

# USA Powerlifting Para Bench Division

\*\*\*In Effect January 1, 2021\*\*\*

**Background and Eligibility.** The Paralympic division in USA Powerlifting applies only to the bench press and the division is officially called “para bench.” The para bench division is open to athletes 14 years of age and older with one or more of eight eligible physical impairments (as defined by [World Para Powerlifting](#)), if these impairments have a certain severity that impacts on sport performance. See table below for a list of eligible impairments. All para bench athletes have an impairment in their lower limbs or hips, which would prohibit them from competing in able-bodied powerlifting. For example, athletes with a single or double amputation through or above the ankle or stiffness of the knee joint would be eligible to compete. If an athlete does not have one of the impairment types listed, they may petition for a waiver that would allow them to compete in the para bench division with their impairment provided it is in the spirit of what the para bench division is intended to represent. Waiver requests may be made by contacting the Technical Committee via email at: [TC@usapowerlifting.com](mailto:TC@usapowerlifting.com).

| ELIGIBLE IMPAIRMENT TYPES          |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| IMPAIRMENT TYPE                    | DESCRIPTION   |
| Impaired Muscle Power              | Reduced force generated by muscles or muscle groups, such as muscles of one limb or the lower half of the body, as caused, for example, by spinal cord injuries, spina bifida or polio.   |
| Impaired Passive Range of Movement | Range of movement in one or more joints is reduced permanently, for example due to arthrogyrosis. Hypermobility of joints, joint instability, and acute conditions, such as arthritis, are not considered eligible impairments. |
| Limb Deficiency                    | Total or partial absence of bones or joints as a consequence of trauma, illness or congenital limb deficiency.  |
| Leg Length Difference              | Bone shortening in one leg due to congenital deficiency or trauma.  |
| Short Stature                      | Reduced standing height due to abnormal dimensions of bones of upper and lower limbs or trunk, for example due to achondroplasia or growth hormone dysfunction.   |
| Hypertonia                         | Abnormal increase in muscle tension and a reduced ability of a muscle to stretch, due to a neurological condition, such as cerebral palsy, brain injury or multiple sclerosis.  |
| Ataxia                             | Lack of co-ordination of muscle movements due to a neurological condition, such as cerebral palsy, brain injury or multiple sclerosis.  |
| Athetosis                          | Generally characterised by unbalanced, involuntary movements and a difficulty in maintaining a symmetrical posture, due to a neurological condition, such as cerebral palsy, brain injury or multiple sclerosis.                |

Source: <https://www.paralympic.org/powerlifting/classification>

**Rules, Procedures, and Equipment.** The technical rules of performance as well as all policies and procedures as defined in the rulebook apply to lifters competing in the para bench division with the following exceptions as described below.

## Weigh-In:

- A large [platform scale](#) is not required though may be used if available
- The athlete may be weighed in a number of different ways including the following:
  - The athlete may stand unassisted on the scale
  - The athlete may sit on the scale
  - The athlete may sit in a chair that is placed on the scale provided the weight of the chair is determined and subtracted from the total weight of the athlete plus the chair
    - Note: a board may need to be placed on the scale to increase the surface area for chair placement; if this is done, the weight of the board must be subtracted from the total weight of the athlete plus the chair plus the board
  - The athlete may be held by their coach while the coach stands on the scale provided the weight of the coach is determined and subtracted from the total weight of the athlete plus the coach
    - Note: this procedure necessitates the scale has a capacity exceeding the combined weight of the athlete and coach

- Athletes with leg braces or similar devices for walking or those with a removable lower limb prosthetic must be weighed in without the brace(s)/device(s)/prosthetic(s)
- For athletes with one or more lower limb amputations, additions to the athlete's bodyweight will be made as follows:

| Type of amputation                         | Additions (kg)   |                      |
|--|------------------|----------------------|
|  | Up to 67 Kgs b/w | 67.01 Kgs & Over b/w |
| for each through ankle amputation add:     | + ½ kg           | + ½ kg               |
| for each below knee amputation add:        | + 1 kg           | 1½ kg                |
| for each through knee amputation add:      | + 1 kg           | + 1½ kg              |
| for each above knee amputation add:        | + 1½ kg          | + 2 kg               |
| for each complete hip disarticulation add: | + 2½ kg          | + 3 kg               |

