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**2023 USA Goalball National Team Programs**

**Overview & Criteria**

**Program Overview**

USABA’s High Performance (HP) Department is responsible for supporting athletes who have the mentality, goals and capability of winning Paralympic Games medals, while identifying, supporting & developing future Games medalists in the sports of goalball. It is important that USABA is investing in our High Performance goalball programs in the most careful and thoughtful ways, in alignment with its strategic initiatives, capturing the important aspects of our development philosophy and high performance investment strategies. In addition, United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) invests significant financial resources into the USABA’s High Performance strategies and directly into its teams and athletes. USOPC does so with the belief that USABA teams are on track to continue winning medals in the Paralympic Games. If USABA’s goalball teams are not on-track to achieve podium performances in the Games, USABA can expect a reduction in USOPC investment.

The three-tiered Program provides performance-based support to athletes in the form of administrative assistance, performance advisement and allocation of financial resources. The Program is comprised of athletes with proven performance capability and is designed with three ascending tiers to support athletes as they advance towards their goal of being selected for Major tournament teams and assisting those teams in achieving podium performances at the Paralympic Games. Athletes are expected to advance levels during their time in the Program with improving performances reflective of their ability to execute Paralympic podium performances.

In addition to the qualification criteria specific to each tier outlined on Page 3, athletes must meet the following minimum criteria to be eligible for the Program:

* Eligible to represent USABA in IBSA competition, including but not limited to:
	+ Nationality of USA and be eligible to compete for Team USA at IBSA sanctioned tournaments immediately
	+ Be internationally classified according to the IBSA master list with a Fixed Review Date (“FRD”) or Confirmed “C”
	+ Current IBSA license holder
* Current USABA annual or lifetime member in good standing
* Current with Safe Sport training & Background checks
* Be 2024 Paralympic Games eligible
* Commitment to an elite goalball training regimen and international competition whether or not part of the resident program
* Creation and submission of an annual performance plan and monthly progress reporting
* Signed National Team Athlete Agreement for the term

Objective criteria, as outlined on Page 3, achieved during the 2023 by athletes guarantees selection to that tier for the duration of that term (note there are two terms). Athletes not currently in the National Team Program may be named in advance of the next term once all eligibility criteria is confirmed and processed, and will retain selection for the duration of that term. Existing National Team Program athletes who have achieved objective criteria may advance to a higher Tier starting on the first of the next month.

Any financial support outlined in this document represents expected funding levels based on the three tiers of the Program, though additional funding and support opportunities may become available to Program athletes and will be communicated accordingly. The descriptions below summarize the purpose of each funding mechanism available. After a review of the Annual Performance Plan (APP), a customized support plan will be developed for each athlete depending on resources available. Adjustments to the approved APP must be approved prior to incurring reimbursable expenses.

* Direct Athlete Support (DAS) stipend: supports training expenses
* Travel reimbursement: supports international travel to compete in developmentally appropriate USA tournament teams as selected
* USOPC benefits: Elite Athlete Health Insurance & Operation Gold funding will be distributed per the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) criteria
* Resident Program Training Allowance: incentive for athletes who are training as part of the resident program full-time or at least half of the annual goalball season (January through November)

Performance Progress
Athletes who qualify for Tier 1 or Tier 2 will be supported at those levels through the term of the Program regardless of time spent in the Program. Athletes who have been a part of the Men or Women National Team Programs for 2 years or more (consecutively or not) and who only qualify for Tier 3 will not be automatically eligible for the Program. Request for special consideration will be subject to discretionary review (as described below) which will review performance results, data analytics, daily training logs, camp/tournament attendance, and age performance analytics with an objective of demonstrating continued progress towards Paralympic team medal capacity before being eligible for the Program.

Tier 3 level is the entry level of the Men and Women National Team Programs and is designed to capture emerging athletes on their way to attaining higher levels of National Team status en route to helping the team in achieving its Paralympic Games podium performance. Therefore, returning National Team Program athletes are not expected to remain on Tier 3 for more than 2 years and athletes who have been on Tier 1 & 2 may not be eligible for Tier 3 without special consideration.

Discretionary Consideration

USABA may use discretion to select athletes who have not met the objective criteria for the Program for several reasons. These include, but are not limited to, injury or illness, the occurrence of exceptional circumstances {(e.g. earthquakes, cancellation of tournaments, epidemics, family emergencies, etc) these examples are not encompassing of all possible exceptional circumstances}, ability to positively impact team performance, and other unanticipated failure of objective criteria to select an athlete likely to help the team achieve tournament and personal results consistent with the program Tiers.

Discretionary nominations to a tier level may be based on a variety of factors, including data analytics, past performances, commitment to training at the highest level to ensure that USABA is investing in the most qualified athletes with the greatest potential to affect positive team best performance of winning Paralympic Games medals. Discretionary nominations for the Program, along with Tier level and term length, will be determined by the Director Sport Performance, applicable head coach, and one elite athlete representative.

