



LONG TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT



BERMUDA PARALYMPIC ASSOCIATION
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1. THE BERMUDA PARALYMPIC ASSOCIATION

The Bermuda Paralympic Association (BPARAS) is the organization responsible for promoting and supporting para-sports and athletes in Bermuda. It was established to provide athletes with disabilities the opportunity to train, compete, and excel in international competitions, including the Paralympic Games.

The history of BPARAS is rooted in Bermuda's commitment to inclusivity and the development of sports for all individuals, regardless of physical challenges. Over the years, BPARAS has worked diligently to identify and nurture talent within the community with disabilities, offering resources, coaching, and support necessary for high-level competition.

Bermuda made its Paralympic debut at the 1996 Paralympic Games, marking a significant milestone in the island's sports history. Since then, Bermudian athletes have participated in subsequent Paralympic Games, showcasing their skills and determination on the world stage. The association continues to advocate for better facilities, funding, and recognition for Paralympic sports, aiming to inspire and empower future generations of athletes with disabilities in Bermuda.

Through partnerships with local and international bodies, the Bermuda Paralympic Association remains dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities through sports, fostering a spirit of perseverance, achievement, and national pride.

The Association endeavors to identify Bermudians who can benefit from para-sport and seeks to develop them so they can compete at a very high level.

This document seeks to define Long-Term Athlete Development as well as the Bermuda Paralympic Association's strategic approach to athlete development. It also considers the benefits of Long-Term Athlete Development for Bermuda and her people.



2. WHAT IS LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT?

Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) is a multi-stage training, competition and recovery pathway guiding an individual's experience in sport and physical activity.

The LTAD framework accounts for growth, development, trainability, and sport system alignment to enable optimal participation for children, youth and adults. LTAD acknowledges the need for a solid foundation of physical literacy before moving toward sport specificity and high performance activity. It culminates by encouraging lifelong engagement in sport.

Long-term athlete development understands that optimum development and success in sport is an extended process that is achieved over a course of time through specific and well-planned programming. LTAD forms the foundation for national sport development by providing a framework and pathway for the progression of athletes, programs and related activities, and is closely linked to the successful implementation of the Bermuda National Sport Policy's five goals, being:

- 1. Increase Participation**
- 2. Achieve Sporting Excellence Regionally**
- 3. Improve Access to Sports Facilities**
- 4. Increase the Value of Sport**
- 5. Establish a Framework for Talent Development**

The Bermuda Paralympic Association is unique in the sense that it does not represent a single sport or activity. The Association currently supports athletes who compete in two sports at the Paralympic level: bocce and athletics. In previous years, the Association supported athletes competing in equestrian events and trained athletes competing in wheelchair tennis and para-archery.

The LTAD framework for the Paralympic Association differs from other sporting associations as it is much more general given there being 28 sanctioned Paralympic sports. This plan seeks to outline a broad development framework that can be used by all para-athletes rather than focusing on specific sports.

