

Introduction

What are Unified Sports?

Unified Sports is meant to join people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team to train and compete. This program is dedicated to promoting social inclusion through shared sports training and competition experiences. Unified Sport looks to develop **Meaningful Competition**, where coaches work together to create a balanced competitive environment. **Coaches are responsible for ensuring meaningful involvement of all players in the game.**

Unified Sport is integrated into all our qualifying sports: Soccer, Basketball, Bocce, Floorball, Track & Field and at our School Championships.

Benefits of Unified Sport

- Helps remove barriers and improve accessibility.
- Allows for increased capacity and participation.
- Coach, volunteer development and leadership opportunities.
- Creates greater awareness for people with ID and better integration with their classmates.
- Enhance outreach and engagement with communities.
- Improved quality of life for individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- Develop higher-level sports skills and have new competition experience.
- Participation in their communities and exposure to choices outside Special Olympics.
- Experience meaningful inclusion as each athlete is ensured of playing a valued role on the team.
- Develop mutually rewarding relationships, are recognized as contributors, and are received with acceptance and respect.
- Develop physical, cognitive, and social skills, while enhancing confidence and self-esteem.

Additional Unified Sport Components

- Unified Sport Consists of two kinds of Athletes:
 - Special Olympics Athlete – an athlete with an intellectual disability.
 - Unified Sports Partner – an athlete without an intellectual disability.
- Forced line changes (substitutions are required to ensure equal play time for all).
- In the recreational competition stream: Unified Partners are not intended to score points in this category but are expected to impact the game in other ways (passing and rebounding).
- In the competitive competition stream, Unified Partners are **intended to score points, impact the game in a meaningful way** and compete in this category. This includes passing, blocking, stealing, rebounding, and shooting. **Note: Unified athletes are not permitted to take over games but are expected to contribute to winning.**

Unified Bocce

- Each Unified team will enter a roster of four athletes: two Special Olympics Athletes and two Unified Sports Partners.
- Divisioning, games, competition, scoring, and tournament format are all unchanged for Unified Bocce.

Team and Players

- A team may have up to five players, which includes four starters and one substitute – as long as there are at least two Special Olympics Athletes and two Unified Sports Partners able to play in each game.
- Each Unified team will enter a roster of four athletes: two Special Olympics Athletes and two Unified Sports Partners.
- School Championships Bocce is a game of 4-on-4. Each team must start the game with four players with at least two SO athletes or forfeit the game.

Divisioning

- All teams are divisioned to play teams of similar ability.
 - Coaches will fill out a team ranking assessment at registration and can use our [Skill Assessments](#) as a guide.
- Team rankings and selected classifications are used to establish division.
- Schools may enter the recreational or competitive category.
 - Recreational: Unified Partners are there to support/facilitate SO Athletes new to the sport who are still working on developing their skills
 - Competitive: Unified Partners are to compete alongside higher-level SO Athletes

The Game

- Playing court – Each bocce court will be 60 feet in length and 12 feet wide. The court surface will be composed of artificial indoor turf on both days of the tournament.
- Equipment—Bocce is played with eight balls, and one smaller target or object ball called the Pallina (jack, cue, beebee, etc.). There are four balls to a side or team, and they are made in two colours to distinguish the balls of one team from those of the opposing team.
- Pallina and colour — A coin toss by the referee will determine which team has the Ballina and the choice of ball colour.
- Rotation of players—the players of any given team must play their balls alternating between Special Olympics Athletes and Unified Sports Partners, provided the one who tosses the Ballina delivers the first bocce ball. No player may deliver more than his/her allotted number of balls per frame.
- **Note:** All other rules of the game will abide by those of traditional Special Olympics School Championship Bocce. This includes the three-attempt rule, sequence of play, initial point, ball delivery, scoring, etc.

RESOURCES

Principal of Meaningful Involvement: [SO Unified Sports Principle of Meaningful Involvement](#)

Unified Sports Coach Guidelines - [Unified Sports Coach Guidelines](#)

Unified Coaching Course - [Unified Coaching Course](#)

Please Note: All other rules of the game will abide by those of traditional Special Olympics School Championship Basketball. This includes out-of-bounds, fouls and penalties, free throws, timeouts, jump balls, etc.

Note: For qualification to Provincial School Championships, teams are competing against teams in their conference, which may extend beyond those they compete against at their qualifier. To learn more about the qualifying process, please visit our resources page: [School Programs Resources](#)