offer adaptive rides, many lack equipment or training for all disabilities, and no universal international mandate exists.

C. Individuals with limb differences can compete in archery at the Paralympics, using mouth-operated or customized bows to achieve world-class accuracy.

Truth: This might seem implausible due to the precision required, but archers like Matt Stutzman, born without arms, use adaptive techniques to compete at elite levels.

Set 7

A. Wheelchair tennis players are allowed to let the ball bounce three times before returning it, to compensate for mobility.

❌ **Myth**: Wheelchair tennis follows almost identical rules to able-bodied tennis, with one key exception, players are allowed only two bounces, not three. This maintains competitive balance while accommodating mobility.

B. There is a soccer league in Europe where players with amputations compete using forearm crutches.

Truth: This may sound unlikely due to the physical demands of soccer, but Amputee Football is an established sport in countries like Poland and Turkey, with international tournaments where outfield players use forearm crutches and goalkeepers have one arm.

C. Some athletes with intellectual disabilities have won medals at the Paralympic Games in sports like swimming and athletics.

Truth: Although often overlooked, athletes with intellectual disabilities do compete in select Paralympic events. Since the 2012 Games, they have participated in sports such as athletics, swimming, and table tennis, demonstrating elite performance levels.

Set 8

A. Basketball players with spinal cord injuries often use gloves with rubber grips to shoot the ball more effectively.

Truth: This might seem strange, but many athletes wear specialized gloves to improve grip and control when dribbling or shooting. Rubberized materials help compensate for limited hand function.

B. Wheelchair basketball players are fully paralyzed from the waist down.

❌ **Myth:** Wheelchair basketball includes players with a wide range of physical impairments, not just complete paralysis. Some players have limited leg movement or conditions like spina bifida, cerebral palsy, or amputations, which still qualify them under classification rules.

C. In some matches, players in wheelchair basketball intentionally fall over (tip their chairs) as part of defensive maneuvers.

Truth: Though it sounds like a foul, tipping the chair can be a legitimate (and sometimes dramatic) defensive move or a result of aggressive blocking. Players are trained to fall safely and return to position quickly, especially in high-stakes matches.

Set 9

A. There are athletes who compete in archery by pulling the bowstring with their feet.

Truth: While it sounds physically impossible, archers like Matt Stutzman, born without arms, use their feet to draw, aim, and release arrows with extreme accuracy, even setting world records.

B. Adaptive rowing includes rowers who can steer the boat using only their head movements.

Truth: In certain classifications, athletes with high-level disabilities use head-controlled systems to steer adaptive rowing boats, combining modified seats and assistive technologies to compete independently.

C. All sports wheelchairs are custom-made and cannot be used by any other player.

✖ **Myth:** While elite players often have custom chairs, many clubs and programs use adjustable or shared sports wheelchairs for training, especially at beginner and intermediate levels.

Set 10

A. Some individuals with locked-in syndrome can compose music using eye-tracking devices to select notes on a digital interface.

Truth: This could be mistaken for a myth due to the severe limitations of locked-in syndrome, but technologies like EyeGaze enable users to create music by selecting notes with eye movements.

B. All new smartphones are designed with built-in accessibility features that fully support every type of disability.

✖ **Myth**: While smartphones include features like VoiceOver or switch control, they don't fully address all disabilities (e.g., cognitive impairments), and some features require third-party apps.

C. People with disabilities have invented assistive devices, like a wheelchair that climbs stairs, patented by users based on their own experiences.

Truth: This seems like a myth due to the technical complexity, but inventors like Ernesto Blanco, a wheelchair user, developed stair-climbing wheelchairs, now commercially available.

Session: "Barriers and beyond – understanding challenges in inclusive sports"

Theme: Understanding disabilities / Sensitization of coaches and sports staff

Time: 60 minutes

Overview: This session encourages participants to explore and critically analyze the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in sports, with a specific focus on their own roles as coaches and sports workers. Through group work and structured reflection, participants will identify key barriers and co-create inclusive strategies for addressing them. The session empowers them to take ownership of inclusion through real-world perspectives and practical solutions.

Objectives:
- To raise awareness of the barriers that persons with disabilities face in sports environments
- To promote critical thinking and empathy among sports professionals
- To encourage the development of actionable and realistic inclusion strategies
- To support teamwork and collaborative problem-solving
- To increase confidence in applying inclusive practices in everyday coaching settings

Materials:
- Handout with profiles of people with disabilities
- Flipchart paper and markers
- Sticky notes
- Tape for wall displays
- Pens/pencils for participants

Group size: maximum 30 participants

Preparation: Facilitator should prepare at least 4 different fictional athlete profiles based on real-life challenges in inclusive sports. Each profile should include a brief background, sport of choice, type of disability, and short situational description. Flipcharts, markers, and materials should be arranged in advance, and group roles should be pre-assigned if needed.