3. WHY IS LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT IMPORTANT?

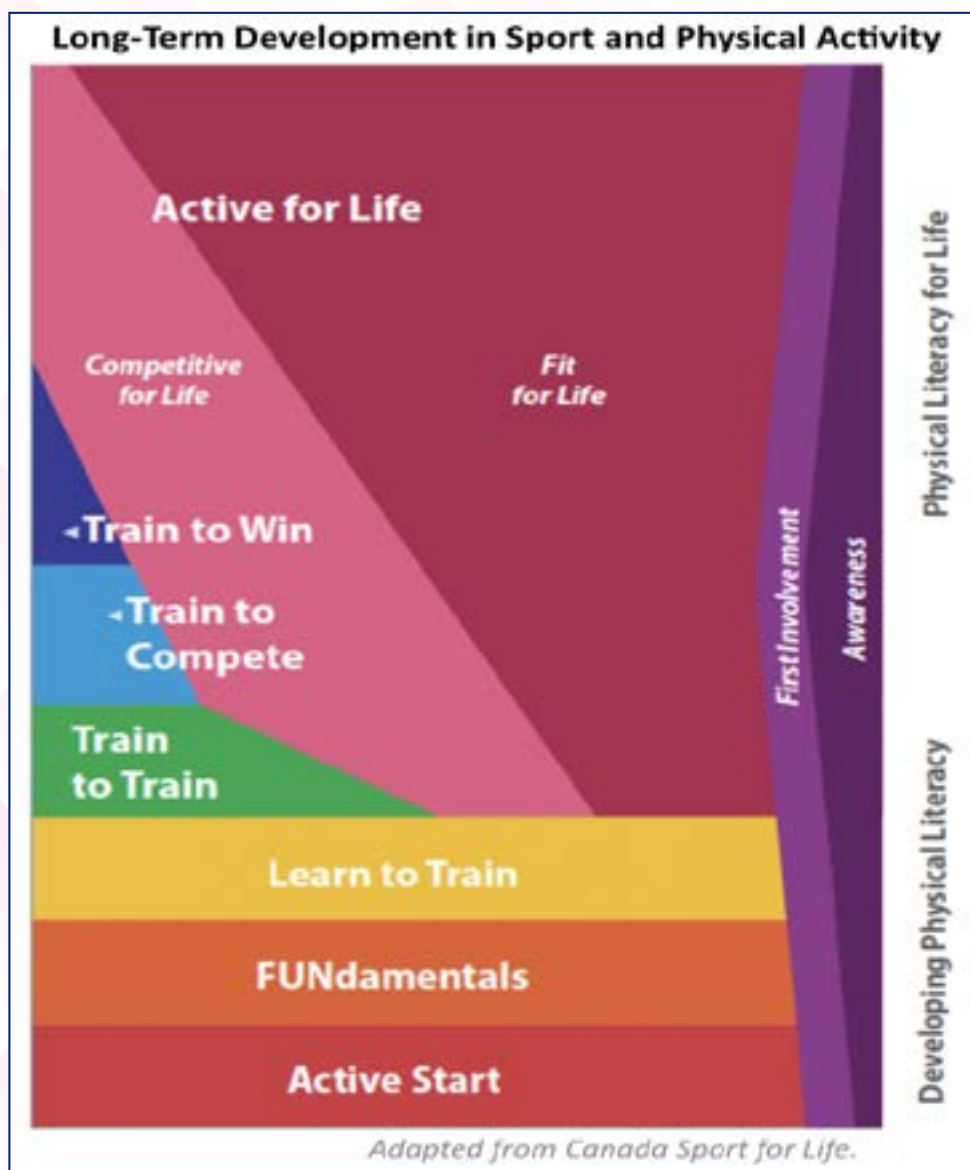
Long-Term Athlete Development is crucial as it ensures athletes of all ages receive appropriate training, support and opportunities for growth and performance. By structuring training programs around the developmental stages of athletes, LTAD promotes physical literacy, skill development, and overall well-being from childhood through adulthood. LTAD emphasizes gradual progression, reducing the risk of injury and burnout while maximizing long-term potential and enjoyment in sport. LTAD also considers physical, mental, emotional and social aspects critical for sustained athletic success. A strong LTAD program encourages lifelong participation in physical activity, promoting health and wellness across communities.

LTAD is particularly vital for individuals with disabilities as it ensures inclusive and adaptive approaches to sports participation. It focuses on personalized training strategies that cater to diverse abilities and needs, fostering confidence, skill acquisition, and social integration. By promoting accessible pathways and supportive environments, LTAD empowers individuals with disabilities to achieve their athletic goals, enhancing overall well-being and quality of life. It also challenges stereotypes and promotes equity in sports, reinforcing the principle that everyone should have the opportunity to experience the benefits of physical activity and sportsmanship regardless of their abilities.



