

# SPORTS 'N SPOKES

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YEARS

September 2025

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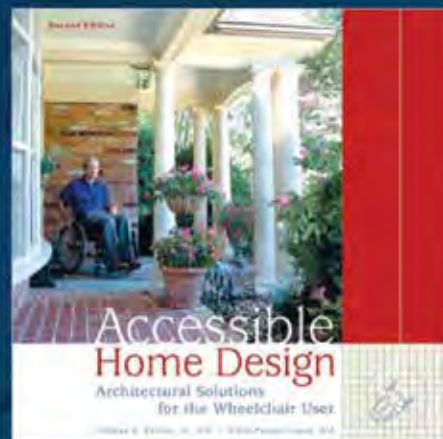
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— Mark Lichter, Director of Architecture, Paralyzed Veterans




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#### WORLD SERIES AT THE MALL

Check out our coverage from the mid-August Wheelchair Softball World Series at the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn. We have photos, stories and a championship game article on [sportsnspokes.com](https://sportsnspokes.com).

#### WHEELCHAIR LACROSSE CHAMPS

Find out who won the late-August Wheelchair Lacrosse Nationals title in Pittsburgh by visiting our Facebook page ([facebook.com/sportsnspokes](https://facebook.com/sportsnspokes)), and look for a photo gallery of highlights from each day.



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**On the cover:** Madelyn Wilson of Massachusetts was named the 2025 *SPORTS 'N SPOKES* Junior Athlete of the Year during July's The Hartford Nationals in Grand Rapids, Mich. Photo by Christopher Di Virgilio.



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# Letters

## Curt Beamer

In the July 2025 issue of *SPORTS 'N SPOKES* (S'NS Replay, p. 33) I read, with deep sorrow, of the passage of Curt Beamer.

I had the pleasure and honor of knowing Curt for many, many years, as well as being the subject of his photographs. Our first meeting was at a track and field competition held at the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center in Fishersville, Va., where a long-term friendship developed and grew stronger throughout the years.

As my participation in events expanded from track and field to shooting and fishing on the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) Bass Tour, Curt was always there to not only shoot pictures, but to extend encouragement, congratu-



COURTESY OF LARRY DODSON

Paralyzed Veterans of America Past National Secretary Larry Dodson, left, the late Curt Beamer, center, and Chris Dodson, right.

lations and conversation during pauses in the action.

During our time together on the PVA Bass Tour, he would often remind me that he “was my good luck charm” and that “every time I come around, you catch fish.” That was the truth!

Larry J. Dodson  
PVA Past National Secretary  
North Augusta, S.C.

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# My Opinion



## Sports & Saving Lives

**M**y friend Paul and I served together on Navy SEAL Team 5 in the early 1990s. Sadly, there was a car accident that resulted in the death of two other SEALs and Paul sustaining a traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Paul received treatment at a nearby naval hospital, which included some exercise-based therapy. However, despite his diminished state, the clinicians thought he had reached the full extent of his recovery, and he was discharged from the hospital.

Even though Paul was no longer a patient at the hospital, he was still considered to be on active duty. For this reason, he returned to our command and was expected to wait for the Navy to medically retire him.

At first glance, he looked like the Paul we always knew, but there were indications of an invisible wound that had taken its toll on our friend. Just as before, Paul had a humorous demeanor, but he struggled to carry on a meaningful conversation and his movements were uneven. He could walk but couldn't run.

Paul's car was destroyed in the accident, and the lease on his apartment was terminated during his lengthy hospitalization, so he set up a cot in his platoon's Quonset hut, a familiar place he could call home.

Every morning, Paul joined us during our physical training regimen, which resulted in some improvements in his motor skills. Soon, Paul was running on the beach and swimming in the open waters of the Pacific Ocean.

His ability to converse improved only slightly, but it became apparent the routine of exercising every morning was a way to rebuild his strength and spirit. He found a renewed sense of purpose in pushing his physical limits, discovering that the intensity of his workouts could, at times, quiet the chaotic thoughts

swirling in his mind due to his TBI. The routine and discipline, once integral to his life as a SEAL, provided a semblance of order in a world that had become unknown and unpredictable.

He had hoped to compete in triathlons, but Paul's military career ended before that goal could be reached. His parents lived in Arizona and at their behest, he moved back home with them.

However, the structured environment of the Navy and the motivation he found working out with his former teammates began to fade. He stopped exercising, and a deep depression began to take hold. The vibrant, determined man his parents remembered slowly retreated into himself, lost in the fog of his injury and the emotional toll it exerted. His parents watched as their son struggled to navigate daily life, his cognitive and emotional difficulties becoming increasingly evident.

Paul's parents were eventually appointed as his fiduciaries, responsible for managing his affairs because he could no longer care for himself. They did their best, but the complex challenges of his TBI and its lasting effects were overwhelming.

One day, Paul's despair became too great to bear, and he tragically ended his life. His parents were left grappling with the devastating realization that the invisible wounds resulting from a random car accident could be just as fatal as those inflicted on the battlefield.

I'm convinced Paul's demise could have been prevented had he stuck with his exercise routine and pursuit of elite competition while being supported by his fellow SEALs. I say this based on my personal experience.

I was paralyzed not long after Paul's accident. While both of us experienced a catastrophic injury resulting in a permanent disability, I had long-term exercise-based therapy, as well as access to adaptive sports programs. Matter of fact, there was an established pipeline that led me and other paralyzed veterans to the most elite competition — the Paralympics.

## SPORTS SPOKES

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# SPORTS SAVED

# ME

Adaptive sports, such as swimming, have helped people with spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and traumatic brain injuries better deal with physical and mental challenges.

So, why did Paul and I experience different outcomes?

Well, there are some who allege systemic discrimination based on the type of disability. These allegations specifically address the disparity between those of us with visible disabilities and those whose disabilities, such as TBI, aren't as conspicuous.

If you're reading *SPORTS 'N SPOKES*, I'm sure you've heard people say, "Sports saved my life," so it's hard to believe anyone in our circles could justify denying someone with a disability, including those with a TBI, access to adaptive sports. Nevertheless, that's the allegation.

The idea of using sports as a means of rehabilitation goes back to the Stoke Mandeville Games, first organized by Ludwig Guttmann, MD, in 1948. There were just 16 veterans, all of whom were seated in wheelchairs, as they competed in the sport of archery.

Over the years, many other competitions have been established to demonstrate how exercise-based therapy programs can help veterans with various disabilities reintegrate through sports. Some of these programs have significantly evolved, becoming more mainstream and inclusive with wider participation opportunities and increased media coverage.

Many of these events have morphed into pipelines for some of the most elite competitions in the world, including the upcoming 2028 Summer Paralympic Games in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, as organizers of these events focus on elite athletes, many veterans who arguably need these programs feel they're being left behind.

One such veteran recently told me that he believes there's a hierarchy of disability that rewards visible injuries, while marginalizing veterans with brain trauma and psychological scars. He went on to say

veterans with TBI have been increasingly sidelined or "classified out" before competition even begins.

There's no doubt veterans with TBI and other invisible injuries are underrepresented at elite levels of competition, but I can't explain why with certainty. Is it because classifiers aren't knowledgeable about TBI? Is it as simple as discrimination? If so, why?

The only thing I know is that Paul never had the opportunity to say, "Sports saved my life."

As always, please share your thoughts with me at [al@pvamag.com](mailto:al@pvamag.com). **S'NS**



# In The Game

## ATHLETICS

### Romanchuk, Siemann, Scaroni Heat Up

**F**ive-time Paralympic medalist and men's wheelchair racer Daniel Romanchuk (Mount Airy, Md.) finished with a track-high four titles at the 2025 Toyota United States of America Track and Field Para National Championships from July 31–Aug. 2 at Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore.

Romanchuk just squeaked past Miguel Jimenez-Vergara (Lawrenceville, N.J.) in the men's T54 5,000 meters, finishing in 11 minutes, 2.93 seconds and beating him by less than a second, while seven-time Paralympian Aaron Pike (Park Rapids, Minn.) and two-time Paralympic medalist Brian Siemann (Champaign, Ill.) placed third and fourth, respectively. Romanchuk also took the men's T54 400 (46.63 seconds) and added wins in the men's T54 100 (14.14 seconds) and men's T54 1,500 (3:02.75) on the final day.

The event marked the first time wheelchair and ambulatory para athletes competed with able-bodied athletes in a track and field national championship event.

Additionally, Siemann raced to three gold medals, taking the men's T53 400 (3:13.45), men's T53 800 (1:44.41) and men's T53 100 (15.13 seconds). The 2017 *SPORTS 'N SPOKES* Junior Athlete of the Year, Jason Robinson (Rome, N.Y.) took the men's 100 wheelchair open (15.48 seconds).

Six-time Paralympic medalist Susanah Scaroni (Tekoa, Wash.) captured three titles, taking the wom-

en's T54 800 (1:45.29), the women's T54 5,000 (11:03.68) and the women's T54 1,500 (3:18.12). Meanwhile, 27-time Paralympic medalist Tatyana McFadden (Clarksville, Md.) took the women's T54 400 (52.38 seconds) and the women's T54 100 (15.59 seconds), while two-time Paralympian Hannah Dederick (Mead, Wash.) took the women's 100 wheelchair open (16.63 seconds).