Instructions: Begin the session with short brainstorming on overall barriers people with disabilities experience. Encourage participants to think about everyday activities of an average person and to share the things they believe are not available to people with

disabilities. Give them some guiding points, like public transportation, education, living alone, and similar. Conclude the brainstorming with breif discussion on how and if we notice these barriers in everyday lives.

Once the introduction is complete, divide participants into small groups of 4 to 6 people and give to each group one fictional profile from Handout1 and guiding questions from Handout2. Explain that their task is to examine the profile and identify the key challenges the athlete might face when trying to participate in their chosen sport. Ask groups to discuss and analyse environmental barriers, social dynamics, communication issues, stereotypes, and any organizational or structural challenges the person from their example may encounter. Instruct them to write down their observations clearly and then brainstorm practical recommendations to make the sport more inclusive for that specific athlete. Ask them to write down both the barriers and proposed solutions on a flipchart paper, which they will later present to the whole group. After 25 minutes of group work, invite each group to present their findings. Give them up to three minutes per group for presentations. As presentations unfold, use a second flipchart to cluster the shared issues, solutions, or insights into broader categories that emerge across different profiles. This will help participants see patterns and overlapping challenges.

Following the presentations, lead a joint reflection to deepen learning and link the discussion to real-life coaching. Use open-ended questions to encourage sharing, such as what surprised them, which assumptions they challenged, and which ideas felt most actionable for them. Make sure to guide the conversation toward personal relevance and professional application. To conclude the session, ask each participant to write down one concrete action they will commit to as a step toward more inclusive coaching. After a moment of reflection, invite a few volunteers to share their action with the group, reinforcing the idea of individual responsibility in creating inclusive environments.

Debriefing and evaluation: Conclude the session with a short debrief and evaluation. Guide participants through a discussion using questions such as:

- What surprised you about the challenges your group identified?
- Did you discover anything you hadn't thought about before?
- Which recommendations do you think are easiest to implement? Which are hardest? Why?
- How can you apply what you've learned today in your real work with athletes?
- How did working in a group help shape your understanding?

Tips for facilitator: Be mindful not to stereotype disability or reduce the discussion to physical access alone. Encourage participants to explore deeper, attitudinal and institutional barriers. Some groups may try to "solve" too quickly, redirect them to first explore the experience of exclusion. Use your own coaching experiences to relate examples. If needed, facilitate emotionally heavy moments with care, as some participants may share personal stories. Examples from the Handout 1 can be changed, facilitator can adjust contexts and add more examples if needed.

Handout 1:

Athlete profile 1
Ana, 16 years old, has had quadriplegia for 10 years following a car accident.
Context: She does not participate in physical education classes at school.

Athlete profile 2
Paolo, 32 years old, has a below-the-knee amputation. He used to play football in his youth. Five years ago, he underwent amputation and has since completed rehabilitation. His doctor advised him to return to some form of sport activity.
Context: He is unsure where to start and lacks information about available sports opportunities.

Athlete profile 3
Mark, 55 years old, is a war veteran who has been blind for over 25 years. He used to train and compete in goalball.
Context: His local club for blind and visually impaired athletes has recently closed.

Athlete profile 4
Sofia, 19 years old, has cerebral palsy.
Context: She would like to take up swimming but has never had formal training or access to adapted facilities.

Handout 2

Guiding questions for group work

1. What are the main barriers this person might face in participating in sports or physical activities? (*Think about physical environment, transportation, access to equipment, communication, attitudes, and knowledge of sport workers in her environment.*)
2. Are these barriers more related to the environment, to people's attitudes, or to how the activity is organized? (*Try to categorize each barrier – environmental, social, organizational, or personal.*)
3. How might this person feel in the described situation? (*Try to imagine their emotions, motivation, fears, or frustration.*)
4. What support would this person need to participate fully and equally in sport or physical education? (*Think about both immediate support and long-term inclusion.*)
5. What role can a coach, teacher, or club play in improving their experience? (*What could you personally do in this situation?*)
6. What simple changes could be made to make the sport or setting more inclusive? (*Are there low-cost or immediate actions that would make a difference?*)
7. What resources, tools, or partnerships could help in removing these barriers? (*Think about other institutions, technologies, or community support.*)
8. Which of your recommendations could be implemented immediately? Which ones would need more time or resources?