4. THE LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT RECTANGLE AND THE SEVEN STAGES OF LTAD FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

This model was created to improve the quality of sport and physical activity so participants would have a chance to realize their potential. It provides a comprehensive framework designed to guide the progressive development of athletes through distinct stages, each tailored to their growth and maturation. The model is divided into seven key phases: Active Start, FUNdamentals, Learn to Train, Train to Train, Train to Compete, Train to Win, and Active for Life. Each phase focuses on specific objectives and outcomes, from developing basic motor skills and fostering enjoyment in the Active Start phase to honing sport-specific skills and competitive excellence in the Train to Win phase. The final stage, Active for Life, encourages lifelong participation in physical activity. The rectangle shape of the model symbolizes the broad foundation built in the early stages that supports the narrow peak of elite performance, ensuring a well-rounded, inclusive approach to athlete development that prioritizes long-term engagement and success.





5. TEN KEY FACTORS OF LTAD

- 1. Physical Literacy** – Children will not stay active with recreational activity or develop into high performance athletes if they don't have physical literacy, and they will not have physical literacy if they do not get the FUNdamentals. The FUNdamentals include a wide variety of fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills that should be learned at young ages (before the onset of the adolescent growth spurt). With these basic skills, children gain the ability, competence and confidence to practice any sport or physical activity they choose.
- 2. Specialization** – There are right times and wrong times to specialize in any one sport or physical activity. Specialize too early, and the athlete may limit their development and success at older ages. Specialize too late, and the athlete may miss key developmental opportunities. In most sports, athletes should not specialize until they are between the ages of 12 to 15. Prior to that age, they should participate in a wide range of sports to ensure they become competent, well-rounded athletes who have acquired physical literacy.
- 3. Age** – Children grow and develop at different rates. Sport and physical activity need to take each child's stage of growth and development into account when designing training, competition, and recovery programs.
- 4. Sensitive Periods** – As children grow and develop, there are times when practice and training will have the greatest effect. These "sensitive periods" provide a special opportunity to train and develop important skills and physical abilities that will impact athletic performance through the lifespan.
- 5. Intellectual, Emotional, and Moral Development** – LTAD addresses the complete physical, mental, cognitive, and emotional development of athletes – not just physical characteristics and performance qualities. Training, competition, and recovery programs need to consider the mental, cognitive, and emotional development of each athlete.
- 6. Excellence Takes Time** – Research has shown that it takes 10,000 hours of quality training for athletes to achieve their full potential and perform at an elite level. In most examples of top-ranked athletes and other star performers, their 10,000 hours are usually accumulated over at least 10 years of training and competing.
- 7. Periodization** – Simply put, periodization is time management. It outlines all annual and seasonal training within a logical schedule to bring about optimal improvements in athlete performance at the right times, while minimizing injury and burnout. Periodization plans connect the LTAD stage of the athlete with the training and development requirements of that stage.
- 8. Competition** – Athletes need to train and compete according to training-to-competition ratios that develop skills and fitness while preventing injury and burnout. As well, the quality of competition and the timing of competitive events need to serve the needs of the athlete – not the needs of coaches, parents, and administrators.
- 9. Sport System Alignment and Integration** – Based on Sport for Life's principles, LTAD promotes system alignment and integration between sport clubs and national sport organizations. Sport for Life addresses the overarching system and structure of sport and physical activity in Canada, including the relationship between school sport, physical education, and high performance sport at all levels from policy to program delivery.
- 10. Continuous Improvement** – The concept of continuous improvement, which permeates LTAD, is drawn from the respected Japanese industrial philosophy known as Kaizen. By applying a willingness to always seek improvements in our understanding and practice, LTAD will continuously evolve to accommodate new breakthroughs in sport science research, new innovations in technology, and evolving best practices in coaching.