Paralympic silver medalist Arelle Middleton (Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.) won the women's F64 shot put with a 12.99-meter throw to defeat Paralympian Samantha Heyison (Adamstown, Md.) Heyison, though, took the women's F44/F64 discus with a 37.0-meter throw on the

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Daniel Romanchuk won the men's T54 1,500-meter event Aug. 2 at the 2025 Toyota United States of America Track and Field Para National Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore.



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Cassie Mitchell, shown in this 2024 file photo at the U.S. Paralympics Team Trials, won two titles at the 2025 United States of America Track and Field Para National Championships in Oregon.

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final day. Three-time Paralympic medalist Cassie Mitchell (Warner, Okla.) won two titles, taking the women's F51 discus (13.16 meters) and the women's F51 club throw (19.92 meters).

Paralympic bronze medalist Justin Phongsavanh (Des Moines, Iowa) took the men's F54 javelin with a 29.17-meter throw.

Noelle Malkamaki (Decatur, Ill.) won her first women's F46 competition, taking the F46 shot put with a 12.63-meter throw.

In his first event since earning a bronze at the 2024 Paris Paralympics, David Blair (Eagle Mountain, Utah) won the men's F64 discus with a 57.57-meter throw. A 2016 Paralympic champion, Blair is also the reigning men's F64 world champion.

Two-time Paralympic champion Ezra Frech (Los Angeles) also captured two gold medals,

taking the men's T63 long jump (6.76 meters) and the men's T63 high jump titles (1.83 meters).

For full results, visit [results.usatf.org/2025paranationals](https://results.usatf.org/2025paranationals).

One day after the event's conclusion, the United States announced its team that will compete at the 2025 Para Athletics World Championships this month in New Delhi. It includes 31 athletes who competed at the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games. But it only has one wheelchair racer — Dederick — after several teammates opted out due to wheelchair marathon obligations, according to an Aug. 2 Team USA Track & Field press release. The team is shown at the box at right.

### Gossard Wins Triple Gold

Only 14 years old, the United States' Brooklyn Gossard wheeled her way to a major feat at a historic women-only event. The United States wheelchair

## U.S. 2025 Para Athletics World Championships National Team

### Men's Team

Name	Hometown
Korban Best	Southlake, Texas
Jaydin Blackwell	Oak Park, Mich.
Michael Brannigan	Northport, N.Y.
Josh Cinnamo	San Diego
Ezra Frech	Los Angeles
Joel Gomez	Encinitas, Calif.
Jonathan Gore	Fayetteville, W.V.
Desmond Jackson	Durham, N.C.
Isaac Jean-Paul	Grayslake, Ill.
Derek Loccident	Oklahoma City
Nick Mayhugh	Manassas, Va.
Ryan Medrano	El Paso, Texas
Leo Merle	Folsom, Calif.
Trenten Merrill	San Juan Capistrano, Calif.
Justin Phongsavanh	Des Moines, Iowa
Max Rohn	Longmont, Colo.
Roderick Townsend	Stockton, Calif.
Jarryd Wallace	Athens, Ga.
Hunter Woodhall	Syracuse, Utah

### Women's Team

Name	Hometown
Sydney Barta	Arlington, Va.
Kaitlin Bounds	Russellville, Ark.
Annie Carey	Boise, Idaho
Chloe Chavez	Panhandle, Texas
Liza Corso	Newmarket, N.H.
Kym Crosby	Yuba City, Calif.
Hannah Dederick	Mead, Wash.
Sayers Grooms	Gainesville, Fla.
Alicia Guerrero	Wapato, Wash.
Violet Hall	Bloomington, Ind.
Beatriz Hatz	Lakewood, Colo.
Jessica Heims	Swisher, Iowa
Samantha Heyison	Adamstown, Md.
Kate Hwang	Courtland, Minn.
Kerrigan Johnson	Arlington, Texas
Noelle Lambert	Manchester, N.H.
Lindi Marcusen	Spokane, Wash.
Brittni Mason	Richmond Heights, Ohio
Arelle Middleton	Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.
Jaleen Roberts	Kent, Wash.
Taylor Swanson	Spokane, Wash.

Source: [usatf.org](https://usatf.org)



## In The Game

racer won gold in the women's T54 100, 400 and 1,500 meters and earned silver in the women's T54 800 at the July 3–4 Olomouc 2025 Women's Grand Prix at the TJ Lokomotiva Olomouc stadium in the Czech Republic.

Gossard recorded personal bests in all three of her gold-medal wins, the 100 (19.02 seconds), 800 (2 minutes, 22.57 seconds) and 1,500 (4:21.06) in the final Grand Prix of the 2025 season.

The first women-only Grand Prix event featured 170 female athletes from 46 nations.

Tunisia's Raoua Tlili and Maroua Ibrahim won two gold medals apiece. A 2024 two-time Paris Paralympic champion, Tlili won the women's F41 discus (34.59 meters) and women's F41 shot put (10.38 meters). She won both

Paralympic gold medals in those events, as well.

Ibrahim took the women's F32 club throw (26.09 meters) and the women's F32 shot put (5.83 meters).

Additionally, Kazakhstan's Irina Tychshenko

recorded a world record in the women's F45 shot put with an 8.79-meter throw and she finished fifth in the combined F45-F46 event, which was won by Uzbekistan's Karomat Omonova (12.13 meters).

And the U.S.' Cassie Mitchell, a three-time Paralympic champion, earned two silver medals in the women's F51 club throw and discus.

For full results, visit [grandprix.olomouc.com/startlists-results](http://grandprix.olomouc.com/startlists-results).

### Berrahal Leads Algerians

Mohamed Berrahal set a F51 class men's discus world record and was one of a handful of Algerian athletes who won gold medals at the Tunis 2025 World Para Athletics Grand Prix in June in Tunisia.

A 2012 London Paralympic Games champion, Berrahal recorded a 13.66-meter throw on his fourth attempt to win gold — breaking Benjamin Cardenas' (Chile) record of 13.40 meters set at the 2023 Nottwil Grand Prix.

Teammates Ahmed Mehideb (a 2024 Paris Paralympics bronze medalist) and Mounia Gasmi (a three-time Paralympic medalist) also won gold. Mehideb won his in the men's F32 club throw with a 38.36-meter throw, while Gasmi won the women's F32 shot put with a 5.70-meter throw, setting an African record.

## BASKETBALL

### U.S. Teams Earn 3X3 Bronze

Thanks to its 11-3 win over Brazil, the United States earned a bronze medal July 20 in women's 3-on-3 wheelchair basketball

at the 2025 FISU World University Games in Bochum, Germany.

Anesia Glascoe scored five points and had nine rebounds, while Hannah Exline finished with four points and two rebounds. Marlee Wagstaff added two assists and two rebounds.

Additionally, the U.S. men earned bronze — defeating Japan, 10-6, in the July 20 men's 3x3 wheelchair basketball third-place game at the 2025 FISU World University Games.

Martrell Stevens totaled a game-high five points and had six rebounds and two assists. Ryan Fitzpatrick added three points, six rebounds and one assist.

Canada won both men's and women's 3-on-3 wheelchair basketball titles.

### Men's U.S. National Team

Seven U.S. athletes from the 2024 Paris Paralympics men's wheelchair basketball gold-medal-winning team are back for this year's national men's wheelchair basketball team, including three from Wisconsin.

They include Jake Williams (Milwaukee), John Boie (Milton, Wis.), Talen Jourdan (Deerfield, Wis.), Jeromie Meyer (Woodbine, Iowa), Fabian Romo (Chicago), Jorge Salazar (Delano, Calif.) and Paul Schulte (Ann Arbor, Mich.).

Additionally, Jared Arambula (Valparaiso, Ind.) returns to a U.S. men's national team. He was on the gold-medal-winning 2016 Rio de Janeiro Paralympic Games team. Other athletes include Drew Beutel (Naperville, Ill.), Tim Houston (Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.), Keesan Paire (Woodville, Texas) and Jorge Sanchez (Oakland, Calif.).





Alternates include: Jake Eastwood (Mill Creek, Wash.), AJ Fitzpatrick (Cedar Rapids, Iowa), Preston Howell (Charlotte, N.C.), Jon McNamara (Champaign, Ill.), Sebastian Milan (Bronx, N.Y.), Eric Rodriguez (Temecula, Calif.), Adam Smith (Waxhaw, N.C.) and Martrell Stevens (Chicago).

Selections were made after the 2025 U.S. men's selection camp July 5–9 at the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo. They represented the U.S. at the 2025 International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF) Americas Cup in Bogota, Colombia, Aug. 15–22. It's

a zonal qualifier for the 2026 IWBF World Championship.

## Women's U.S. Team Selected

**T**his year's U.S. women's wheelchair basketball team features a mix of six members from the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games silver-medal-winning women's wheelchair basketball team, one from the 2021 Tokyo Paralympic Games bronze-medal-winning wheelchair basketball team and five newcomers.

Paralympians Abigail Bauleke (Savage, Minn.), Ixhelt Gonzalez (Chicago), Bailey Moody (Johns Creek, Ga.), Emily Oberst (Brook-

field, Wis.), Lindsey Zurbrugg (Portland, Ore.), Ali Ibanez (Murray, Utah) and Zoe Voris (Chicago) lead the way.

Bauleke, Gonzalez, Moody, Oberst, Zurbrugg and Ibanez played on last year's Paralympic team, while Voris was on the 2021 Tokyo team. They're joined by newcomers Josie DeHart (Fruita, Colo.), Elizabeth Floch (Blanchard, Idaho), Quinn Meyer (Austin, Texas), Emilee Gustafson (Big Lake, Minn.) and Hayley Nilsen (Edina, Minn.). Abby Dunn (Susanville, Calif.) and Skylar Scarnecchia (Warren, Ohio) were named alternates.

