



## TRADITIONAL AND UNIFIED TEAM SPORTS

### AGE AND ABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

While the best sports experience is produced when athletes (and partners if unified) are of similar age and ability, there is some flexibility, depending on the sport chosen. Based on the nature, characteristics and team dynamics, sports have been separated into the following two groups, each with a unique standard for age and ability matching.

Teams should be constructed in such a way as to provide training and competition opportunities that meaningfully involve and challenge all participants (athletes and partners if unified). The opportunities often lead to improved sports skills, higher self-esteem, equal status with peers and new friendships.

#### **Group 1: Basketball, Floor Hockey, Soccer, Softball, Volleyball (*Contact sports*)**

- For these sports, selection of athletes (and partners if unified) of similar age and ability is essential for training and competition in these sports. Though rules modifications have been implemented to minimize differences (especially between athletes and partners if unified), inappropriate competition experiences and a higher risk of injury result from teams where athletes (and partners if unified) are poorly matched.
- The age group of a team is determined by the age of the oldest athlete on that team on the opening date of competition.
- Divide teams into the following age groups: 8-15 (Junior); 12-15 (Senior); and 22-over (Masters).
- Athletes are allowed to advance one age division only. (i.e. – an athlete (or partner if unified) in the 8-15 age group may play on a team in the 16-21 age group but may not play on a team of 22-over athletes.)

#### **Group 2: Aquatics, Athletics, Bowling, Bocce, Cycling, Equestrian, Figure Skating, Golf, Gymnastics, Powerlifting, Rollerskating, Sailing, Speed Skating, Long Distance Running / Walking, Table Tennis, Tennis (*Non-contact sports*)**

- For these sports, election of athletes (and partners if unified) of similar age and ability is preferred, but not essential, for training and competition in these sports. Though ability matching is not essential in these sports, it may enhance the quality of training and competition experiences. Due to the nature of the competitive environment in these sports, there is minimal additional risk of injury when athletes (and partners if unified) are not matched by ability.
- The age group of a team is determined by the age of the oldest athlete on that team on the opening date of competition.
- Divide teams into the following age groups: 8-15 (Junior); 12-15 (Senior); and 22-over (Masters).
- Similar age and ability is preferred, but not essential, for training and competition in these sports. However, due to the ways that teams are divisioned, keep in mind age-appropriateness.

**\*\*Note: Exception to the sport of Bowling**

- Any athlete (or partner if unified) competing in Masters Bowling **MUST** be 22-over on the opening date of competition.
- Any athlete (or partner if unified) competing in Winter Games **MUST** be 8-21 on the opening date of competition.