Session: "In their shoes – experiencing exclusion in sport"

Theme: Understanding disabilities / Sensitization of coaches and sports staff

Time: 60 minutes

Overview: This experiential session uses structured role-play to help coaches and sports professionals better understand the real-life challenges persons with disabilities face in sport and physical activity contexts. By stepping into the roles of youth with disabilities navigating exclusion in schools, clubs, and teams, participants develop empathy, question institutional norms, and identify the small moments where inclusion can be supported or denied. The goal is not to simulate impairment, but to understand how systems and people either empower or isolate individuals.

Objectives:
- To foster empathy among coaches and sport workers through experiential learning
- To identify the institutional and social barriers that persons with disabilities face in sport and PE environments
- To critically reflect on the attitudes, biases, and practices that lead to exclusion
- To develop practical ideas for inclusive change in sport and education systems
- To empower sport professionals to be active agents of inclusion

Materials:
- Handout
- Flipchart paper and markers
- Tape

Group size: maximum 30 participants

Preparation: Facilitator prepares printed scenarios and additional materials and props that can be used for role-play part of the workshop. Additionally, facilitator should write down definitions for stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, on flip chart paper or to prepare additional Handout with these definitions.

Instructions: Begin the session with a short whole-group discussion about the terms stereotype, prejudice, and discrimination. Use simple questions to encourage participants to define what each term means, how it forms, and how it affects people's behaviour, especially toward persons with disabilities. The purpose is to establish a common understanding and introduce the topic in an engaging and accessible way.

After this introduction, divide participants into smaller groups. Each group receives a printed scenario describing a discriminatory situation faced by a person with a disability, along with character roles to play. The groups have 15 minutes to prepare and assign roles among themselves. Their task is to stage a short role-play (5–10 minutes) that illustrates the situation. Emphasize that the goal is not acting performance, but demonstrating the interactions and social dynamics in the scene. After each group performs, facilitate a discussion with the full group. Ask questions such as:

- Who was discriminated against?
- Who was discriminating?
- What attitudes or assumptions shaped the actions of those involved?
- Could understanding or change have been possible?
- Can participants relate these scenes to everyday situations they have witnessed?

Once all groups have presented and discussions are complete, gather the participants again for a final collective reflection. Ask them to identify and write down their recommendations, some directed toward persons with disabilities (e.g., what support or access they need), and others toward those who contribute to discrimination (e.g., institutions, service providers, individuals). These recommendations should be written on flipchart paper and displayed in the room. End the session by reinforcing the importance of personal responsibility and everyday actions in challenging discrimination and promoting inclusion.

Tips for facilitators: When guiding this session, it is essential to create a respectful and emotionally safe environment. Remind participants that the goal of the role-play is not to mimic disability but to explore social interactions, power dynamics, and exclusion mechanisms. Be sensitive to emotional reactions, some participants may have personal experiences related to the situations. Encourage honest engagement, but intervene gently if mockery or discomfort arises. Emphasize that discriminatory behaviour often comes from lack of understanding, and that everyone, including bystanders, has the power to influence outcomes. Use real-life references and everyday examples to help participants make meaningful connections. During the reflection phase, guide the conversation toward empathy, responsibility, and practical change. Reinforce that the purpose of the workshop is not just awareness, but action, encouraging participants to reflect on their role in building more inclusive environments in sport, education, and daily life.

Debriefing and evaluation:

- How did it feel to take part in your role or to observe the situation?
- What moment stood out to you the most, and why?
- Who had the power to change the situation, and did they use it?
- Can you relate this scenario to something you've seen or experienced in real life?
- What could have been done differently to prevent or respond to the exclusion?
- What is one thing you will take away from this session for your own practice or behavior?

Handout 1: Role-play scenarios

Scenario 1 – "You don't have to come"

Ana is 15 years old and has recently started secondary school. She is a wheelchair user and loves sports, especially wheelchair basketball. She was excited about PE classes as she participated in her previous school, but after the first week, the PE teacher told her she didn't "need to come anymore" because the gym is upstairs with no elevator and "there's nothing she can do anyway." The principal agrees to let her skip PE. Her classmates don't talk to her about PE anymore. Ana now spends PE periods alone in the library.

Roles: Ana (student), PE teacher, principal, classmate 1 (silent but concerned), classmate 2 (indifferent), observer(s)

Scenario 2 – Public office without access

A wheelchair user needs to visit a city office to handle paperwork. The building has stairs but no ramp or elevator. The person cannot reach any public official and relies on passersby, who mostly ignore them. When the security guard is called, he refuses to help, saying he has back problems and cannot lift anything.

Roles: Wheelchair user, Security guard, Bystander 1 (indifferent), Bystander 2 (willing to help but unsure how), City official (waits behind a desk but doesn't assist)

Scenario 3 – Basketball training session

A young man with a mild intellectual disability attends a trial basketball training. The coach is unsure how to include him and chooses to ignore him. Some players make fun of him, while one tries to help but lacks confidence.