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## In The Game

Selections were made after the 2025 U.S. women's selection camp June 11–15 at the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo. They represented the U.S. at the 2025 International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF) Americas Cup in Bogota, Colombia, Aug. 9–17. It's a zonal qualifier for the 2026 IWBF World Championship.

### PARA POWERLIFTING

#### China Totals 14 Golds

China's para powerlifters did some heavy lifting, totaling 14 gold medals in 20 events at the June 22–24 World Para Powerlifting World Cup at the China Administration of Sports for Persons with Disabilities in Beijing. In the first World Para Powerlifting event held in Beijing in nearly 20 years, China dominated.

Reigning Paralympic champion Guo Lingling won the women's up-to 45 kilograms event with a

world-record 124-kilogram lift in the Powerlift, or fourth attempt allowed for a record lift. She also bested her own world record mark (123 kilograms) set at the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games.

Additionally, three-time Paralympic champion Tan Yujiao (women's up-to 73 kilograms) won gold in a higher division with a 125-kilogram lift, while female athletes Cui Zhe (women's up-to 41 kilograms), Han Miaoyu (women's up-to 79 kilograms) and Zheng Feifei (women's up-to 86 kilograms) also won gold medals. China's Qi Yongkai (men's up-to 59 kilograms), Zou Yi (men's up-to 65 kilograms), Gu Xiaofei (men's up-to 80 kilograms) and Yan Panpan (men's up-to 97 kilograms) — all 2024 Paralympic medalists — also all won golds.

Malaysian brothers Bonnie Bunyau Gustin and Bryan Anak Gustin earned medals together for the first time. Bonnie won the men's up-to 72 kilograms gold with a 215-kilogram lift, while Bryan

earned bronze in the men's up-to 88 kilogram division.

For more information, visit [paralympic.org](http://paralympic.org).

### TENNIS

#### Ziying Makes History

Wang Ziying became China's first athlete to win a Grand Slam wheelchair singles tennis title. The world's No. 4-ranked player, Ziying upset the 2024 Paris Paralympic champion Yui Kamiji from Japan, 6-3, 6-3, in the women's singles final during the Wimbledon Wheelchair Championships at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in London in mid-July.

Ziying, 26, with teammate Li Xiaohui, already became the first Chinese players to win a Grand Slam title in wheelchair tennis earlier this year after taking the women's doubles title at the Australian Open. She stopped Kamiji's hopes of recording a career Golden Slam (all four Grand Slams, plus a Paralympic Games gold medal) in wheelchair tennis singles for now.

Ziying doubled up on titles, as she and Xiaohui took the women's wheelchair doubles title, defeating France's Ksenia Chasteau and Colombia's Angelica Bernal, 6-3, 6-1.

Meanwhile, in the men's wheelchair division, world No. 1 Tokito Oda (Japan) rallied for a 3-6, 7-6,

China's Guo Lingling, shown in this 2021 Tokyo Paralympics file photo, won the women's up-to 45 kilograms event with a world-record 124-kilogram lift at the June 22–24 World Para Powerlifting World Cup at the China Administration of Sports for Persons with Disabilities in Beijing.





China's Wang Ziyi defeated Japan's Yui Kamiji in the women's wheelchair singles final July 12 at the 2025 Wimbledon Wheelchair Championships at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in London. Ziyi became China's first athlete to win a Grand Slam wheelchair singles tennis title.

6-2, victory over Great Britain's Alfie Hewett to earn his sixth career Grand Slam singles title. Now, he just needs a U.S. Open singles victory to finish off the career Golden Slam. He's already won titles at the Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon.

Spain's Martin de la Puente and the Netherlands' Ruben Spaargaren knocked off Great Britain's Gordon Reid and Hewett, 7-6 (7-1), 7-5, in a tightly contested wheelchair doubles final.

And in the quad division, the Netherlands' and world No. 1 Niels Vink recorded his third consecutive Wimbledon quad singles title with a 6-3, 6-3 victory



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## In The Game

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Japan's Yui Kamiji beat the Netherlands' Aniek van Koot in the women's wheelchair singles final during the 2025 French Open at Roland-Garros in Paris.

over compatriot Sam Schröder. Vink and Israel's Guy Sasson captured the quad wheelchair doubles title, defeating South Africa's Donald Ramphadi and Great Britain's Gregory Slade, 6-0, 6-2.

### Japan Nets Singles Sweep

**J**apan's Yui Kamiji and Tokito Oda each won wheelchair singles titles at June's French Open, sweeping the women's and men's divisions on the Roland-Garros courts for the second time in less than a year.

Kamiji won the June 7 women's wheelchair singles title, defeating the Netherlands' Aniek van Koot, 6-2, 6-2, in the final, despite battling a wrist issue. She joined the Netherlands' Diede de Groot as the only active wheelchair tennis player to have won five French Open women's wheelchair singles titles, with only the late Esther Vergeer (the Neth-

erlands) having more from 2007 to 2012. It also marked Kamiji's 10th Grand Slam women's wheelchair singles title overall.

Kamiji also teamed with South Africa's Kgothatso Montjane to take the women's wheelchair doubles title, as they rallied to defeat China's Xiaohui Li and Wang Ziyang, 4-6, 7-5, 10-7, in three sets on June 6.

Oda recorded his third consecutive men's wheelchair singles division title, defeating Great Britain's Alfie Hewett, 6-4, 7-6 (8-6), on June 7. At 19 years old, he's just one short of Japanese player Shingo Kunieda's record of four straight French

Open men's wheelchair singles titles from 2007 to 2010.

Hewett, though, teamed with Great Britain's Gordon Reid to win the men's wheelchair doubles title, defeating Oda and France's Stephane Houdet, 6-4, 1-6, 10-7, on June 7.

The Netherlands' Niels Vink teamed with Israel's Guy Sasson to win the quad wheelchair doubles title at the 2025 French Open at Roland-Garros in Paris. They beat Turkey's Ahmet Kaplan and South Africa's Donald Ramphadi, 6-3, 6-4.



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In the quad division, 45-year-old Guy Sasson (Israel) won his second straight wheelchair singles title. He defeated top seed Niels Vink (the Netherlands), 6-4, 7-5. He also teamed with Vink to win the quad doubles title, defeating Turkey's Ahmet Kaplan and South Africa's Donald Ramphadi, 6-3, 6-4, on June 6.

## RACING

### Peachtree Streaks Hold

**T**wo-time U.S. Paralympic gold-medalist Daniel Romanchuk and Paralympic gold-medalist Susannah Scaroni each kept up their July 4 peachy streaks in Atlanta.

Romanchuk won his eighth consecutive Atlanta Journal-Con-

stitution Peachtree Road Race men's wheelchair division title, while Scaroni recorded her fourth straight and fifth title overall.

Romanchuk won the men's division in 18 minutes, 36 seconds — beating last year's time by over a minute — with fellow U.S. Paralympian Aaron Pike (20:36) and the Netherlands' Geert Schipper (20:13) in the top three.

Scaroni finished in 21:06, ahead of U.S. Paralympians Tatyana McFadden (23:32) and Emelia Perry (24:37) in the top three.

Ricardo Aranda won the men's push assist in 38:51, ahead of Dale Robinson (39:50) and Joshua Porter (41:36), while Bentley-Grace Hicks won the women's push assist in 41:14 over Tori Ragsdale (42:27) and Erika Northrop (43:55).

Gary Brendel took the grand masters push-rim wheelchair title in 27:48, ahead of Steve Montgomery (29:44) and Matt Davis (30:06).

Kohen Grantom won the junior division push-rim wheelchair title in 26:08, ahead of Ben Vondrak (29:50) and Harry Houngh-Lee (31:53).

Krige Schabert captured the masters division push-rim wheelchair title with a 22:17 finish, ahead of Fidel Aguilar (23:09) and Jose Pulido (25:53).

Cristian Eduardo Torres won the open quad division push-rim wheelchair title in 26:58, ahead of Santiago Sanz Quinto (28:20) and Robert Smith (30:55).

The U.S.' Daniel Romanchuk, shown in this 2024 Paris Paralympics file photo, won his eighth straight Atlanta Journal-Constitution Peachtree Road Race men's wheelchair division title July 4 in Atlanta.



## In The Game

© GETTY IMAGES/ALI GRADISCHER



The U.S.' Tatyana McFadden reacts after winning the women's T54 800-meter wheelchair race during the 2025 Prefontaine Classic at Hayward Field July 5 in Eugene, Ore.

It also marked the 50th anniversary of the race's wheelchair division.

### McFadden Wins Prefontaine

**T**he U.S.' Tatyana McFadden showed she's still got it, as she captured a title at the 2025 Prefontaine Classic July 5 at Hayward Field at the University of Oregon.

A 22-time Paralympic medalist, McFadden won the women's T54 800 meters, finishing in 1 minute, 46.89 seconds and beating Belgium's Léa Bayekula (1:47.66) and the U.S.' Hannah Dederick (1:50.61).

### Two World Records Set

**T**he Netherlands' Fleur Jong and Germany's Johannes Floors each set world records at the July 5 Para Leichtathletik Heimspiel in Leverkusen, Germany.

A three-time Paralympic gold-medalist, Jong came away with a world record in the women's T62 100 meters, finishing in 12.19 seconds, which was .12 seconds faster than her previous best set in June's Paris World Para Athletics Grand Prix in France.