Source: p. 21 [https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/World%20Para%20Powerlifting\\_February%202019.pdf](https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/World%20Para%20Powerlifting_February%202019.pdf)

#### Equipment:

- Bench
  - A specifically designed para bench (e.g., as manufactured by [Eleiko](#) and [ER](#)) is not required though may be used if available
  - If using a standard bench, the length of the bench may be extended (no limit to the maximum length) at the same height by various means (e.g., box, another bench, etc.) to ensure the athlete is able to place their legs entirely on the bench surface
  - If using a standard bench, the width of the bench may be extended (no limit to the maximum width) by various means (e.g., box, another bench, etc.) to ensure the athlete is able to place their legs entirely on the bench surface (note: the width of the bench may not be extended for the area of the bench within 70.5cm of the head end)
- Leg/Bench Straps
  - Athletes are allowed (not required) to have their legs strapped to the bench for additional stability and may choose to use one or two straps
  - Athletes may use [specifically designed para bench straps](#) or any type of strapping/securing mechanism provided they are not more than 2.2m in length and not more than 10cm in width
  - Each strap being used must be presented and shown at equipment check
  - Strapping is allowed anywhere on the legs from the ankles to the top of the thigh but must never be on, across, or above the hip line
    - The only exception to this is for amputees with complete hip disarticulation; in such cases, straps should be used and placed as low as possible away from the groin area and there must never be two straps overlapping each other
  - Straps must never be placed directly across the knee (patella) unless severe contractures of the legs dictate otherwise
  - There must never be two straps overlapping and or touching each other and a visible gap between the two straps must be present
    - The only exception is where an athlete has extreme contractures of the legs; in this case, for safety reasons, strapping may be overlapped
  - Strapping of the legs must be done by either the athlete or the coach; in either case this can be with the assistance of the spotters/loaders

## Rules of Performance:

- Athletes have the choice of placing their feet on the ground (if they are able) or on the top of the bench with legs/knees extended as much as their specific impairment allows (note: if placing feet and legs on the bench, the back of the foot/ankle is considered the correct contact point - the feet will not be flat on the bench)
  - If the athlete chooses to place their feet on the ground, they should make every attempt to position the feet flat but a completely flat foot position is not required
  - If the athlete chooses to place their feet on the ground, they are allowed to use foot blocks conforming to the dimensions as defined in the rulebook
- Body positioning must remain the same throughout the entire lift and may not be changed after the lift has commenced
- Slight movement of the foot/ankle is permitted but the foot/ankle is not allowed to be lifted off of the surface (i.e., the bench or ground)
- Time allowances
  - Once the bar is called loaded/ready, the athlete has 2 minutes to begin the lift
  - Upon completion of the lift, the athlete has 1 minute to exit the platform
  - Following the first and second attempts, the athlete has 1 minute to submit their next attempt
- The athlete may be accompanied on and off the platform by one coach and the coach may help to position the athlete on the bench (including the strapping procedure) and/or assist the athlete off the bench and/or platform

## **General Information.**

- Communication with meet director
  - Athletes competing in the para bench division are encouraged to contact the meet director as early as possible to determine what equipment will be available at the meet and what modifications can be made to the bench and/or for the weigh-in procedure
- Para bench division availability at USA Powerlifting events
  - The para bench division may be offered at local, state, and regional meets.
  - Meet directors are not required to offer the para bench division. If an athlete is interested in competing in the para bench division at a particular meet but a para bench division is not offered, the athlete is encouraged to contact the Technical Committee via email ([TC@usapowerlifting.com](mailto:TC@usapowerlifting.com)) to see if the para bench division can be added to the list of divisions being offered for that particular meet; this request should be made as far in advance of the meet as possible
- State and American records will be maintained for the para bench division
- Supportive equipment (i.e., bench shirts) is not allowed in the para bench division; all raw equipment/apparel standards must be adhered to
- All [USA Powerlifting anti-doping rules](#) apply to those competing in the para bench division
- World/USA Para Powerlifting approved equipment
  - Athletes who are interested in learning where to buy the equipment used in World/USA Para Powerlifting competitions (e.g., para bench, leg/bench straps, platform scale, etc.) are encouraged to contact the USA Powerlifting Technical Committee via email at: [TC@usapowerlifting.com](mailto:TC@usapowerlifting.com).
- Interested athletes must submit an application and be approved by USA Powerlifting to compete in the para bench division; this designation will appear on the athlete's membership card