

## World Games Unified Sports Competition Protocol Overview

Unified Sports® teams need to incorporate the Principle of Meaningful Involvement.

Meaningful Involvement is an effort to optimize participation by all team members (athletes and partners) based on the principle that every player should contribute to the success of the team. The composition of any team must include players with necessary sport-specific skills. Teams must not include players who dominate play, exclude other teammates from contributing to the success of the team, or present a health and safety risk on the field of play. By permitting any player to dominate play, other players' roles and opportunities are greatly limited. This violates both the spirit and intent of the Special Olympics Unified Sports rules and philosophy and will be addressed according to the standards set forth by each sport's governing rules. Therefore, it is the expectation for all Unified Sports teams participating at Special Olympics Unified Sports competitions on any level of competition to demonstrate their understanding of this fundamental principle.

The following protocol has been established to assess all Unified Sports teams and ensure the Principle of Meaningful Involvement is being followed. The process focuses on educating and communicating with coaches and delegations, as well as sanctioning when Unified Sports rules and policies are not followed.

### ON-SITE UNIFIED SPORTS COMPETITION PROTOCOL POINTS OF EMPHASIS:

- Player dominance and Meaningful Involvement violations may include partners athletes, and coaches.
- Sport officials on the field of play do not monitor or determine meaningful involvement. However, they may be asked for input. Unified Sports Delegates (USD) are responsible for the observations and sanctions.

**Unified Sports Evaluation Committee (USEC):** World Games will have a USEC composed of Unified Sports Delegates (USDs) and observers. The members of this committee are qualified individuals knowledgeable in Unified Sports who help observe, guide, monitor and enforce compliance.

- Each sport is assigned a USD. This member works with the sport Technical Delegate (TD) and Competition Manager to oversee a process of observing all Unified Sports teams to ensure they are incorporating the principle of meaningful involvement.
- Each USD is supported by Unified Sports observers.
- The Unified Sports observers apply sport-specific observation criteria to determine if a team is not following the Principle of Meaningful Involvement or if a player dominance is occurring. The Unified Sports observers report observations to the USD who is ultimately empowered to enforce the Principle of Meaningful Involvement and similar age requirements.
- Teams will be observed regarding Meaningful Involvement in all rounds of competition, including divisioning and medal rounds.

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## **SANCTIONS:**

Teams that do not abide by Unified Sports rules and protocol are subject to sanctions. These sanctions cannot be protested.

When the USD determines that a Unified Sports team is not incorporating the principle of meaningful involvement, the USD consults with the Technical Delegate (TD). The following steps will be taken in the sanctioning process.

1. **Education:** During Divisioning, the USD or TD informs the respective coach with the specifics about why his/her team is not following the Principle of Meaningful involvement, and what needs to be done to correct it. They are informed that if their play does not improve, sanctions will be forthcoming.
2. **Verbal Warning:** After the Divisioning round, if the USEC member determines a first violation has occurred, there will be a verbal warning in line with the sport-specific competition warning protocol. Sport-specific protocol will determine how and when to stop competition to give warnings, for example an official's timeout. The warning will be documented on an official scoresheet or similar format. The head coach is held accountable.
3. **Sanctions:**
  - Specific Player or Coach Sanctions (sport-specific penalties, for example: substitution, technical foul, warning, yellow card, ejection)
  - Team Consequences (for example: change of possession, forfeiture of game, disqualification)
  - The Head of Delegation (HOD) will be alerted of sanctions and involved in the process.

Disqualification will result in a participation ribbon.