Floors set a record in the men's T62 200, finishing in 20.29 seconds — .04 seconds faster than his previous best time set more than three years ago.

**S'NS**



# Classic Cliff



1975 YEARS 2025

*This year marks SPORTS 'N SPOKES' 50th anniversary, and as part of the yearlong celebration of this major milestone, this special department is dedicated to some of the best columns from founder Cliff Crase. This month's Classic Cliff is from the January 1982 issue of SPORTS 'N SPOKES.*

## Mail Sacked

**T**hrough rain, sleet, snow or gloom of night the mail must go through! That is the battle cry of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). I'll certainly buy that bit! The only question that continuously haunts me is not through what ... but when??? Lord knows the USPS is the butt of numerous jokes and an easy target for media critics. And, after the latest (ahem) postal delivery of the November/December issue of *SPORTS 'N SPOKES* (S'NS), it did not take a great deal of persuasion for me to question the efficiency of the folks that move the mail for the citizens of our county.

Possibly the postal people are overworked and underpaid. I really don't know. What I do know is that when it comes to moving magazines with a second class bulk permit (which I might add, to obtain I nearly had to promise the rights to my firstborn), the USPS has a long way to go (even in perfect weather).

You might ask, "Well, cheapo, why don't you send the publication by another class: first, third, fourth ... someth'n'?" In order to send the magazine first class, the cost of a one-year subscription would quadruple; everything in the post office moves before third class; and the multitudinous regulations that the postal service has designed prevents the magazine from going fourth class.

If ever I were asked to define the publishing business in one word, that word would be DEADLINES. That is a word not to be found in any USPS reg-

ulation — except when a rate hike is announced. The S'NS staff scours the world, giving deadlines to those who wish to have their material printed. The copy is prepared by a pre-determined date for the typesetter. Then the proof-reader, art director, printer and binder all have their deadlines to meet, regardless of equipment failure or labor problems. Finally, the mailer labels and packages the issues and delivers them to the USPS dock on time. At that point in the publishing process, everyone from the editor to the driver of the mailer's truck is terrified. Can you imagine, after burning the midnight oil to meet all these deadlines — keeping the typesetter up to all hours of the night, breathing down the printer's neck and reviving an exhausted art director — placing such an item that has taken weeks of work, stress and energy into the hands of the U.S. Postal Service? Stark fear sets in as gloom and doom prevail until ... three weeks to a month later an excited reader from Brooklyn, N.Y., calls to say, "Youse guys did it again!" The gloomy setting partially lifts 'cause the sports wheelers in Maine still have to wait a few more days for their issue. Two weeks is reasonable to expect for delivery across the United



ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID HOSTETLER  
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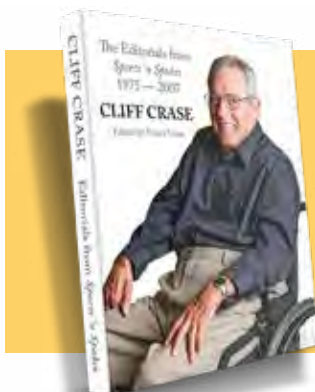
States with a second class rate, but one month!? The November/December test copy that is sent to the

S'NS office took two weeks to arrive after its November 20th mailing ... and the postal station is only 2 miles away!

Postal people have told me through the years that "not one piece of mail stays in one place for more than 24 hours." Sounds good to me, but the only thing I can figure out is that yes, the mail never stays in one place for more than a day — they just move it from one corner of the station to the other.

I really hate to put a bad mouth on the postal people of the U.S., but geeze ... c'mon, this is a highly mobile, technological world we live in. 'Course it could be worse. We could be mailing out of Canada. We have a ton of patient subscribers up north. When they receive an issue, they thank God for the miracle!

S'NS



*Take a peek into the history of wheelchair sports through the words of SPORTS 'N SPOKES founder Cliff Crase. The Editorials from SPORTS 'N SPOKES 1975 — 2007 is 280 pages of columns written by Cliff while he served as editor and also includes photos. \$28.55 (plus S&H). Proceeds benefit Paralyzed Veterans of America. To order, visit [blurb.com/b/6516777](http://blurb.com/b/6516777).*

# On The Sidelines

## BASKETBALL

### UofA To Host Championships

**T**he University of Arizona (UofA) will have the chance to defend its men's national wheelchair basketball championship title on its home court next year.

The National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA) announced in late June that the 2026 NWBA Men's and Women's Intercollegiate Division National Championships are headed to Tucson, Ariz., in 2026. The championships will be held at UofA's McKale Memorial Center March 31–April 4.

This past April, UofA beat the University of Texas-Arlington (UTA), 75-67, in Champaign, Ill., to claim its first men's national championship in three tries.

Meanwhile, the University of Alabama's women's team will head to Tucson looking for its sixth

straight championship after claiming its fifth consecutive title with a 67-52 win over UTA in Champaign.

The NWBA collegiate division saw 11 men's teams and six women's squads compete for their respective national championships this past season.

For more information, visit [nwba.org](http://nwba.org).

### NWBA Tourney Heads To Louisiana

**M**ultiple National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA) championships are headed to the Deep South.

The NWBA announced in late June that the championship tournaments for both the adult and junior divisions will be held in West Monroe, La., in 2026. All

six tournaments will take place at the West Monroe Sports & Events facility.

The top 16 ranked wheelchair basketball teams in each adult division (I, II,

The University of Arizona in Tucson, Ariz., will host the 2026 National Wheelchair Basketball Association intercollegiate championships.



© GETTY IMAGES/BRAD HOLT





West Monroe Sports & Events in West Monroe, La., will host six National Wheelchair Basketball Association championships in March 2026.

and III) will earn an invitation to their respective national tournaments, with competition set for March 26–29. The junior division will take center stage the week before, with the top 32 ranked varsity and top 16 ranked prep teams competing March 20–22.

Located about two hours east of Shreveport, La., Monroe is expected to host an estimated 96 teams and more than 1,300 wheelchair basketball players over the two championship weekends.

Opened in 2024, West Monroe Sports & Events features 110,000 square feet of venue space, including eight basketball courts.

For more information, visit [nwba.org](http://nwba.org).

## BOCCIA

### Alabama Welcomes World Event

The top boccia players in the world will be competing in the United States for the first time in almost a decade.

The Boccia International Sports Federation announced July 9 that Lakeshore Foundation in Birmingham, Ala., will host the

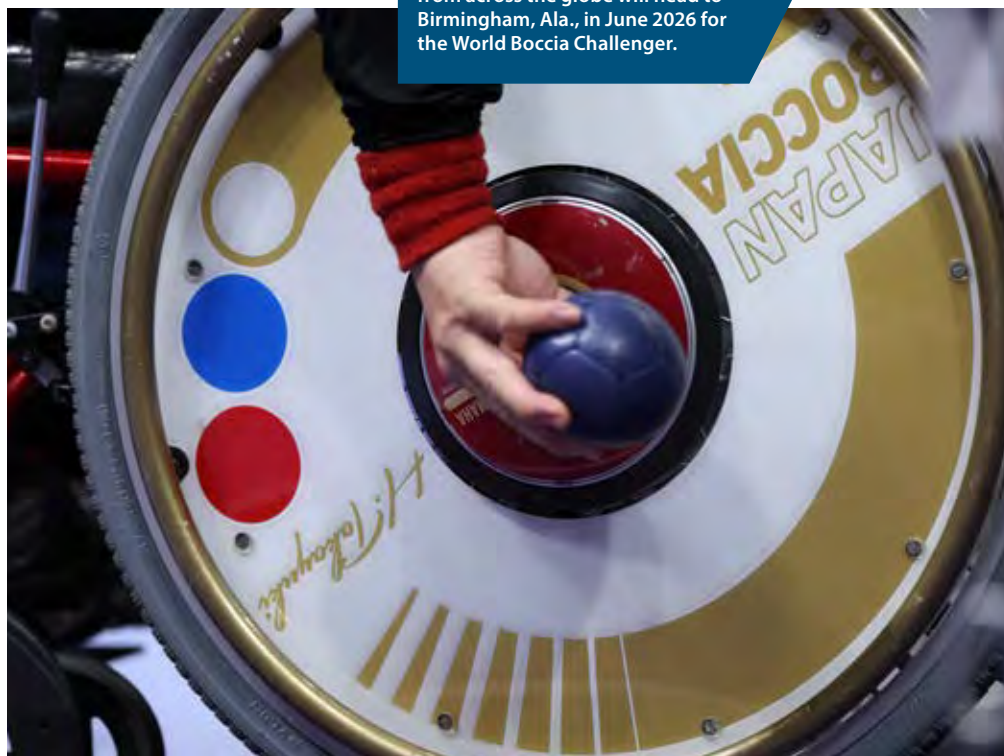
2026 World Boccia Challenger set for June 16–23. It's the first time since 2017 that the United States will host a world event for boccia.

The competition will be at Lakeshore Foundation, which serves as home for Boccia United States through the Lakeshore National Adapted Sports Organiza-

tion. The tournament is a critical opportunity for competitors to earn ranking points toward qualification for the 2028 Paralympic Games in Los Angeles.

The event in Birmingham is one of 11 scheduled for 2026.

Some of the best boccia players from across the globe will head to Birmingham, Ala., in June 2026 for the World Boccia Challenger.



© GETTY IMAGES/MICHAEL STEELE

## On The Sidelines

Other locations for boccia competitions in 2026 include Saudi Arabia, Canada, South Korea, Portugal and Brazil.

