**USA Goalball National Team Programs Guiding Principles**

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 following are areas deemed essential to USABA High Performance as we continue preparation for future Paralympic Games:

* **Men and Women Goalball National Team Programs** – Our Men and Women Goalball National Team Programs design should recognize and reward individual athlete performance and progress which translates into teams’ success as our mission critical goals of winning Major Games medals. The Men and Women Goalball National Team Programs is not intended to just reward the best goalball players in the USA with support and services; it is intended and must be designed to support our strategic mission related to Teams Games medals.
* **Resident Program** – The Turnstone Center for Children & Adult with Disabilities in Fort Wayne, Indiana, is the host and training site for our resident program. This program is a very high priority in providing some of our top athletes individualized and team training, in-person coaching, and access to sport performance resources that are essential for athlete and team success.
* **National Team Training Camps** – It is critical for our national team athletes to get together for training camps, strategically, to practice as a team in preparation for Major Games and important tournaments. The intent for athletes within the national team programs is to be prepared for the invitation to such camps by being physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared and ready when called up. If selected to attend a training camp by a Head Coach, the intent is for all invited players to be present for said training camp for its entirety. The list of camps will be made available as early as possible in Q1, each year, so every effort can be made for all athletes in the pool to make it to each camp as invited.
* **Major Tournaments** - Each year, the Head Coach for each National Team Program, in conjunction with the Sport Performance Director, will establish a list of tournaments each program would like to attend based competition expected to be at the tournament, priorities of the program for the year, and budget. A list of such tournaments will be communicated to National team athletes as early as possible, with Q1 as the preference, so every effort is made for athletes to be available should they be selected for a tournament. Each Major tournament will have selection procedures that will be followed for team selection for the tournament. Within these procedures, it will include detailed information as to when a team will be selected and if there is an anticipated training camp associated with said tournament and what parameters will be discussed to make the team selection.
* **International Friendlies** – Playing against world leading countries for each program, outside of just tournaments, is a high priority for each program to practice being match ready. The hope is that these friendlies can occur surrounding already scheduled national team training camps to reduce the amount of travel on athletes in the program but will also make the training camps more meaningful from a team readiness standpoint. On-going dialogue with other countries will happen throughout the year to see if these can be scheduled as well as dialogue with Turnstone to host such teams and facilitate such events. Communication to all athletes within the national team program will be communicated with as much advance notice as possible knowing these friendlies may be scheduled as available.

The USA Men and Women Goalball National Team Programs, and the financial support associated, is designed specifically to assist these teams in achieving podium performances at the Paralympic Games. The three-tiered program provides performance-based support to individual athletes in the form of a travel and training assistance, tournament support, performance advisement, and allocation of resources. Each National Team 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 making a Paralympic team and subsequently a podium performance at the Paralympic Games. Athletes are expected to advance up the levels during their time in the Program with improving individual performances reflective of their ability to help the team execute Paralympic podium performances.

* **Tier 1 level** – earned by athletes who have made rosters for very recent Major tournaments, excluding alternates, who show the most potential to assist the team in executing a Paralympic podium position. \*
* **Tier 2 level** – earned by athletes who have made roster for not as recent Major tournaments (or alternates at recent tournaments) but are showing the potential to assist the team in executing a Paralympic podium position. \*
* **Tier 3 level** – earned by athletes who have not made a roster or been an alternate at a recent Major tournament but are showing potential to make a roster or be an alternate at an upcoming Major tournament and potentially a Paralympic Games team. This is the entry point to the national team program. \*
* **Development training pool**– although not a part of the national team program, it is a vital subset of athletes who are showing potential at regional tournaments and may be invited to development and national team camps on an invitation-only basis and/or youth tournaments as opportunities arise. The support for these athletes is tailored to their individual development plan.

*\*Language in each level is representative in nature and is not meant to serve as official criteria language.*

**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.

Development Training Pool (known as simply the “training pool”) is not a part of the national team program but is a vital part of the athlete development pipeline. Athletes are invited to be a part of this training pool due to their performances at regional tournaments as observed by USABA HP staff and scouts. Athletes in this pool are still developing their Goalball skills and any benefits as being part of this pool is subjective and not guaranteed. Each athlete in the pool will have direct communication with the Head Coach for their respective national team program and a personal development plan will be agreed upon as a condition of being in the pool. From time to time, athletes from this pool could be invited to development and national team camps on an invitation-only basis as opportunities arise but is not a guarantee. Additional tournament opportunities and camps may arise that fit the need of the pool athlete to help them move up the talent ID pathway with a goal of being in the national team program in the not-too-distant future.

**Monikers**Beginning in 2023, there is a systematic change in how we use specific monikers (or words) to describe different groups of athletes in specific situations within the programs. Here are such monikers and definitions:

* National Team Roster – those athletes who have qualified for tier 1, 2, or 3 and are rostered onto our national team program
* Resident Program – those athletes who are training in Fort Wayne at Turnstone on a regular or fairly regular basis. Athletes who are part of this program should be in the training pool or part of the National Team.
* Tournament Team – the group of athletes who are named to an upcoming international tournament (e.g., The USA Goalball Women’s IBSA World Games Team).
* Training Pool – the first step in the talent identification pathway and is meant for athletes who have been identified at domestic events and show potential to continue to excel in Goalball given resources by USA Goalball.

**Athlete and Team Accountability**

Athletes part of the National Team program will be held accountable for following prescribed training (S&C as well as Goalball skills and drills) in their home environment when not at a training camp or tournament with a national team program or tournament team. Monthly performance reports may be required in order to remain in good standing as part of the program. Regular attendance at all training camps and tournaments, when offered, will be a priority to remain in good standing as part of the program. National Team Training Camps will be confirmed no less than 30 days prior to a camp beginning. If a National Team athlete must miss a training camp, then a written letter, as to the reasoning of missing the camp, needs to be sent to the Sport Performance Director and Team Head Coach no less than 21 days prior to the camp beginning. If an emergency situation arrives less than 20 days prior to a camp beginning, a phone call needs to be made to the Sport Performance Director and/or Head Coach immediately upon knowing the camp must be missed. Quarterly National Team meetings, when scheduled, should be attended via zoom with best effort as these meetings will contain important team building and program updates that should not be missed if possible.

**Discretionary Evaluation**

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.

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