6. BERMUDA PARALYMPIC ASSOCIATION LTAD STAGE BY STAGE DEVELOPMENT

The Bermuda Paralympic Committee is committed to promoting and developing para-sports within Bermuda. The Committee's long-term participant pathway is designed to support athletes of all levels, from grassroots to elite, to reach their full potential and compete at the highest levels of their chosen sport. The pathway includes the following stages:

1. Introduction (Ages 6–9) At this stage, the Bermuda Paralympic Committee will through the Bermuda school system and community partners introduce para-sports to children in Bermuda and develop their basic skills. This stage will focus on building fundamental movement skills such as running, jumping, and throwing, and will also introduce the basic rules and techniques of para-sports. Children will participate in fun, engaging activities and events to encourage them to develop an interest in sport.

Training objectives:

- Develop basic movement and motor skills through fun and inclusive activities
- Increase overall physical literacy and coordination

Competition objectives:

- Introduce athletes to para-sports in a fun and low-pressure environment
- Focus on participation and skill development rather than winning or losing
- Possible resources and programs
- Inclusive sports clinics for children with disabilities, led by experienced coaches and athletes
- Community events and activities that promote para-sports and encourage children to get involved
- Inclusive physical education classes in schools, with a focus on fundamental movement skills

2. Foundation (Ages 10–12) At this stage, the Bermuda Paralympic Committee will focus on developing the basic skills and technique of para-sports. This will be done through liaison with the Bermuda school system, other NSGBs and community partners, such as WindReach. Athletes will receive training in many para-sports events and will participate in competitions and events to further develop their skills. The focus will be on building a strong foundation of skills and technique to prepare athletes for the next stage of the pathway.

Training objectives:

- Build a foundation of basic skills and techniques in specific para-sports
- Improve overall fitness and strength

Competition objectives:

- Compete in local and regional events to gain experience and confidence
- Focus on skill development and personal improvement
- Possible resources and programs
- Beginner-level para-sport training camps and clinics, with a focus on developing basic skills and technique
- Local competitions and events that give athletes the opportunity to gain experience and compete against their peers
- Regular training sessions with experienced coaches and athletes, with a focus on developing foundational skills



3. Development (Ages 13-15) At this stage, the Bermuda Paralympic Committee will focus on monitoring identified athletes with disabilities with a view to their developing their skills to progress to para-sports at a higher level. Athletes will receive specialized coaching and training in specific sports and will participate in local and regional competitions to gain experience and exposure to high-level competition. The focus will be on building a strong foundation of skills and technique to prepare athletes for the next stage of the pathway.

Training objectives:

- Build on the foundation of basic skills and techniques
- Develop sport-specific skills and tactical awareness

Competition objectives:

- Compete in regional and national events to gain exposure to higher-level competition
- Focus on performance improvement and preparation for higher levels of competition
- Possible resources and programs
- Specialized training programs for specific sports, led by experienced coaches and athletes
- Regional competitions and events that give athletes the opportunity to compete against athletes from other regions and gain exposure to high-level competition
- Mentorship programs that pair young athletes with experienced para-sport athletes for guidance and support

4. Performance (Ages 16-18) At this stage, the Bermuda Paralympic Committee will focus on developing athletes to compete at a high level in para-sports. Athletes will receive intensive coaching and training in specific sports provided by the relevant NSGBs. Identified para-athletes will be encouraged to participate in national and international competitions to gain experience and exposure to top-level competition. The focus will be on developing athletes to compete at the highest levels of their chosen sport and preparing them for the next stage of the pathway.

Training objectives:

- Build on the development of sport-specific skills and techniques
- Develop high-level physical and mental fitness

Competition objectives:

- Compete in national and international events to gain exposure to the highest level of competition
- Focus on achieving personal bests and qualifying for national and international teams
- Possible resources and programs
- High-level training camps and clinics, with a focus on developing athletes to compete at the national and international level
- National and international competitions that give athletes the opportunity to compete against top-level competition and gain exposure to college and professional scouts
- Mental skills training and support to help athletes cope with the pressures of high-level competition





5. High Performance (Ages 19+) At this stage, the Bermuda Paralympic Committee will focus on developing elite para-sport athletes who can compete at the highest levels of their chosen sport. Athletes at this stage will receive specialized coaching provided by the relevant NSGBs and training to help them achieve their goals. They will also participate in international competitions to gain experience and exposure to top-level competition. The focus will be on developing athletes to compete at the Paralympic Games and other major international events.