An adapted version of bocce, boccia became a Paralympic sport in 1984 and is one of only two Paralympic sports without a parallel Olympic counterpart.

For more information, visit [lakeshore.org](http://lakeshore.org) or [worldboccia.com](http://worldboccia.com).

## PARALYMPICS

### Milano Cortina Medals

Featuring a unique design that looks like two halves coming together as one, the medals for the upcoming Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Paralympic and Olympic Games have been unveiled.

Revealed at a July 15 event in Venice, Italy, one of the host areas for the Games, the medals appear as two interlocking halves brought together by either the Paralympic Agitos or Olympic rings. Each half of the medal features a different texture.

Braille is included on the bottom half of the Paralympic medals to denote the medal type and sport. Lines are engraved on the edge to distinguish them by touch.

The design is described as including an "essential" look that places emotion and teamwork at the core.

The two halves are meant to symbolize the two cities of the Games, Milan and Cortina, coming together and the "culmination of an athlete's journey and all of those who stood by their side along the way."

There will be 137 gold, 137 silver and 137 bronze medals awarded to athletes during the Paralympic Winter Games.

The Games will bring together more than 600 athletes from across the world competing in para alpine skiing, para biathlon, para cross-country, para ice hockey, para snowboard and wheelchair curling.

The first Games to be co-hosted by multiple cities, the Winter Paralympics are set for March 6–15. The Winter Olympics will take place Feb. 6–22.

For more information on the Games, visit [milanocortina2026.olympics.com/en](http://milanocortina2026.olympics.com/en).

## VET GAMES

### NVWG Going To Detroit

Get your engines revving because the 2026 National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG) are headed to the Motor City.

The 45th edition of the Games are slated for Detroit July 9–14. It's the first time the NVWG will visit the state of Michigan.

Detroit is best known for being the central hub of the automo-

bile industry in the United States. Ford, General Motors and Chrysler are among the auto giants located in Detroit.

The Games should feel right at home in a city that also has a rich sports tradition. Baseball's Detroit Tigers, the NBA's Detroit Pistons, the NFL's Detroit Lions and

© GETTY IMAGES/DENIS TANGNEY JR

Detroit is set to host next year's 45th edition of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games July 9–14.

the NHL's Detroit Red Wings have combined to bring 22 championships to the city.

Co-sponsored by Paralyzed Veterans of America and the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Games bring together hundreds of veterans from across the country for several days of sports and camaraderie.

Details such as venues for events and registration are still being finalized and will be announced sometime early next year.

For information, visit [wheelchairgames.org](http://wheelchairgames.org).

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# Sports Associations

## AMPUTEE SPORTS

**Move United**  
451 Hungerford Drive, Ste. 608  
Rockville, MD 20850  
moveunitedsport.org

## ARCHERY

**USA Archery**  
210 USA Cycling Point  
Suite 130  
Colorado Springs, CO 80919  
(719) 866-4576  
clubs@usarchery.org

## BASKETBALL

**Wheelchair Basketball Canada**  
6 Antares Drive, Phase 1, Unit 8  
Ottawa, Ontario K2E 8A9  
Canada  
(613) 260-1296  
info@wheelchairbasketball.ca  
wheelchairbasketball.ca

**International Wheelchair Basketball Federation**  
5 Route Suisse  
1295 Mies  
Switzerland  
+41-22-545-00-00  
iwbfb.org

**National Wheelchair Basketball Association**  
1130 Elkton Drive, Ste. C  
Colorado Springs, CO 80907  
(719) 266-4082  
nwba.org

## BILLIARDS

**National Wheelchair Poolplayers Association**  
9757 Mount Lompoc Court  
Las Vegas, NV 89178  
jdolezal@verizon.net

## BODYBUILDING

**Wheelchair Bodybuilding, Inc.**  
P.O. Box 777  
Converse, TX 78109  
(785) 893-6398  
wheelchairbodybuilding@gmail.com  
wheelchairbodybuilding.com

## BOWLING

**American Wheelchair Bowling Association**  
c/o Gary Ryan, AWBA Secretary  
16006 Congo Lane  
Houston, TX 77040  
(713) 444-7588  
gryan210@sbcbglobal.net  
awba.org

## FENCING

**U.S. Fencing Association**  
1 Olympic Plaza  
Colorado Springs, CO 80909  
(719) 866-4511  
usfencing.org

## FLYING

**Freedom's Wings International**  
60 Old Lakeside Rd South  
Hewitt, NJ 07421  
Chris Lynch, Pres. (973) 417-7841  
William Thar, Sec./Treas. (973) 507-6072  
freedomswings.org

## FOOTBALL

**Move United**  
451 Hungerford Drive, Ste. 608  
Rockville, MD 20850  
moveunitedsport.org

**Universal Wheelchair Football Association**  
U.C. Raymond Walters College  
Disability Services Office  
9555 Plainfield Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45236-1096  
(513) 792-8625  
john.kraimer@uc.edu

## GOLF

**U.S. Golf Association**  
1631 Mesa Avenue  
Colorado Springs, CO 80906  
(719) 471-4810, ext.15  
usga.org

**National Amputee Golf Association**  
11 Walnut Hill Road  
Amherst, NH 03031  
(800) 633-6242  
info@nagagolf.org  
nagagolf.org

## HOCKEY

**U.S. Sled Hockey Association**  
710 N. Lake Shore Drive, 3rd Floor  
Chicago, IL 60611  
(312) 908-4292 / 908-1051 (fax)  
info@sledhockey.org  
usahockey.com/sledhockey

## HORSEBACK RIDING

**North American Riding for the Handicapped Association**  
P.O. Box 33150  
Denver, CO 80233  
(800) 369-RIDE / (303) 252-4610 (fax)  
pathintl.org

## LACROSSE

**Wheelchair Lacrosse USA**  
4245 West Overlook Drive  
San Diego, CA 92108  
(619) 807-9327  
wheelchairlacrosse.com

## MULTISPORT

**Casa Colina Adaptive Sports & Outdoor Adventures**  
255 East Bonita Avenue  
Pomona, CA 91769  
(909) 596-7733 / 593-0153 (fax)  
casacolina.org

**Move United**  
451 Hungerford Drive, Ste. 608  
Rockville, MD 20850  
moveunitedsport.org

**World T.E.A.M. Sports**  
4250 Veterans Memorial Highway,  
Ste. 420E  
Holbrook, NY 11741  
(855) 987-8326 / 288-3377 (fax)  
worldteamsports.org

## QUAD SPORTS

**Bay Area Outreach & Recreation Program (BORP)**  
3075 Adeline St., Ste. 155  
Berkeley, CA 94703  
(510) 849-4663 / 849-4616 (fax)  
info@borp.org  
borp.org

**United States Wheelchair Rugby Association**  
4000 Ridgeway Drive  
Homewood, AL 35209  
(205) 999-3092  
uswra.org

## RACQUET SPORTS

**International Tennis Federation (Wheelchair Tennis Department)**  
Bank Lane, Roehampton  
London SW15 5XZ, England  
(011) 0044-(0)208-878-6464  
0044-(0)208-392-4744 (fax)  
wheelchairtennis@itftennis.com  
itftennis.com

**United States Tennis Association**  
70 W. Red Oak Lane  
White Plains, NY 10604  
(914) 696-7000 / 696-7029 (fax)  
usta.com

## RECREATION

**Turning POINT (Paraplegics On Independent Nature Trips)**  
403 Pacific Avenue  
Terrell, TX 75160  
(972) 524-4231  
point@turningpointnation.org  
turningpointnation.org

## SHOOTING

**Move United**  
451 Hungerford Drive, Ste. 608  
Rockville, MD 20850  
moveunitedsport.org

**National Wheelchair Shooting Federation**  
102 Park Avenue  
Rockledge, PA 19046  
(215) 379-2359 / 663-0102 (fax)

**NRA Disabled Shooting Services**  
11250 Waples Mill Road  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
(703) 267-1495 / 267-3941 (fax)

## SKIING

**Move United**  
451 Hungerford Drive, Ste. 608  
Rockville, MD 20850  
moveunitedsport.org

**Ski for Light, Inc.**  
1455 West Lake Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55408  
(612) 827-3232  
info@sfl.org  
sfl.org

## SOFTBALL

**National Wheelchair Softball Association**  
13414 Paul Street  
Omaha, NE 68154  
913-205-4628  
softball@midwestadaptivesports.org  
wheelchairsoftball.org

## TABLE TENNIS

**American Wheelchair Table Tennis Association**  
23 Parker Street  
Port Chester, NY 10573  
(914) 937-3932  
johnsonjennifer@yahoo.com

## TRACK & FIELD

**Adaptive Track & Field USA (ATSUSA)**  
<https://www.atfusa.org>

## WATER SPORTS/RECREATION

**American Canoe Association**  
7432 Alban Station Boulevard  
Ste. B-232  
Springfield, VA 22150  
(703) 451-0141 / 451-2245 (fax)  
americancanoe.org

**Handicapped Scuba Association**  
1104 El Prado  
San Clemente, CA 92672  
(949) 498-4540 / 498-6128 (fax)  
hsa@hsascuba.com  
hsascuba.com

**Water Skiers With Disabilities Association**  
1251 Holy Cow Road  
Polk City, FL 33868  
(800) 533-2972 / (863) 324-4341  
325-8259 (fax)  
usawaterski.org

A person wearing a black helmet and a black jersey with "RISE" and "EST 2007" on it is riding a green wheelchair on a red and orange ramp. The person is performing a stunt, possibly a backflip or a drop, as they are in mid-air. The background is a blurred, colorful wall.