Roles: Athlete with disability, Coach, Player 1 (mocking), Player 2 (supportive but unsure), Player 3 (ignores him)

Scenario 4 – University open day

A Deaf young woman comes to a university open day. There is no interpreter, and all information is presented only verbally. When she tries to ask a question, the university representative answers briefly, avoiding eye contact.

Roles: Deaf young woman, University representative, Student volunteer (could help but hesitates), Other visitor (intervenes or comments)

Scenario 5 – City bus ride

A person with cerebral palsy tries to enter a city bus that has a manual ramp. The driver refuses to deploy the ramp, saying he's running late. Some passengers complain about the delay, while one person tries to support the person entering the bus.

Roles: Passenger with disability, Bus driver, Passenger 1 (complains), Passenger 2 (silent), Passenger 3 (defends the person)

Scenario 6 – Job interview

A blind applicant comes for a job interview. The employer immediately expresses doubt about how the person would work. Although the applicant is qualified, the interview ends quickly and dismissively.

Roles: Blind applicant, Employer, HR officer (sits in silently), Colleague (makes comments after the candidate leaves)

Handout 2: Definitions

Stereotypes are widely held but oversimplified and fixed ideas or beliefs about a group of people. They are mental shortcuts we use to categorize others based on characteristics such as appearance, ability, gender, or background. While stereotypes can seem neutral or even positive, they are often inaccurate and ignore individual differences. For example, assuming all people with disabilities are dependent or incapable reflects a stereotype that can limit how others see and interact with them.

Prejudice refers to a negative attitude or feeling toward a person based solely on their perceived membership in a particular group. It is often based on stereotypes and learned biases, and it usually involves a judgment made without knowing the person. Prejudice can manifest as fear, mistrust, discomfort, or hostility and often operates on an emotional level. For instance, believing that someone with a disability is less competent or less valuable is a form of prejudice.

Discrimination is the behavior or action that results from prejudice. It involves treating someone unfairly or denying them opportunities based on their identity or perceived differences. This can occur at the individual, institutional, or systemic level and may be visible (such as denying access or excluding someone) or subtle (such as ignoring someone's input). In the context of disability, discrimination might include refusing to provide accessible facilities or excluding someone from sports activities without valid reason.

Session: "Beyond limits – the power of sport"

Theme: Sensitization of coaches and sports staff/Player management and inclusion

Time: 60 minutes

Overview: This motivational session is designed to challenge internalized and social perceptions of disability and showcase sport as a transformative force in the lives of persons with disabilities. Through brainstorming, a quiz, and inspiring stories, participants will explore the empowering potential of sports participation.

Objectives:
- To confront common stereotypes and negative perceptions of disability
- To highlight real-life examples of achievement and autonomy through sport
- To motivate participants to engage or continue engaging in sports
- To increase awareness of health, psychological and social benefits of sport for persons with disabilities

Materials:
- Flipchart and markers
- Prepared quiz (printed or digital)
- Projector and screen
- Video clip featuring successful Paralympic athletes (3–5 minutes)
- Reflection handouts

Group size: 20–30 participants

Preparation: Facilitator prepares quiz questions based on positive statistics and success stories in parasports (e.g., famous athletes, benefits of participation, Paralympic milestones). Select and test a short motivational video. Print reflection sheets. Prepare flipchart for brainstorming.

Instructions: Start the session by asking participants to share their first thoughts and associations with the word disability. Write all answers visibly on a flipchart, without filtering or correcting. Encourage spontaneous input and make sure all voices are heard. After the list is created, guide a short discussion that focuses especially on repeated or negative associations, such as dependence, weakness, or exclusion. Acknowledge that these ideas are common but often based on stereotypes, and use this moment to introduce the idea that such views can and should be challenged.

Once the brainstorming is complete, introduce the quiz activity. Divide participants into small teams and explain that they will take part in a friendly quiz focused on facts, achievements, and benefits related to disability and sport. Distribute printed quiz sheets or project the questions if working digitally, we recommend the use of Mentimeter or other similar platforms. You may choose to read questions aloud and allow time for teams to discuss each answer. Encourage participation and curiosity rather than competition. After each question, go through the answer key with the whole group, using the explanations provided to clarify why each correct answer matters. Use this opportunity to challenge common misconceptions and highlight the empowering potential of sport. After the quiz, invite participants into an open discussion. Ask them how the facts they just learned compare to what they expected. Encourage them to reflect on which statistics or stories surprised them, and whether any of their assumptions changed during the activity. Help them connect this new information to their own experiences and environments, especially in relation to coaching, teaching, or working with young people. Then, introduce the short motivational video you prepared. Make sure to explain who is featured and why their story is important. Play the video (3–5 minutes), and after watching, ask each participant to write down one takeaway or message that stayed with them. Use post-it notes or a reflection handout, depending on your setup. Give participants a minute or two to reflect individually before moving on.