Training objectives:

- Focus on sport-specific skills, tactical awareness, and physical and mental fitness at the highest level
- Develop high-level training and recovery strategies

Competition objectives:

- Compete in international events to gain exposure to the best athletes in the world and prepare for the Paralympic Games
- Focus on achieving personal bests and qualifying for Paralympic teams
- Possible resources and programs
- Specialized training programs and camps for elite athletes, led by experienced coaches and athletes
- International competitions and events that give athletes the opportunity to compete against the best in the world and prepare for the Paralympic Games
- Access to state-of-the-art facilities, equipment, and medical support to ensure that athletes are physically and mentally prepared to compete at the highest levels

6. Paralympic Preparation (Ages 20+) At this stage, the Bermuda Paralympic Committee will focus on preparing athletes to compete in the Paralympic Games. Athletes will receive intensive training and support to ensure that they are physically and mentally prepared to compete at the highest levels. This stage may also include participation in international competitions and training camps to further prepare athletes for the Paralympic Games.

Training objectives:

- Focus on preparing mentally and physically for the pressures of the Paralympic Games
- Develop high-level training and recovery strategies to peak at the right time

Competition objectives:

- Compete in high-level international events to simulate the environment and pressures of the Paralympic Games
- Focus on performing at the highest level.
- Possible resources and programs
- Intensive training camps and clinics that simulate the environment and pressures of the Paralympic Games
- Mental skills training and support to help athletes cope with the pressures of the Paralympic Games
- Access to specialized coaching and support staff to help athletes prepare for the Paralympic Games





7. Paralympic Games (Ages 20+) The Paralympic Games stage is the pinnacle of the pathway. Athletes who have reached this stage will represent Bermuda at the Paralympic Games and compete against the best para-athletes in the world. The Bermuda Paralympic Committee will provide athletes with all the necessary support, including coaching, training, and equipment, to ensure that they can perform at their best and represent Bermuda with pride.

Training objectives:

- Focus on maintaining peak physical and mental condition throughout the Games
- Utilize high-level training and recovery strategies to perform at the highest level

Competition objectives:

- Compete against the best athletes in the world and win medals for Bermuda
- Possible resources and programs
- Access to state-of-the-art facilities, equipment, and medical support during the Games
- Mental skills training and support to help athletes perform at their best under pressure
- Support and guidance from experienced coaches and staff to help athletes compete at the highest levels

8. Post-Competition Support (Ages 21+) The Post-Competition Support stage is focused on supporting athletes as they transition out of competition and into their post-athletic careers. The Bermuda Paralympic Committee will provide athletes with access

Training objectives:

- Focus on transitioning to a post-athletic career and developing new skills
- Maintain a healthy and active lifestyle

Competition objectives:

- Focus on giving back to the community and inspiring the next generation of para-sport athletes
- Possible resources and programs
- Career development programs to help athletes transition into their post-athletic careers
- Mental health and well-being support to help athletes adjust to life after competition
- Community outreach programs that allow athletes to give back and inspire the next generation of para-sport athletes

The Bermuda Paralympic Committee's long-term participant pathway is designed to support athletes of all ages and abilities to reach their full potential in para-sports. The pathway includes stages that focus on introducing para-sports, developing basic skills, and preparing athletes to compete at the highest levels of their chosen sport. With specialized coaching, training, and support, the Committee is committed to developing elite para-sport athletes who can represent Bermuda at the Paralympic Games and other major international events.