Wheelchair motocross  
provides athletes with an  
adrenaline rush and freedom.

*by Jennifer Best*

**Y**ou may have seen professional wheelchair motocross (WCMX) athlete Aaron "Wheelz" Fotheringham toss back his epic, double backflip from the seat of his wheelchair, "drop," or enter, into a 27-foot-tall quarter pipe or span a massive 70 feet of air in the world's farthest wheelchair ramp jump. You probably caught 16-year-old WCMX world champion Tomas Woods dropping into the park from an inverted hand plant.

Seeing those amazing feats may have you thinking, "Man. I could never do that." But WCMX athletes say anyone with a sense of spirit, adventure and a taste for adrenaline can do it.

ILLUSTRATION BY KERRY RANDOLPH  
PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY PAUL WILKINS

# FLIPS, FRIENDS



"It goes from, 'There's no way I'm diving off this,' to you can't wait to go to the park to dive off the same wall. You can't wait," says 57-year-old Mikey Kendall of Oxnard, Calif.

## Gaining Skills

WCMX is an adaptive action sport that brings wheelchair users and other adaptive equipment users into the skate park.

Like skaters and cyclists around them, they ride ramps, spin, flip and glide the concrete pools, bowls and rails. It's a sport that builds community and life skills useful far beyond the park.

The World WCMX Federation founded by Action Park Alliance is dedicated to advancing the sport internationally through annual pinnacle events, the World Championships and the World WCMX Series. This year's World WCMX Championships run Sept. 12-14 in Bulle, Switzerland.

Kendall recalls an after-concert venue exit that could have been lengthy were it not for the skills he'd gained at the skate park.

"The curbs are easily 2 feet tall, and there's nothing more frustrating than walking behind drunk people. Before WCMX, I would have hung the chair and boomed off the curb, but it's full-on jumps now. We rip it and people in line see it and are like, 'Dude! Did you see that!? That was crazy!'" Kendall says. "Yes-

terday, I was at the auto parts store. There were no ramps. A guy offered to help. I could honestly say, 'No, I got it.' It's that moment of recognition that they've never seen anything like it before, but it's everyday for us now. You can't keep me out."

Las Vegas-based Fotheringham, whose spina bifida landed him the wheelchair gig, dove into skate park action at the fearless age of 8, while Preston, England-based Woods joined the game as a tween in 2020 after Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, a group of inher-

Above: Tomas Woods won the 2024 World WCMX Championships in Birmingham, Ala.

Center: Wheelchair motocross athlete Aaron "Wheelz"

Fotheringham is best-known for his double backflip from the seat of his wheelchair.



# RIPS & SHIPS



Damian Munoz balances his wheelchair on a beam during the 2024 World WCMX Championships in Alabama.



ited disorders that affect his connective tissues, altered his mobility modalities.

"I'm scared, all the time," Woods says. "I'm getting better at it, but I'll turn to [my coach] Ben [Sleet] and say, 'There's no chance I'll do that.' Within an hour, I'll usually do it with spotting, crash mats. Most of the time, you can learn something small, and eventually we'll work through it."

But the sport brought him community after his pre-illness friends went by the wayside.

"For me, it's been huge mentally. When I first got my chair, I couldn't do all the things my friends were doing. But when I got to the skate park, I met all these people, and the action sports world has been huge for me," Woods says. "Plus, you have a bad day, things aren't going your way, you get in the skate park and ride around and have to focus so much you can't think about the bad day, how s\*\*\*\*\* your boss has been or anything else that might be bothering you."

## Embracing The Crazy

For Kendall, who came into the sport in his 40s, his first drop was the hardest.

He'd always been an adrenaline junky, and it was a motorcycle — and a too-long look at a jogging woman — that made him a level T4-T5 complete paraplegic with no sensation or movement mid-chest down 33 years ago.

"When I was first injured, friends said I needed to take my chair to the skate park. I was like, 'Dude, you guys are crazy! I'll ride my motorcycle flipped out of my mind, but jumping off a bowl is not a good idea for me,'" he says.

Fast-forward 20 years to his meeting of the minds with friend Troy McGuirk, a Paralympic wheelchair rugby player, coach and avid urban skate park rider. McGuirk pushed Kendall to give it a chance, and that friendship and trust drove Kendall to the edges.

He packed up an old beater wheelchair that had some life in it, put on some old street tires and rode around the park for his first session with a cruise through the pump track, then flow with the chair.

"It just hit. I've played almost everything you can think of in a wheelchair — hockey, football, basketball. Those are all cool and great sports, but they're team sports. This is something where I can just grab my chair and go to the park. It's just me and my chair





Tony Throgmartin flies high off a ramp during the 2024 World WCMX Championships in Birmingham, Ala.

Emiglio Pargätzi displays agility and balance skills on a beam during the 2024 World WCMX Championships.



and nothing else matters. When you're in the park on the side of a wall, it just takes everything else out. Nothing else matters. Ever," says Kendall, with a bit of a choke and a tear coming to one of his eyes.

For him, it's not about the massive jumps and flips, but the freedom. And helping others, especially younger people, gain that feeling is the be-all, end-all.

"It's freedom, 100 percent. It's the mindset and what I can draw out of it that's the draw. It's not something me and the team did. It's me, and I conquered that wall, my fear. I've seen kids that, once they see it, they're done. It's all they want to do, and it's beautiful to see a kid go from, in the back of their mind, thinking they'll never be able to do it and see the passion hit 'em," Kendall says. "It's a beautiful thing because it's just them and their ability."

He remembers one youngster who sat at his first obstacle for more than an hour before taking the dive.

"Now, we can't keep him off of stuff and now he plays baseball, rafts, does all kinds of stuff because

WCMX gave him the personal strength and courage to step forward and do it," Kendall says.

## WCMX Hot Spots

Kendall, like many WCMX athletes, found his way into the sport via his local skate park.

He has since ridden all the best: South Fontana Skate Park in Fontana, Calif., La Quinta X Park in La Quinta, Calif., Las Vegas and hot spots in Illinois and Texas.

"Fontana South is one of the oldest parks in the circuit, and it's designed really well," Kendall says. "You can get in and out of the deep bowl by yourself. The pump track is cool. It's so accessible."

Woods, who started at the indoor skate parks of Graystone Action Sports in Greater Manchester, England, says he also favors La Quinta X Park and Coachella Valley and the Action Park Alliance parks located in Texas, Alabama and California.





"It's definitely a pretty fun way to spend your days," Woods says. "It's great for physical and mental health, but what gets overlooked, particularly with wheeled and skate park action sports, is that there's a huge community. People think the park is a place for anti-social behavior and crime, but it couldn't be further from the truth."

Woods started the Tomas Woods WCMX Foundation to spread the joy, the sport and encourage more accessible facilities through the foundation's Hub Park program. To become a designated Hub Park, facilities must demonstrate inclusivity, innovation and exceptional WCMX experiences with parks designed for all to access.

lower back provides safer, more comfortable rides. For safety, riders should wear elbow pads, knee pads and a motocross helmet.

"But you're strapped in the chair, so if you go over, you tuck and roll and the chair takes it," Kendall says. "Your hands can get beat up, and you'll have some battle scars, but a chair, especially a purpose-built chair, will take it."

Access to most community skate parks is free or nominal. Many require a simple liability waiver, while others require watching a training video "that basically says don't do anything stupid," Kendall says.

"It's pretty fun! Give it a go," Woods says.

## WCMX Resources

Whether you want to give professional wheel-chair motocross (WCMX) a try or just see more of it, there are plenty of resources.

For more information about World WCMX Federation, visit [worldwcmx.org](http://worldwcmx.org).

For the Action Park Alliance, visit [actionparkalliance.com](http://actionparkalliance.com).

Across Texas, check out parks involved in adaptive skateboarding and WCMX programs at [abilityskateboarding.org/programs](http://abilityskateboarding.org/programs).

To learn more about the Tomas Woods WCMX Foundation, visit [woodswcmx.org](http://woodswcmx.org).

For riding in the Greater Manchester area, start with [graystoneactionsports.co.uk](http://graystoneactionsports.co.uk).

Additionally, in Australia, visit [slabzoo.com](http://slabzoo.com).

Germany's Marco Thieser shows just how much freedom adaptive motocross gives wheelchair athletes as he does a trick at the 2024 World WCMX Championships.

Riders can start in any chair, but a stout sports chair with a wider stance and

**S'NS**

# RECIPE FOR SUCCESS



**Sixteen-year-old Massachusetts native combines record-breaking racing with community service as the 2025 S'NS Junior Athlete of the Year.**

*by Christopher Di Virgilio*

**A**t just 4 years old, Madelyn Wilson attended the Boston Marathon with her family. Watching the wheelchair division roll past sparked something in her that ultimately changed her life. That experience led her parents to gift her a racing wheelchair for her fifth birthday, launching what has become a remarkable athletic journey.

Now, 12 years later, Wilson is the 2025 *SPORTS 'N SPOKES* (S'NS) Junior Athlete of the Year, a recognition that places her among an elite group of young athletes, many of whom have gone on to the Paralympics.

## **Breaking Barriers & Records**

Wilson's competitive résumé reads like a seasoned athlete despite her young age. Born with spina bifida, Wilson hasn't let that define her. She holds the USA National Record in the U17 women's

para 3,000-meter event (9 minutes and 52 seconds), an achievement that came after intense competition pushed her beyond her comfort zone.

