



ATHLETES WITHOUT LIMITS

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AAU and AWL Join Forces to Support Taekwondo Players with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities at Upcoming International Championships

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Bend, OR — Athletes Without Limits (AWL) and the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) announce a partnership to support US Taekwondo athletes who qualify to represent the USA at a major upcoming international championship.

Up to 12 Para Poomsae athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities will receive funding from AAU to represent the USA at the 2022 Virtus Americas Regional Championships in São Paulo, Brazil. As the US member organization of Virtus, Athletes Without Limits organizes the US teams for Virtus events. The Virtus Americas Regional Championships will be attended by hundreds of the region's top athletes competing in six sports.



“This is a substantial investment by the AAU in building the best Taekwondo team in the world.” said Barry Holman, AWL President. “By supporting players with intellectual disabilities across all genders, classes and age groups equally, the AAU is putting the USA in a position to build deep teams and ensure all deserving athletes have the opportunity and support to represent the USA at the highest levels.”

US Taekwondo athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities will have the opportunity to compete for these 12 spots at the AAU National Championships in Las Vegas, NV July 3-9, 2022. The funded team slots will be awarded to the female and male AAU National Champions in each of the two age group (Under 30/Over 30) in the three classes (II1 - Intellectual Impairment; II2 - Down Syndrome; II3 - Autism). In addition to the 12 player slots, AAU will fund coaching/staff positions.

“AAU Taekwondo is excited about our partnership with Athletes Without Limits and Virtus! As the only organization committed to growth at the grassroots level, we are honored to be chosen to host the team trials and offer new opportunities to these amazing athletes.” said Bobby Stone, AAU National Sports Chair for Taekwondo.

Taekwondo players interested in competing at AAU Nationals and subsequent events should contact AWL Taekwondo Coach **Johnny Birch** (jbirchtkd@gmail.com) and visit the Athletes Without Limits website (www.athleteswithoutlimits.org) to complete the eligibility process to establish their competition class. AAU athletes and coaches can contact AAU Para Taekwondo Director, **Brad DeMinck** (lakeshoretkd@charter.net) for information regarding the AAU National Championships.

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***About Athletes Without Limits** - Founded in 2009, Athletes Without Limits (AWL) is the leading US sports organization providing opportunity, support and advocacy for athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities to compete at their highest level in para and mainstream sport. AWL is the US member of Virtus - World Intellectual Impairment Sport. Athletes Without Limits works with hundreds of US athletes in more than 10 sports to qualify for international competitions – up to the Paralympic Games; organizes US teams to compete at major international championships; hosts World and National Championships in the US; and works with international, national and local sports organizations to promote and provide inclusive opportunities for all athletes.*

***About the Amateur Athletic Union** - The AAU was founded in 1888 to establish standards and uniformity in amateur sports. During its early years, the AAU served as a leader in international sport representing the U.S. in the international sports federations. The AAU worked closely with the Olympic movement to prepare athletes for the Olympic Games. After the Amateur Sports Act of 1978, the AAU has focused its efforts into providing sports programs for all participants of all ages beginning at the grass roots level. The philosophy of "Sports for All, Forever," is shared by nearly 700,000 participants and over 150,000 volunteers.*