To close the session, invite participants to share their takeaway if they feel comfortable. Encourage them to frame it as a personal motivation or commitment for the future, something they want to remember, change, or act on. Finish by summarizing the key message: that sport is not only about competition, but also about inclusion, empowerment, and building confidence. Reinforce that everyone has a role in creating inclusive sport environments, and that change begins with awareness, mindset, and opportunity.

Debriefing and evaluation:

- What stereotype from the beginning of the session do you now see differently?
- Which story or statistic most motivated or surprised you, and why?
- How can sport contribute to self-worth, independence, and social inclusion for persons with disabilities?

Tips for facilitator: Use inclusive and respectful language at all times, especially when discussing disability. If participants are unfamiliar with parasport, provide context without overwhelming them. Be ready to adapt the quiz content depending on the group's age, background, or interests, it will slightly change if you are working with people with disabilities, sport workers or young people. During discussion, connect quiz facts with broader themes like human rights, participation, and empowerment.

Tips for adjusting workshop: This workshop can be easily adapted to serve as a motivational tool for persons with disabilities, particularly those who are not yet involved in sport or who may hesitate due to internalized stigma or lack of information. In this version, the focus should shift from raising awareness among coaches to inspiring personal empowerment and showing the possibilities sport can offer. Instead of challenging external perceptions, the emphasis is placed on building self-confidence, exposing participants to positive role models, and offering accessible knowledge about opportunities and pathways into sport. The brainstorming segment can be reframed to explore participants' personal associations or feelings about sport and movement, while the quiz can be delivered in a more playful, affirming tone, highlighting relatable success stories and health benefits. Facilitators should create a safe, non-judgmental space that encourages honest reflection and allows participants to see sport not as a competitive obligation, but as a pathway to autonomy, community, and self-expression. The video and debriefing can be particularly powerful in helping participants envision themselves in active roles, and the final reflection should invite them to consider what small steps they could take toward trying a new activity or reconnecting with physical movement in ways that feel meaningful and achievable.

Handout – Quiz questions and answers:

1. Who is the most decorated Paralympian of all time?
a) Natalie du Toit
b) Tanni Grey-Thompson
c) Trischa Zorn ✅
d) Ellie Simmonds
⬜ *Trischa Zorn, a visually impaired swimmer from the USA, has won 55 Paralympic medals.*

2. Which city hosted the first official Paralympic Games?
a) Tokyo
b) Rome ✅
c) Athens
d) London
◻ *The first official Games were held in Rome in 1960.*

3. True or False:
People with cerebral palsy cannot safely train or participate in swimming.
✅ *Correct answer: False*
◻ *Many people with cerebral palsy successfully train and compete in swimming at both recreational and elite levels, including in the Paralympic Games. Swimming is often recommended as it reduces the impact of gravity, improves muscle control, and supports cardiovascular health.*

4. Which of the following adaptive sports is not currently included in the Paralympic Games?
a) Powerchair Football ✅
b) Sitting Volleyball
c) Goalball
d) Boccia
◻ *Powerchair Football is a popular adaptive sport for individuals using power wheelchairs, but it is not yet part of the Paralympic Games.*

5. What percentage of the global population is estimated to experience some form of significant disability?
a) 5%
b) 10%
c) 24%
d) 16% ✅
◻ *According to the World Health Organization, approximately 1.3 billion people, about 16% of the global population, experience some form of significant disability. This number is expected to rise due to population aging and increased prevalence of chronic health conditions.*

6. Which of the following is a known benefit of regular physical activity for persons with disabilities?
a) Reduced risk of secondary health conditions
b) Increased social inclusion and mental well-being
c) Extended life expectancy
d) All of the above ✅
▢ *Studies show that regular physical activity contributes to better physical health, increased social engagement, improved mental well-being, and can be associated with longer life expectancy among persons with disabilities.*

7. Who was the first paraplegic athlete to complete the Ironman World Championship?
a) Carlos Moleda
b) David Bailey
c) John Maclean ✅
d) Marc Herremans
▢ *Explanation: John Maclean made history in 1995 by becoming the first paraplegic athlete to complete the Ironman World Championship. His groundbreaking achievement paved the way for other athletes with disabilities to participate in endurance sports.*

8. In which year did Mark Inglis become the first double-leg amputee to reach the summit of Mount Everest?
a) 1998
b) 2006 ✅
c) 2012
d) He never reached the summit
▢ *Mark Inglis, a climber from New Zealand, made history in 2006 as the first person with both legs amputated below the knee to summit Mount Everest. He completed the climb using specially designed prosthetic limbs.*

