Paralympic Equestrian Classification History

1948 Para Classification initially started with [Dr Ludwig Guttmann](https://www.paralympic.org/classification/history). Athletes were allocated ‘Classes’ based on the cause of their impairment. E.g., paraplegic due to trauma, amputation of one or more limbs, visual impairment or any other types of disability (called Les Autres). Although, it became clear that this system was not suitable.

1984 There was an exhibition of dressage at the first international multi-disabled games in New York, with a view to have Para Dressage in Atlanta 1996 Olympic Games.

1985 Chris Meaden invented a new classification for all disabilities and for any sport called the Sport Specific Profile System. This involved allocating each athlete a profile then grouping the profiles according to the functional activity of each sport. A national training manual was created, and training of classifiers took place in all areas of UK; seven sports took on this new classification.

1987 The first World Dressage Championship for the Disabled took place on the Swedish island of Orust. Due to the initiative of physiotherapist Charlotte von Arbin, it was decided a common classification system was necessary. This would ensure severely impaired riders from different nations would compete against others with similar functional ability rather than the cause of the impairment.

1985 - 1996 Many national, regional and international equestrian events were held. The International Paralympic Equestrian Committee (IPEC) was responsible for the rules, officials, and classifiers.

1994 The third World Equestrian Games for Disabled were held in Hartpury where Chris Meaden gave a presentation of her multi-disabled, sport specific classification, supported by Sue Adams, secretary of IPEC, and Joyce Sherriff. Jonquil Solt, the IPEC chairman put together a working group who put the profiles into 4 classes for competition. The working group consisted of:

* Clive Milkins- respected trainer from West Bucks RDA UK
* Joyce Sherriff- classifier, physio and trainer from West Bucks
* Dr Gill Peacock- medical doctor and above knee amputee
* Chris Meaden Physiotherapist- researcher, and trainer of classifiers

The system was then presented to the IPEC committee in Finland where it was voted by the committee to introduce the ‘Profile System’ into para dressage after the 1996 Paralympics in Atlanta. Jonquil Solt was instrumental in getting training sessions held for classifiers and judges, in as many countries as possible.

Compensating aids were also introduced for riders who were disadvantaged due to their impairment i.e., a whip if they could not use their leg(s) or salute with head only if they could not use their arms. It was important to make sure that they had no advantage over unimpaired riders.

1996 - 1999 Chris Meaden ran classification courses and exams for physiotherapists and medical doctors; she spearheaded the creation of an international corps of classifiers. Courses were held in France, Germany, Sweden, Czech Republic, Israel, Russia, Japan, Hong Kong, USA, Australia, Canada and Argentina.

1996 Para dressage became the only equestrian discipline included in the Atlanta 1996 Paralympic Games, growing in popularity over the years.

2000 The Sport Specific Profile System was used in four classes for the first time at the Paralympic Games in Sydney 2000. The competition was successful, and this system has been in place for 20 years.

2004 It was decided by the committee to increase the number of classes to five, ready for Athens 2004 Paralympic Games. The classes have remained the same and international classifiers have been trained in over 20 countries. Many people qualified as national classifiers, so riders could be classified nationally, then by international classifiers for international events.

2006 The IPC allowed each of its Paralympic sports to become independent or to join its respective able-bodied national federation. Para Equestrian sport was the first to do this, with the FEI taking over management on 1st July 2006, when IPC Equestrian moved into FEI under the new name of Para Equestrian.

2015 The fourth edition of FEI’s classification system guide was published.