"Having competition out there always motivates me," she says. "I feel like that's always one of the most important things for me."

Her record-setting performance wasn't just luck — it was the result of preparation and mental focus. The day before the record-breaking race, Wilson had run a mock 3,000 on her home track, clocking around 10:20.

"I was like, OK, if I can run that and maintain that pace, strategically that'll be pretty good," she remembers.

ILLUSTRATION BY KERRY RANDOLPH PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER DI VIRGILIO





COURTESY OF THE WILSON FAMILY



But when race day arrived and she faced real competition, Wilson knew she had to dig deeper.

The Massachusetts native has also dominated state competitions and broken barriers at events such as the New Balance Nationals Indoor championships. At age 7, she became the youngest female athlete ever to complete the Falmouth Road Race, an accomplishment that demonstrated her early commitment to tackling challenges head-on.

Wilson's state-level dominance has been consistent. She claimed Massachusetts State Female Para Champion titles in the 100, 800, and 1-mile events in 2023, then followed up in 2024 with championships in the 800, 1- and 2-mile events. Her breakthrough at the 2024 New Balance Nationals Indoor championships was notable, too, as she became the first women's para athlete to compete in the event.

## A Family Affair

Behind Wilson's success is a strong support system, particularly her father, Carl Wilson, who serves as her primary coach. Since her team, the Navigators out of New Jersey, is not local and she can't train with them regularly, Carl has

Madelyn Wilson competes at July's The Hartford Nationals in Grand Rapids, Mich. Inset: Madelyn Wilson received a pink racing wheelchair for her fifth birthday.



Madelyn Wilson attended the 2025 The Hartford Nationals closing ceremonies in Grand Rapids, Mich.



stepped into the role, riding his bike alongside her during training sessions.

"He's basically like my coach," Wilson says. "He's been instrumental for me, and he never pushes me to go to a level that I never really thought I was going to get to."

Their training routine includes three to four sessions during the week, with both weekend days dedicated to workouts — a schedule that reflects Wilson's philosophy: "I don't rest much. I just go."

Her parents have been supportive from the beginning, encouraging her to "go fast" even in her everyday wheelchair. This encouragement has shaped her approach to racing, where speed is her calling card.

"I really just like the speed. I just like to go fast," she says.

## Beyond The Track

While racing remains her primary passion, Wilson's athletic pursuits reach far beyond the track. She participates in Nordic skiing, water skiing, swimming and sled hockey — though she's quick to note that while she loves sled hockey, it's "not as much as track." These cross-training activities serve a dual purpose: They're fun and they make her stronger for her primary sport.

"The sled hockey, when you go to pull the sticks along the ice, that makes my arms stronger," she says.

At Notre Dame Academy in Worcester, Wilson balances her athletic commitments with academic studies and community involvement. She serves as a student ambassador, giving tours during open houses, and she maintains strong grades while pursuing her interests in science, particularly biology. Wilson's consistency has also earned her recognition at the national level, including multiple gold medals at The Hartford Nationals from 2017 to present.

At this year's The Hartford Nationals, Wilson competed across multiple events. She achieved a personal best and won the girls' U17/U20 F56 shot put with a 4.53-meter throw. She also earned second place in both the girls' U17/20 F56 discus (7.58 meters) and her preferred 5,000-meter race (18:15.72).



Madelyn Wilson competes in shot put at July's The Hartford Nationals in Grand Rapids, Mich.

CHRISTOPHER D. VIRGILIO



## A Heart For Service

Wilson also volunteers her time to give back to her community through an organization called Lasagna Love, a nonprofit that aims to positively impact communities by connecting neighbors with neighbors through homemade meal delivery. Over the past year and a half, Wilson has made approximately 75 lasagnas for families in need, working through an online portal system that connects volunteers with those requesting meals.



Madelyn Wilson plays the flute in her high school's band.

Vacation Bible School, demonstrating her commitment to working with younger children across multiple settings.

## Dreams Of Boston & Beyond

When asked about her long-term goals, Wilson doesn't hesitate. Her biggest dream, written on a piece of paper during a Martin Luther King Jr. Day museum visit, is to win the Boston Marathon women's wheelchair race — the same race that inspired her journey over a decade ago.

But her ambitions extend far beyond Boston.

"I also want to try out for the Paralympics in LA [Los Angeles] in 2028," she says.

To achieve these dreams, Wilson knows the formula.

"Training hard, training every day. You don't want to take that many days off, but you just keep going, keep working toward your goals," she says.

## Learning From The Best

Wilson's biggest inspiration comes from Paralympic legend Tatyana McFadden, whom she first met at the Falmouth Road Race when she was just 6 years old. Too young to compete that year, Wilson was disappointed until McFadden offered something special.

"She was like, 'Oh, if you want, I'll do a race with you on the track. I'll do, like, a one-lap race with you.

PHOTOS THIS PAGE COURTESY OF THE WILSON FAMILY



Madelyn Wilson shows off her lasagna made for a family in need.

"People that are a little less fortunate, we make lasagna for them in our own houses, and then we deliver them," Wilson says.

Wilson also has a musical side and plays flute in her school's jazz and instrumental ensembles, a six-year commitment that showcases her diverse talents. Additionally, she's learning American Sign Language (ASL), inspired by a deaf friend, and is planning to study ASL in college.

Her community involvement extends beyond Lasagna Love. Wilson serves on the Charlton Public Library Student Advisory Board and works as a children's counselor at Leicester Church of Christ



COURTESY OF THE WILSON FAMILY

Madelyn Wilson, far right, met Paralympic wheelchair racers Daniel Romanchuk, center, and Tatyana McFadden at July's The Hartford Nationals.

"I'll go in my regular day chair, and you can go in your race chair," Wilson recalls.

Wilson won that race — though she suspects McFadden let her win — and the experience cemented her admiration for the Paralympic champion.

"She's always driven me forward. She's one of the greatest that there is," Wilson says.

The two still communicate at races, and McFadden continues to provide advice and encouragement. At this year's The Hartford Nationals, McFadden made an appearance and Wilson had the chance to meet with her again, continuing their longtime connection.

## Looking Ahead

As Wilson prepares for her junior year of high school and continues her athletic development, she approaches both good days and setbacks with perspective.

"Everyone has bad days sometimes. You don't set records all the time," she says. "It's just something that happens with everybody, and I think in life you just have to deal with it."

This mature outlook, combined with her natural speed and work ethic, positions Wilson well for the challenges ahead. Her immediate focus includes competing in longer distances — she's excited about the 5,000 and considering her first full marathon at the Baystate Marathon in Lowell, Mass., this fall.

Madelyn Wilson gets in a few warm-up racing laps during the 2025 The Hartford Nationals in Grand Rapids, Mich.



CHRISTOPHER D. VIRGILIO





Madelyn Wilson, far left, receives her 2025 *SPORTS 'N SPOKES* (S'NS) Junior Athlete of the Year award and a \$2,500 check from S'NS Web Content Manager Christopher Di Virgilio, center, while 2024 S'NS Junior Athlete of the Year Luke Bowman joins them.

The \$2,500 that comes with the Junior Athlete of the Year award will go toward practical needs: a new racing wheelchair. Her current chair is borrowed, and while she hasn't outgrown it yet, Wilson is planning ahead.

"I'll probably put like two grand toward my chair and take the other 500 for me," she says with a laugh.

Wilson also received the S'NS Junior Athlete of the Year custom-crafted award, a one-year complimentary subscription to S'NS and, of course, lands this month's magazine cover.

## Advice For Younger Athletes

For young athletes just starting their journey, Wilson's advice is both practical and inspirational. On the practical side, she emphasizes the importance of taking it slow with equipment purchases, suggesting that families borrow gear initially to ensure their child enjoys the sport before making significant financial investments.

More fundamentally, she encourages young athletes to recognize their unique gifts.

"Take advantage of what you have because everybody's gifted with something. You just have to find that, and people find that at different ages," she says.

Wilson joins a distinguished group of young athletes who have gone on to greater achievements. With her combination of natural talent, dedication



Madelyn Wilson, right, and a young 2022 *SPORTS 'N SPOKES* Junior Athlete of the Year Delmace Mayo many years ago.

and community spirit, she's ready to write the next chapter of her story with the same philosophy that has driven her success: Keep moving forward, stay dedicated and never stop going fast.

To nominate an outstanding young athlete for Junior Athlete of the Year, visit [sportsnspokes.com](https://sportsnspokes.com) between February and June 15.

**S'NS**



# MEMORY-FILLED MINNEAPOLIS

ILLUSTRATION BY KERRY RANDOLPH

**After 20 years, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games made a momentous return to Minnesota.**

*by John Groth*

**I**t was a memorable and momentous return for the National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG) to Minneapolis.

After hosting the Games, co-sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), there 20 years ago, the Twin Cities area put on a heavy-hitting July 17–22 event this year.

It featured 537 athletes, a visit from VA Secretary Doug Collins, new competitions such as an ax throwing exhibition, a power soccer all-star game, family-filled events like a pickleball up/down and plenty of camaraderie.

For some athletes, it served as a soul-filled reminder of what the Games mean to them, while others experienced thankfulness and fun.

## Twenty-Year Returns

Orlando Perez and Centra “CeCe” Mazyck each had some emotional moments during this year’s Games. It marked a major milestone return for both Paralympians, too.

