

Athletes Will Shine at the Special Olympics World Winter Games in 2022



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
**WORLD
WINTER
GAMES**
KAZAN 2022

Next year in Kazan, Russia, 2,000 athletes from 108 nations will challenge the world to embrace inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities during the World Winter Games.

Using the platform of the Games, Special Olympics will seek to transform attitudes about intellectual disabilities in Russia, as well as create new opportunities for social integration for the estimated 3 million people with intellectual disabilities living in Russia. The games will also feature an expansion of Unified Sports® and

related programs, where athletes with and without intellectual disabilities play sports together. Here are the stories of some favorite winter sports and athletes who will compete in the next World Winter Games.



FLOORBALL

Diabate Hadidiah
Cote D'Ivoire (AFRICA)

pictured front row, center

Diabate is an athlete who loves a challenge. After Diabate excelled at judo, her coach encouraged her to try a new sport: the fast-paced game of floorball. Through sports, Diabate says she's found new abilities and confidence, plus she's mastered the skills of cooperation and compromising with multiple players on her team. She's even gained more physical strength racing up and down the field. At the 2017 World Winter Games in Austria, Diabate's team triumphed with hard-fought victories—and a bronze medal.



ALPINE SKIING

**Brenton Heslehurst
Australia (ASIA PACIFIC)**

Brenton lives over 2,000km from the nearest Australian snowfields. Yet he's a skilled athlete who's worked hard to excel in alpine skiing. Brent was thrilled to represent Australia at the Special Olympics World Winter Games 2017, held in Austria. Those Games marked a year of important firsts for him: He was chosen to represent Australia for the first time at a World Winter Games AND he welcomed his first

child with his wife, Emily, who is also a Special Olympics athlete. Of course, Brent didn't stop there. He achieved another first at those last World Winter Games—his first gold medal in global competition in the Giant Slalom!

FIGURE SKATING

**Sharita Taylor, Ohio, USA
(NORTH AMERICA)**

Competing at her first World Winter Games was a longtime dream for Sharita. She says the experience made her feel like she was living in a fairy tale. When she's not competing, Sharita trains when she can and has been working at PNC Bank. One of Sharita's long-term goals is to be a figure skating coach for her local Program or maybe even Special Olympics USA's World Games team. In addition, Sharita is a dedicated mentor—for her fellow athletes with autism and those without. "I still want to pass on what I've learned to younger generations on the spectrum and those who are not on the spectrum! If I can do it, everyone can!"