*Concerns or questions related to discretionary decisions should be communicated to the USABA Director Sport Performance (aduke@usaba.org or 719-244-7761). In addition, athletes are encouraged to contact the Athlete Ombuds Office as a resource for confidential, independent advice and assistance with resolving disputes (contact information below). After the previous steps have occurred, athletes may contact USABA CEO (mquinn@usaba.org or 719-866-3220) to administer an executive review to ensure published criteria and process was followed. Athletes have the right to file a grievance per the* [*USABA’s Grievance, Appeal, and Complaint Procedures*](https://www.usaba.org/membership/policies-and-procedures/)*. Athletes also have the right to report any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest and will not be retaliated against for raising concerns or asking questions of USABA or the Athlete Ombuds Office. For more information, please see* [*USABA’s Whistleblower Policy*](https://www.usaba.org/about/governance-financials/)*.*

***Athlete Ombuds*** *-**The Office of the Athlete Ombuds offers independent, confidential advice to elite athletes regarding their rights and responsibilities in the Olympic and Paralympic Movement, and assists athletes with a broad range of questions, disputes, complaints and concerns.*

*Phone:                 719-866-5000*

*Email:* *ombudsman@usathlete.org*

*Website:* [*usathlete.org*](http://link.teamusa.org/c/6/?T=NzkwMjk2MzY%3AMDItYjIxMTE4LTJmNzEwYWY4MGEwYjQxZWY4ZDViZDY3ZDc5MDk3ZmE5%3AZW1pbHlAdXNhdGhsZXRlLm9yZw%3AY29udGFjdC0yNjg4OWMxNDg4MDJlYjExOTBmZDAwNTA1NmI1YjFmYS0yODMzMmIxMDg5ZGQ0MmQ3OTdhYjMzMTU5YzcyNWVjZg%3AZmFsc2U%3AMjk%3A%3AaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cudGVhbXVzYS5vcmcvQXRobGV0ZS1PbWJ1ZHM_X2NsZGVlPVpXMXBiSGxBZFhOaGRHaHNaWFJsTG05eVp3JTNkJTNkJnJlY2lwaWVudGlkPWNvbnRhY3QtMjY4ODljMTQ4ODAyZWIxMTkwZmQwMDUwNTZiNWIxZmEtMjgzMzJiMTA4OWRkNDJkNzk3YWIzMzE1OWM3MjVlY2YmZXNpZD1iMjAwODg4NC00MmE4LWViMTEtOTExMi0wMDUwNTZiNWRmYmM&K=rajfJKUkrBKAxNayorOP8A)

Direct Athlete Support (DAS)
The United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) allocates DAS support to National Governing Bodies (NGBs) on a basis of objective performance. In 2023 will be made available to USABA National Team Program athletes at the levels of Tier 1, 2, and 3. The amounts are based on tier level and can be found on page 3. Athletes must remain in good standing to receive DAS for the duration of their National Team Program term. Athletes who choose to break their agreement or no longer remain committed to an elite goalball training regimen and international competition whether part of the resident program or not will be removed immediately. At the end of the year, any unallocated DAS funds the USOPC has allocated to USABA athletes will be split equally amongst all athletes in Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3.

Elite Athlete Health Insurance (EAHI)

The United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) allocates EAHI slots to National Governing Bodies (NGBs) on a basis of objective performance. This program provides an affordable insurance option to athletes. This benefit is provided through the USOPC and in 2023 will be made available to USABA National Team Program athletes at the levels of Tier 1, 2, and 3. Athletes must remain in good standing to receive EAHI benefits for the duration of their National Team Program term. Athletes who choose to break their agreement or no longer remain committed to an elite goalball training regimen and international competition whether part of the resident program will be removed immediately. Athletes who are removed through the program (by choice or contract expiration) may have the option to remain on the insurance program at their own cost for up to one year.

Resident Program Training Allowance
The Resident Program located at the Turnstone Center in Fort Wayne, IN is an important aspect to our High Performance Development and National Team athlete readiness. We believe the more we train and have access to elite level performance services the better prepared our athletes will be for Major Games/Tournaments. As an incentive to have more National Team Program Athletes Training Full-time (or at a minimum half of the goalball season) as part of the Resident Program; any athlete within Tier 1, 2, or 3 is eligible for an additional payment of $200 per quarter for being part of the Resident Program.

**Projected 2023 Support Levels:** *(subject to change at the start of each Term depending on USABA & USOPC funding)*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NTP Level** | **DAS (Direct Athlete Support) stipend** | **Travel Reimbursement** | **USOPC Insurance** | **Resident Program Training Allowance** |
| Tier 1 | $1,525/quarter | TBD based on tournament team selection  | Eligible for EAHI | Eligible for $200/quarter |
| Tier 2 | $800/quarter | TBD based on tournament team selection | Eligible for EAHI | Eligible for $200/quarter |
| Tier 3 | $350/quarter | TBD based on tournament team selection | Eligible for EAHI  | Eligible for $200/quarter |

**USA Goalball National Team Programs Qualification Criteria Term 1**:January 1 – July 31, 2023

**Tier 1**

Athletes may achieve a Tier 1 status through the following criteria:

* Member (excluding alternates) of the 2022 IBSA Goalball World Championships team

**Tier 2**Athletes may achieve Tier 2 status through any **one** of the following criteria:

* Member (including alternate) of the 2019 IBSA Qualification Tournament Team
* Member (including alternate) of the 2019 Para Pan American Games Tournament Team
* Member (including alternate) of the 2020 Paralympic Games Team
* Alternate of the 2022 IBSA World Championships Tournament Team

**Tier 3**

Athletes may achieve Tier 3 status through the following criteria:

* Member (excluding alternates) of any international adult tournament the U.S. team participates

**USA Goalball National Team Programs Qualification Criteria Term 2** August 1 – December 31, 2023

**Tier 1**

Athletes may achieve a Tier 1 status through the following criteria:

* Member (excluding alternates) of the 2023 IBSA World Games Tournament Team

**Tier 2**Athletes may achieve Tier 2 status through any **one** of the following criteria:

* Member (including alternate) of the 2020 Paralympic Games Team
* Member (including alternate) of the 2022 IBSA Goalball World Championship Tournament Team
* Alternate of the 2023 IBSA World Games Tournament team

**Tier 3**

Athletes may achieve Tier 3 status through the following criteria:

* Member (excluding alternates) of any international adult tournament the U.S. team participates