9. True or False:
The Paralympic Games include athletes with intellectual disabilities.
True ✅
▢ *These events were reinstated after a suspension in 2000.*

10. What was the slogan of the London 2012 Paralympic Games?
a) "Faster, Higher, Stronger"
b) "Spirit in Motion"
c) "Inspire a Generation" ✅
d) "Beyond the Limits"
▢ *"Inspire a Generation" was used across both Olympic and Paralympic events.*

11. Which country typically dominates the medal count in the Paralympic Games?
a) Australia
b) Russia
c) United States ✅
d) Germany

🏅 *The United States has historically been the most successful country in the history of the Paralympic Games. As of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics, Team USA has won over 2,600 medals in total, including more than 900 gold medals. The second most decorated nation is the United Kingdom, which has consistently placed at the top in recent editions of the Games. While countries like China, Russia, and Australia have had strong performances in recent years, the USA remains the all-time medal leader across both Summer and Winter Paralympic Games.*

12. How many athletes participated in the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games?
a) Around 1,000
b) Around 3,000
c) Around 4,400 ✅
d) Over 7,000

🏅 *Explanation: Approximately 4,400 athletes from 169 countries competed in the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, held from August 28 to September 8, 2024. These athletes participated in 549 medal events across 22 sports, showcasing the global reach and inclusivity of the Paralympic movement.*

13. Which athlete became famous for competing with prosthetics in both the Olympics and Paralympics?
a) Alex Zanardi
b) Oscar Pistorius ✅
c) Markus Rehm
d) Marla Runyan

🏅 *Pistorius competed in both Games, though later became controversial.*

14. Which of these sports was created specifically for blind athletes?
a) Judo
b) Goalball ✅
c) Table Tennis
d) Bocce
⬚ *Goalball is designed for athletes with visual impairments.*

15. What is the most common barrier preventing persons with disabilities from participating in sport?
a) Lack of interest
b) High equipment costs
c) Inaccessible facilities ✅
d) Weather conditions
⬚ *Research consistently shows that the lack of accessible sports infrastructure, such as adapted gyms, pools, and changing rooms, is one of the main reasons persons with disabilities are unable to participate in physical activity. Without inclusive environments, even motivated individuals face exclusion.*

Session name: See the person, not the label

Theme: Player management and inclusion

Time: 60 minutes

Overview: This session invites participants to slow down and take a fresh look at how they think and talk about disability. Through personal reflection, group discussion, and joint problem-solving, the goal is to shift focus, from labels and assumptions to real experiences and real solutions. Participants will work together to identify common barriers persons with disabilities face in daily life, and to come up with ideas that make inclusion not just possible, but practical.

Objectives:
- To raise awareness of how stereotypes and assumptions influence perception of persons with disabilities
- To identify real-life barriers in education, healthcare, and social participation
- To encourage group-based problem-solving and solution design
- To support a shift from passive understanding to active inclusion
- To foster reflection on personal biases and responsibility for inclusion

Materials:
- Flipcharts titled: "School & Education," "Healthcare," "Social Life & Leisure", "Sport"
- Markers
- Printed adjective reflection sheets (1 per participant)
- Printed group worksheets for inclusion strategy (1 per group)
- Reflection handouts: "What I Thought Before – What I Think Now"
- Sticky notes (optional)
- Tape (for flipchart display)

Group size: 30 participants

Preparation: Before the session, the facilitator should print and prepare enough copies of all handouts for each participant and group. Prepare three flipcharts and clearly label them with the thematic areas. Place the flipcharts in three corners of the room to create space for group work and movement. If using sticky notes instead of direct writing, prepare those in advance.

Instructions: Start by giving each participant a printed list of adjectives. Ask them to go through the list on their own and circle the words they personally associate with "a person with a disability." Tell them not to overthink it, just go with their first instincts. Let them know this isn't a test and they don't need to share their answers with anyone. You're not looking for "correct" associations, just honest ones. This is a warm-up, and they'll return to it at the end, so they should keep the papers until the session ends. Once everyone is finished, explain that the session will now focus on everyday areas of life where persons with disabilities often face barriers: school and education, healthcare, social life and leisure, and sport. You should have four large flipcharts prepared in advance, each labeled with one of these areas and placed in different parts of the room.