The pathway also includes post-competition support to help athletes transition out of competition and into their post-athletic careers. Overall, the Bermuda Paralympic Committee's long-term participant pathway is a comprehensive and effective way to develop para-sports in Bermuda and support athletes to achieve their goals.



7. THE BERMUDA PARALYMPIC ASSOCIATION: SUPPORTING BERMUDA'S NATIONAL SPORTS POLICY

Bermuda's National Sports Policy has the following five goals:

- 1. Increase Participation**
- 2. Achieve Sporting Excellence Regionally**
- 3. Improve Access to Sports Facilities**
- 4. Increase the Value of Sport**
- 5. Establish a Framework for Talent Development**



The Bermuda Paralympic Association's LTAD plan aligns with each of these points as follows:

1. Increase Participation

Seeking out and encouraging those with disabilities to participate in sport will open accessibility to sport and ensure all of Bermuda has a chance to learn and develop in the sport of their choice.

A robust Paralympic training plan will help to identify and retain individuals who may not have an opportunity to train and compete at a high level. Actively targeting the disabled population encourages diversity in sport participation and administration.

2. Achieve Sporting Excellence Regionally

According to Bermuda's National Sports Policy 2022 – 2027, the Bermuda Government wants to increase funding for high performance athletes and teams by 30%. To do this, the government must identify athletes worthy of this funding. The Bermuda Paralympic Association endeavours to develop athletes that have a high chance of placing regionally (and internationally). Although the Association currently supports few athletes in competition, the athletes the Association supports have performed exceptionally well and have achieved both regional and international recognition.

3. Improve Access to Sports Facilities

The Bermuda Paralympic Association gladly accepts improved access to sporting facilities. This will help ensure that the government's facilities are utilized by a broader portion of the population (not just the able bodied).

4. Increase the Value of Sport

Sport is an integral component of a healthy society. All individuals can realize the value of sport, not just the able-bodied. The Bermuda Paralympic Association strives to introduce Bermudians with disabilities to paralympic sport, identify those who can train at a high level, and support those who can compete at an extremely high level. This increases the value of sport, unites people of diverse backgrounds and creates hope.

5. Establish a Framework for Talent Development

The Bermuda Paralympic Association is committed to refining its Long-Term Athlete Development plan and seeks to work with government to further sport in Bermuda. The Association labours to identify and develop disabled individuals who show an aptitude and ability to compete at a high level of para-sport.



8. ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES IN BERMUDA

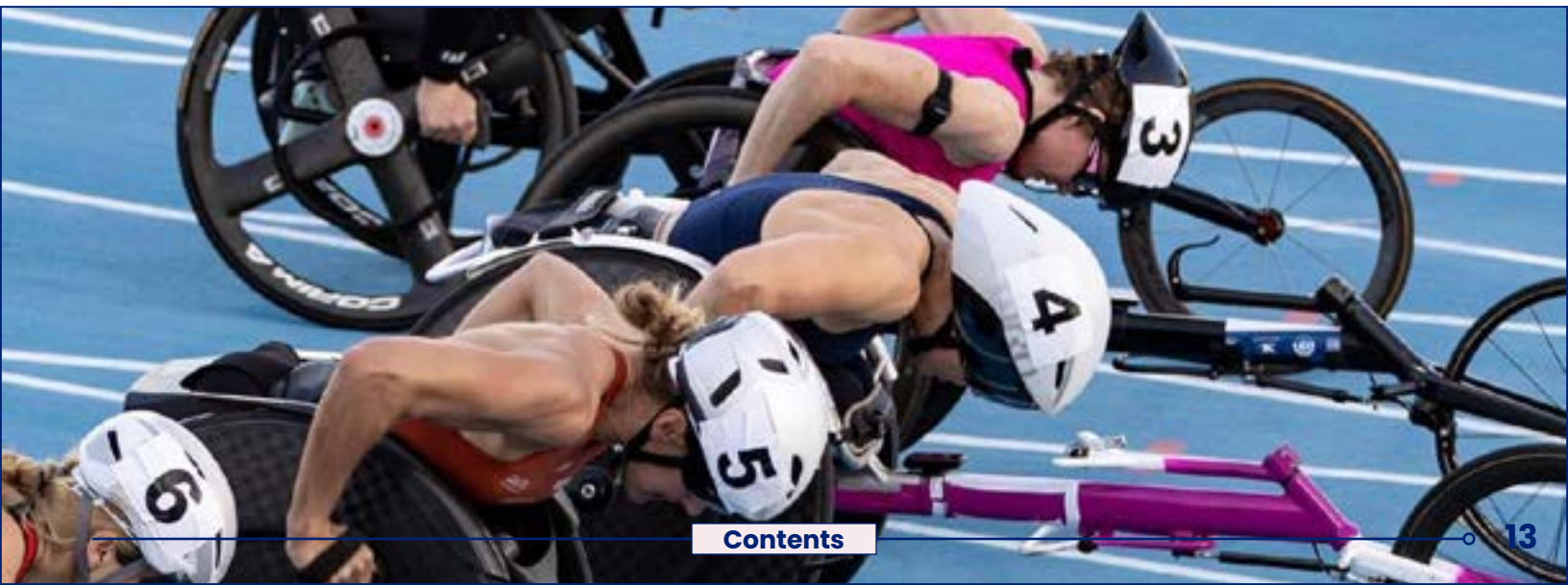
Developing para-athletes in Bermuda presents several unique challenges, primarily due to the island's small size and limited resources. One of the foremost difficulties is the scarcity of specialized training facilities and equipment necessary for para-athletes to train effectively. Unlike larger countries with established infrastructure, Bermuda must often adapt existing sports facilities to meet the needs of athletes with disabilities, which can be both costly and logistically challenging.

Finding potential para-athletes in Bermuda also presents several challenges. The island's small population limits the pool of candidates, making it harder to identify individuals with the necessary potential and interest. Moreover, there is a lack of awareness and understanding of para-sports, both among the public and individuals with disabilities, which can hinder the discovery and development of talent.

Additionally, there is a limited pool of qualified coaches who possess the expertise required to train para-athletes. Coaching para-athletes demands specialized knowledge of adaptive sports techniques and an understanding of the specific physical and psychological needs of athletes with disabilities. Bermuda's relatively small population means there are fewer opportunities to develop and retain such expertise locally. Another significant challenge is the limited funding and sponsorship opportunities available for para sports. Securing financial support is crucial for covering the costs of training, equipment, travel, and competition fees. However, with a smaller commercial base and less visibility for para sports compared to mainstream sports, attracting sponsors and government funding can be more difficult. This financial constraint limits the ability to provide comprehensive support to athletes, hindering their development and competitiveness on the international stage.

Finally, societal attitudes and awareness about para sports can pose additional barriers. There may be a lack of understanding or undervaluation of the capabilities and achievements of para-athletes, leading to less community support and engagement. Overcoming these perceptions requires ongoing efforts in advocacy, education, and the promotion of para sports to cultivate a more inclusive and supportive environment for athletes with disabilities.

Despite these challenges, the Bermuda Paralympic Association remains committed to advancing para sports on the island. By fostering partnerships, advocating for increased funding, and raising awareness, Bermuda's Paralympic Association continues to work towards creating a more equitable and supportive landscape for para athletes, enabling them to achieve their full potential and represent Bermuda with pride on the global stage.



9. ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN BERMUDA

Despite the challenges, Bermuda presents several unique opportunities for the development of para-athletes, offering a promising environment for nurturing talent and promoting inclusivity. One of the key opportunities lies in the close-knit nature of the Bermudian community, which fosters dedicated support networks and a sense of camaraderie among athletes, coaches, and supporters. This tight community fabric can lead to personalized attention and tailored support for para-athletes, enhancing their development and well-being.

