

## **Paralympic Table Tennis**

Hello everyone! My name is Stephen Cannell. I'm a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) in Toyohashi. Today I would like to introduce the popular Paralympic event, table tennis, also known as ping-pong.

Table tennis was created as an indoor alternative to tennis. Like tennis, a racket is used to hit a ball back and forth across a table. The name ping-pong comes from the sound of the ball as it is hit and bounces on the table.

The table is 2.74m long and 1.525m wide. The ball is 40mm around and is made of plastic. The rackets have a rubber surface to allow control over the ball's spin. Because players are able to control the direction of the bounce with spin, it can make it very difficult for the opponent to return the ball.

Table tennis is played in both the Olympics and Paralympics, but unlike most sports it became a Paralympic event before it became an Olympic event.

Paralympic table tennis is divided by type of disability and severity. Classes 1-5 are wheelchair classes, 6-10 are standing, and 11 is for athletes with cognitive disabilities. The rules are the same as standard table tennis, except in the case where a rule must be altered to allow play to be possible.



5 time Paralympic gold medalist

Natalia Partyka

Currently ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the class 7 world rankings is Toyohashi native Katsuyoshi Yagi. Yagi has a condition which causes him to lose mobility in his wrists and affects development in his hands. He has 6 wins at international tournaments. If Yagi maintains his current rank of 7<sup>th</sup> until the qualification deadline, he will qualify for the Paralympics.

There is one Japanese player who has currently secured their Paralympic qualification, Takashi Asano.

Asano secured his qualification at the 2019 ITTF Asian Championships by winning the class 11 tournament.

When you think of table tennis, you probably think of China as being the strongest. However, Germany and Brazil are also quite strong. German Thomas Schmidberger is currently ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the class 3 world rankings. There is also an American athlete who has secured a Paralympic qualification.

Paralympic table tennis athletes are extremely skilled and fun to watch. The rules are simple, and the sport is easy to watch. Let's all tune in to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics and cheer on our favorite athletes!

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