



Para Athletics Development Camp Builds Connection, Fosters Community and Provides Opportunity

Athletics Canada proudly announces the successful hosting of the inaugural Para Athletics Development Camp hosted in Victoria, BC, from March 10th to 14th, 2024. The four-day event brought together a diverse cohort of six development athletes and eight emerging coaches to learn from the performance staff and engage with National Team athletes at Athletics Canada's West Hub.

Heather Hennigar, West Hub Lead and Coach, expressed enthusiasm, stating, "We were pleased to be the host for this event and demonstrate what we can offer at the hubs. Initiatives like these strengthen our Para Athletics community, paving the way for future success by offering opportunities for coach development and mentorship, particularly in underrepresented disciplines like wheelchair racing, where we have seen significant growth over the past few years."

The Para Athletics Development Camp aligns with Athletics Canada's 2028 Strategic Plan, focusing on participation, development, and gender equity. By promoting inclusion, integrating girls and women into Para Athletics, supporting athlete development, and providing coach leadership opportunities, the camp lays the groundwork for a robust and sustainable pathway in Para Athletics.

"We are witnessing the impact of Becoming Para Ready on our grassroots initiatives in Para Athletics and the remarkable success of the high performance team" said Fannie Smith, Para Development Manager. "The Para Development Camp played a pivotal role in uniting these two facets of Para Athletics and continuing the forward momentum we are seeing across Canada in embracing the inclusion of Para athletes in their programs and plans."

Participants shared their experiences and insights, highlighting the importance of community and mentorship. Katie Pegg, an up-and-coming F46 Shot Put athlete, expressed her excitement, saying, "I don't often get to train with other Para athletes, so being part of a larger community was amazing! Seeing other athletes commit to the process and achieve success gives us something to aspire to and also creates a safe place where I could have someone to relate to as an athlete and a person with a disability."

Jen Wood, a coach from Saskatchewan, emphasized the value of creating a community for developmental athletes and coaches, stating, "We're often isolated, so opportunities to connect and learn are crucial for both athletes and coaches and are a critical piece in supporting athletes for their next step in Para Athletics."

The camp also serves as a bridge between development and high performance, preparing athletes and coaches for future competitions, including the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games. Carla Nicholls, Para Performance Lead, emphasized the importance of this transition, stating, "The High Performance Program is currently focused on Paris 2024, but we can't lose sight on the future in our sport. We must ensure we have a strong and sustainable Para Athletics program along the entire pathway."

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"The camp was a resounding success, building momentum and serving as a catalyst to support athletes along their development pathway as they work toward the Talent Confirmation program and preparing them for the World Para Athletics (WPA) World Juniors next year," said Sarah Black, Para Performance Manager, whose role is to support athlete's transition into the Performance Pathway. "It has also provided invaluable support to coaches working with athletes on an accelerated pathway who can learn from our National Team staff, but also from one another, fostering peer mentorship and collaboration. This is an important step in building capacity and creating alignment in the system."

We aim to expand this initiative annually, focusing on different disciplines and providing more development opportunities for coaches and athletes. Athletics Canada thanks the Government of Canada for its support of this year's Para Development Camp through the Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Sport Initiative.

Athletics Canada will be hosting a webinar on Thursday April 18 4pm PT / 7pm ET on the [Para](#) Athletics Pathways. You can register [here](#).

For more information about the Para Athletics Development Camp or Athletics Canada's Para initiatives, please contact:

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