Ask participants to move around the room individually and visit each flipchart. At each one, they should take a moment to reflect and then write down at least one specific barrier a person with a disability might face in that area. Be clear that they should be concrete and realistic. Instead of general ideas like "lack of access," they could write "no locker room adapted for wheelchair users" under sport, or "PE teacher excludes students with disabilities." Encourage them to rely on what they've seen, heard, or experienced, even imagined. Everyone should contribute to all four flipcharts. Once everyone has written their inputs on each of the four categories, divide participants into four smaller groups and assign one flipchart to each group. Each group should then analyze what has been written. Their first task is to cluster the barriers into themes, like "lack of infrastructure," "social stigma," "poor communication," or "exclusion from decision-making." After that, they will move on to the solution phase. Give each group a worksheet to help them structure their work. On this worksheet, they should identify the most prominent problems, categorize them by theme, and then propose practical and realistic solutions. These can range from simple behavioral changes to institutional or policy-level improvements. Make sure they understand that they can think broadly and creatively, and that it's important to imagine change on multiple levels, from individual action to systemic reform. When all groups have finished, ask them to prepare a short presentation (around 3 minutes) to summarize their findings. Bring the whole group back together and have each group present one by one. After each presentation, open the floor briefly for comments, did others notice similar barriers across categories? Did something stand out or surprise them?

To conclude the session, invite participants to take another look at their adjective sheet from the beginning of the session. Has anything changed in how they view disability now? Distribute the reflection handout titled "What I thought before – What I think now" and allow a few quiet minutes for writing. If time allows, encourage a few participants to share what they've written. End the session by emphasizing that inclusion in sport and other areas of life is not about doing a favour, it's about equity, dignity, and rethinking structures that were never designed for everyone.

Debriefing and evaluation: After the group presentations and final reflection activity, guide the group through a short debrief using these questions:

- What kinds of assumptions did you notice in your original word choices?
- Which barriers were easiest to address, and which seemed the most difficult?
- What surprised you in your group's discussion or in the ideas other groups shared?
- What are some things that you personally could do differently after this session?

Ask participants to share some of their written reflections if they wish.

Tips for facilitator: Approach this session with openness and flexibility. Don't push participants toward "correct" answers, help them stay curious. In sport settings especially, many participants may carry unconscious biases about what people with disabilities can or cannot do. Challenge these gently through conversation, not correction. Use real-life examples if needed to connect theory to sport. During group work, check in regularly to keep momentum and focus. If groups get stuck listing only obvious problems (e.g., "no ramp"), ask what's behind that, who decides where ramps go, who designs the space, who speaks up? If anyone shares a personal experience, acknowledge it respectfully. This session works best when it feels both safe and real.

Handout 1: **Attribute sheet**

What do you associate with disability?

Circle all the words that, at first thought, you connect with a person with a disability.

Independent	Resilient	Lonely	Needy
Strong	Smart	Angry	Patient
Isolated	Limited	Capable	Tired
Fragile	Active	Helpless	Brave
Motivated	Lazy	Kind	Inspired
Sad	Courageous	Empowered	Quiet

Handout 2: **Group worksheet**

Segment: _____
   1. What are the specific barriers listed on your flipchart?
   2. Can you group them into common types of problems?
   3. What would help solve these problems? Think about practical ideas.
   4. Pick one solution your group really believes in. Why does it matter?

Handout 3: **Reflection sheet**

Look back at your circled adjectives.
How many were negative? _____
Would you circle the same ones now? Why or why not?
What surprised you most in today's activity?
What's one thing you want to do differently from now on?

Session name: "Stronger together – communication and team dynamics on the court"

Theme: Player management and communication in the team

Time: 60 minutes

Overview: This session offers a flexible set of short activities that support communication, listening, trust, and reflection among players in wheelchair basketball teams. Designed for coaches and sport workers, these interactive exercises can be used as warm-ups, training modules, or standalone workshops to strengthen team spirit and improve collaboration both on and off the court.

Objectives:
- To enhance verbal and non-verbal communication skills among players
- To build trust and cooperation through experiential learning
- To promote reflection on team roles, feedback, and mutual respect
- To equip coaches with adaptable exercises for team development

Materials:
- Flipchart and markers
- Printed handouts (see Handout section)
- Blindfolds (optional)
- Small objects or cones for navigation challenge
- Stickers or colored cards for feedback

Group size: Minimum 10, maximum 20 participants (ideal for one full team or inter-club mixed group)

Preparation: Facilitator prints handouts in advance and sets up a clear, open space suitable for movement and group work. Materials for each activity should be laid out in separate stations if used in sequence.

Instructions: The facilitator may select one or more of the following exercises depending on the group's needs and session time. Each activity is self-contained and serves the overarching goals of improving team communication, trust, and cohesion.