Bermuda's geographic location and scenic environment provide an ideal backdrop for training and competitions. The island's natural beauty and mild climate allow for year-round outdoor training opportunities in various sports, including sailing, swimming, and track and field. Such conditions can be advantageous for athletes who require consistent and adaptive training environments, enabling them to maintain peak physical condition and develop their skills continuously.

Additionally, Bermuda's government and sports organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of inclusive sports. This growing awareness has led to increased visibility and support for para-athletes. In March 2024, the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation honoured Jessica Lewis by awarding her Bermuda's female athlete of the year. This recognition contributes to a more inclusive sporting culture on the island and helps to raise the profile of para-athletes and garner broader community and corporate support.

Bermuda's strategic focus on youth development presents another significant opportunity. There is an option to integrate para-sports into school programs and encourage early participation which can identify and nurture talent from an early age. Schools and youth organizations can play a pivotal role in promoting physical literacy and inclusivity, ensuring that children with disabilities can engage in sports and develop their potential.

International collaboration and exchange programs also offer substantial opportunities for Bermuda's para-athletes. By forming alliances with established para sports organizations and participating in international competitions, Bermudian athletes gain exposure to higher levels of competition and best practices in adaptive training methods. These experiences can accelerate their development and elevate the standard of para sports on the island.

Finally, the significant international business presence on the island means the level of corporate funding opportunities exceeds those that would be available in other small nations.





10. IDENTIFYING PARA-SPORT CANDIDATES

Given Bermuda's small population (approximately 60,000 individuals), there is naturally a limited pool of candidates who are eligible to participate in para-sport. Of these individuals, there is an even smaller number who have the ability or potential to compete at higher levels of para-sport.

Even though the Bermuda Paralympic Association serves a small portion of Bermuda's population, para-sport is crucial to the country's standing and success as it promotes inclusivity, empowers individuals with disabilities, and fosters a culture of resilience.

The Bermuda Paralympic Association desires to increase the number of individuals participating in para-sport and has committed to the following to identify potential para-athletes in Bermuda:

- 1. Community Outreach Programs:** Engage with local communities through awareness campaigns and events to educate people about para sports and encourage individuals with disabilities to participate in sports activities.
- 2. Collaboration with Disability Organizations:** Partner with local disability organizations and support groups to identify individuals who might be interested in and benefit from participating in para sports. The Bermuda Government is launching a National Disability Registry. The Bermuda Paralympic Association would like to support the Government's Disability Registry initiative by connecting self-identified individuals with people and resources in the para-sport community.
- 3. School Programs and Workshops:** Implement programs in schools to identify and introduce children with disabilities to different sports. Workshops and sports days can help identify disabled individuals with a natural talent or interest in athletics in Bermuda's public and private schools.
- 4. Healthcare Provider Referrals:** Work with local healthcare providers, including physicians, physical therapists, and rehabilitation workers, to identify individuals who have the physical capabilities and interest in pursuing para-sports.
- 5. Media Campaigns:** Continue to use social media, local newspapers, radio, and television to promote para-sports and share success stories, inspiring individuals with disabilities to explore their athletic potential.
- 6. Training Programs for Coaches:** Develop training programs for coaches to better understand how to collaborate with athletes with disabilities, helping them identify and nurture talent effectively.
- 7. Collaboration with International Organizations:** Partner with international para-sports organizations to bring expertise and resources to Bermuda, enhancing local efforts to identify and develop para-athletes.

Conclusion

The Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) framework is an integral part of BPA's strategic approach, providing a comprehensive roadmap for athlete progression from early childhood through elite competition and beyond. By following the LTAD stages, athletes can develop the physical, technical, and mental skills needed for success in sports while promoting lifelong participation in physical activity. The LTAD framework not only supports the athletic journey but also contributes to a healthier and more active society.

This plan will significantly enhance the identification and development of potential para-athletes in Bermuda and will help ensure sport is accessible to all of Bermuda's people.



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