Exercise 1: Say what you hear

Time: 10 minutes

Goal: Practice giving and following simple verbal instructions under time pressure

Method: Participants are in pairs. One person receives a card with one word (see Handout below). Their task is to describe the word without saying it, and their partner must guess the word. Think of it like a mini version of charades, but only verbal – no gestures, no hints like "it rhymes with…" Allowed: synonyms, examples, general explanations. Once the word is guessed (or after 1 minute), they switch roles and try with another word. Play at least 2–3 rounds per pair.

Optional: Turn it into a team challenge – how many words can a pair guess in 3 minutes?

Debrief questions:
- What strategies helped your partner understand?
- When was it hard to explain or understand?
- How does this relate to game-time communication?

Exercise 2: Blind navigation

Time: 15 minutes

Goal: Build trust and verbal guidance

Method: One player is blindfolded and must be guided (verbally only) by their teammates to reach a placed object or cone. Each round, switch the leader. Add complexity by introducing obstacles.

Debrief questions: How did it feel to guide or be guided? What improved communication?

Exercise 3: Conflict scenarios – when things break down

Time: 15 minutes

Goal: Practice responding to breakdowns in team dynamics

Method: Small groups receive a printed real-life scenario (see Handout) that describes a communication issue or tension on the team. Each group discusses and presents how the team could respond more constructively.

Debrief questions: What patterns did we see? How do we currently handle conflict?

Exercise 4: The team I want

Time: 10 minutes

Goal: Encourage personal reflection and team empathy

Method: Players sit in a circle. Each person anonymously writes one sentence starting with "In my ideal team, everyone would…" (see Handout). Facilitator reads them aloud. Open floor for voluntary sharing.

Debrief questions: What themes came up? What do we each need to feel supported?

Wrap-Up & Feedback (Optional): Use colored stickers or verbal evaluation to gather immediate impressions. Ask:

- What will you try differently at next practice?
- What surprised you today?
- How do you want your team to grow from here?

Tips for facilitators: Be flexible and responsive. These exercises are not about performance, but about creating insight and dialogue. Pay attention to dominant voices and help quieter participants to contribute to group discussions. If some participants are hesitant, start with low-pressure activities like "Say What You See." Always link reflections back to real game situations, missed passes, tension in matches, unspoken frustrations. Use humor to keep energy light but bring focus during reflection moments. Encourage coaches to revisit these activities regularly to maintain healthy communication culture.

Handout 1:

Pressure	Teamwork	Block
Speed	Timeout	Strategy
Defense	Energy	Screen
Focus	Assist	Rotation
Victory	Substitution	Mistake
Champion	Rebound	Motivation

Handout 2: **Conflict scenarios for group work**

Scenario A: One player always talks over others during team meetings.
Scenario B: During games, two teammates blame each other for mistakes.
Scenario C: A player feels excluded but doesn't speak up – others notice.
Scenario D: After a lost match, some players criticize loudly, others shut down.

Each group should answer:
- What is happening here?
- How can the team respond differently?
- How would this affect trust?

Reflection Sheet – "The Team I Want"

- Write one sentence: "In my ideal team, everyone would…"
- No names. Give it to the facilitator to read aloud.
- Then answer privately:
  - One thing I do well in team communication: _____
  - One thing I want to change: _____
  - One thing I'll try next game: _____

10.0 ABOUT ERASMUS + SPORT

The aim of Erasmus+, as a program, is to support the educational, professional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport, to contribute to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, to drive innovation and to strengthen European identity and active citizenship.

Erasmus+ actions in the field of sport promote participation in sport, physical activity, and voluntary activities. They are designed to tackle societal and sport-related challenges. Opportunities are available for organizations under 3 Calls which address these challenges. A specific call on Capacity Building in the field of sport is also available as of 2022. It targets EU Member States and third countries associated to the Program (previously called Program countries) and the Western Balkans.

The actions:

Cooperation partnerships
Designed for organizations to develop and implement joint activities to promote (among others) sport and physical activity, as well as deal with threats to the integrity of sport (such as doping or match-fixing), promote dual careers for athletes, improve good governance, and foster tolerance and social inclusion.

Small-scale partnerships
For grassroots organizations, less experienced organizations and newcomers to the Program. Small-Scale Partnerships have simpler administration, smaller grants and shorter durations than Cooperation Partnerships.

Not-for-profit European sport events
Designed to encourage sporting activity, implement EU strategies for social inclusion through sport, foster volunteering in sport, fight against discrimination and encourage participation in sport and physical activity.

Capacity Building in the field of sport
Capacity-building projects are international cooperation projects based on multilateral partnerships between organizations active in the field of sport in EU Member States and third countries associated to the Program (previously called Program countries) and the Western Balkans. They aim to support sport activities and policies in as a vehicle to promote values as well as an educational tool to promote the personal and social development of individuals and build more cohesive communities.