For Perez, the last time the Games were in Minneapolis, he was named the Spirit of the Games

winner in 2005. Meanwhile, for Mazyck, it marked the anniversary of her first one.

An Army veteran and PVA Mountain States Chapter member, Perez has competed in the Games since 1999. He served from 1994 to 1996 in personnel administration. But in 1995, when he was just 19 years old, he fell while climbing on a training wall at Fort Jackson, S.C. His spinal cord hit the rocks and a benign tumor grew there, which led to surgery to remove it and that left him paralyzed.

Now at age 50, this NVWG hit him a bit differently, especially after seeing a picture of himself at the 2005 Games compared to now.

“That reminded me that when I was that young, I looked up to these older veterans that have been coming for a long time. And the tables have reversed,” Perez says. “I’m one of the older guys now, trying to get all the younger guys motivated.”

Perez competed in powerlifting, wheelchair basketball, pickleball, field events and adaptive fitness at this year’s Games.

But what he had most fun with was playing with his stepson, Drayk, in a new pickleball event called the up/down.



**NATIONAL VETERANS  
WHEELCHAIR  
GAMES**





CHRISTOPHER DI VIRGILIO

KERRY RANDOLPH

Wheelchair players could team up with an able-bodied player, whether it be a family member, spouse, caregiver or friend, and face off against another team in a single-elimination bracket-style tournament. Teams played one self-refereed game against each other to 11 points, and the winning team advanced. There were two tournaments — one designated for family and one designated for higher-level teams. Winners received medals.

Originally, the up/down was going to be an exhibition event, but organizers found there was enough interest to turn it into something more. Perez loved it for the added community and family support, and it gave him a chance to include Drayk.

“Well, it’s his first Games, and he’s so excited,” Perez says. “Like, you know, he’s my stepson. But on the other side of this is the beautiful family that we got. He’s feeling really, really special. He’s feeling the energy. And he’s already talking about Detroit [in 2026]. So, the job is done — getting my family also to support the veterans and include them into the family.”

Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) Southeastern Chapter member Centra “CeCe” Mazyck, left, and PVA Mountain States Chapter member Orlando Perez had some memorable returns to this year’s National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Minneapolis.





COURTESY OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Paralyzed Veterans of America Southeastern Chapter member Centra "CeCe" Mazyck competed in deadlift, above, and recorded a personal-best 120-pound bench press at this year's National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Minneapolis.

This NVWG was special for Mazyck, too. This year marked her 20th Games, and this time she competed in powerlifting, wheelchair basketball, javelin, shot put and adaptive fitness, winning a gold medal in powerlifting (bench press) with a personal-best 120-pound lift.

The 49-year-old Army veteran and retired sergeant first class sustained level L1 and L2 spinal cord injur-

ies (SCIs) in 2003 during a routine parachute jump in Fort Bragg, N.C. And it was her recreational therapist, Suzanne Kenrick of the Augusta VA Medical Center in Georgia, who gave her that push and urged her to go the Games. They've both attended every one since.

The PVA Southeastern Chapter member, who served as a jump master from 1995 to 2003 in the Army and then from 2003 to 2005 in the Army Reserves, says she experienced greatness that first time. She specifically remembers how she cried during the 2005 closing ceremony because she felt so good and didn't want to leave.

"I felt like it was family. And I just didn't want to go back out in the world and leave my family," says Mazyck. "You know, all the support that you get, the camaraderie, the stories that we tell each other, the connections that we make, it's just amazing."

## Oh Mann!

Paul Mann couldn't thank his boat captain, Robert Beaman, enough.

The PVA Buckeye Chapter member had a literal highlight reel of a time at the NVWG's second annual bass fishing tournament.

Mann and Beaman captured the 2025 NVWG bass fishing team tournament with their five-fish, 15.54-pound haul July 15 at Lake Minnetonka. They finished nearly 2 pounds ahead of PVA Wisconsin Chapter member Angela Walker and boat captain Larry Hanson (five fish, 13.84 pounds), while PVA Nevada Chapter member Alan Marsh and boat captain Steve Pieri placed third (five fish, 13.48 pounds).

Meanwhile, Marsh and Pieri managed to win the Big Fish title with a 4.29-pound catch, edging out



KERRY RANDOLPH

Paralyzed Veterans of America Mountain States Chapter member Orlando Perez participated in adaptive fitness and other sports at this year's National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Minneapolis.



Hanson and Walker (4.27 pounds) and PVA Northwest Chapter member Kevin Ferguson and boat captain Jack Kiffe (3.69 pounds).

Each of the top three finishers, along with the Big Fish winner, received a medal and a new fishing pole.

An Army veteran, Mann served from 1989 to 1993 as military police. Seven years later, he sustained a level C6-C7 incomplete SCI after a car accident as a passenger in a car with his father.

In last year's inaugural fishing event in New Orleans, Mann's grand total was one fish at 1.73 pounds. This year, he caught plenty more.

He credited Beaman with finding some out-of-the-way hot spots and using the right bait, a frog bait, for his wild success.

"I got videos of these fish jumping out of the water. This was like a *National Geographic* moment to me. It was awesome," Mann says. "I mean, I've never fished for five or six hours and caught over 30 fish, and we were throwing them back consistently."

A PVA Nevada Chapter member and Marine Corps, Army and Coast Guard veteran, Marsh retired in 2009 and was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2010.



Paralyzed Veterans of America Buckeye Chapter member Paul Mann, right, and his boat captain Robert Beaman, show off some of their event-winning haul during the National Veterans Wheelchair Games bass fishing event.



Paralyzed Veterans of America Nevada Chapter member Alan Marsh, right, and his boat captain Steve Pieri won the Big Fish award at the 2025 National Veterans Wheelchair Games bass fishing event.

PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY LISA GHYLIN-PAULSON





He didn't compete in the fishing event last year, but did so this year at the urging of some other PVA Nevada Chapter members.

Pieri had never fished at Lake Minnetonka before and fished in spots other people weren't trying. It worked. Although Pieri couldn't attend the nighttime awards banquet at the Hyatt Regency hotel, he video-called Marsh as he received the award.

"I had a great captain. The water was nice. It started getting choppy later on, but it was just perfect," Marsh says. "It was the perfect day to go fishing."

## Paralympians Join In

Fresh off their 61-47 gold-medal winning World Wheelchair Rugby Americas Championship title over tournament host Brazil in São Paulo, U.S. national wheelchair rugby team head coach Joe Delagrave, assistant coach Eric Newby and players Chuck Aoki, Mason Symons and Sarah Adam provided a memorable experience for NVWG athletes, too.

They helped guide a two-hour wheelchair rugby clinic inside the Minneapolis Convention Center on the Games' opening day. The group talked to about 15 athletes, taught them some warmup stretches and performed a handful of passing and chair movement drills before participating in a scrimmage.

For Aoki, it was a chance to give back to the community. He enjoys working with athletes of different ages, ability levels and experience.

"And, you know, I tell people all the time that you don't have to be a Paralympic athlete to have the sport impact your life. And so, I think this is a great example of how it can just impact your life in a really positive way, even if it's only just you come here and play every year is all," says Aoki, who, along with Adam, were each named to the Americas Championship all-tournament team.

Just ask Austin Walters about its impact.

He wheeled over to participate in the clinic. But there was a slight problem. The PVA Keystone Chapter member had no sports wheelchair. Plenty of people helped him out.

First, the 27-year-old Army veteran borrowed a prototype wheelchair — with a design inspired by the Japanese art form Kirigami — from Pittsburgh's Human Engineering Research Labs to test out and do passing and mobility drills. Then, a female athlete let Walters use her sports wheelchair and strap-in belts to compete in the scrimmage game. Turns out, that athlete was Adam. Walters couldn't believe he'd used a Paralympian's chair and belts afterwards. It left him humbled and thankful.

"And she set me up with the whole setup to go out and play. So, without her, I wouldn't have been able to play," Walters says. "She really helped me out."

## New Super Champs

This year brought two new champions to the obstacle courses known as "Super G" and Super M (motorized). And it brought two new obstacles, too.

PVA Nevada Chapter member Darnell Calahan captured the Super G obstacle course title, while PVA Mid-Atlantic Chapter member Amy McKee won the Super M wheelchair obstacle course title inside the Minneapolis Convention Center.

An Army veteran, Calahan won a tight battle in the Super G, finishing in 2 minutes and 55 seconds to edge out PVA Northwest Chapter member Russ Norris, the two-time defending champ, by 3 seconds.

Calahan served from 2017 to 2019 in human resources before sustaining a level T11 SCI on Jan. 5, 2019, after falling out of a tree.

In his second year at the NVWG, this marked the 30-year-old's first official year competing in the obstacle course known as "slalom," and then, after finishing

U.S. Paralympic wheelchair rugby coach Joe Delagrave, with hand out, instructs athletes about drills at a wheelchair rugby clinic during the 2025 National Veterans Wheelchair Games' opening day.



CHRISTOPHER DI VIRGILIO





Paralyzed Veterans of America Mid-Atlantic Chapter member Amy McKee wheels through the pool noodles during the Super M course.



Paralyzed Veterans of America Nevada Chapter member Darnell Calahan won the obstacle course known as "Super G" title.

in the top two of his division in that event, advancing to the harder obstacle course known as Super G.

The top two finishers in each of the four divisions in the obstacle course known as slalom (Divisions II, III, IV and V) advance to the Super G and Super M.

Calahan had his own cheering section, including his wife, Tamarah,

and his older sister, Paris, with him at the Super G. They brought green cheerleader pom-poms and rooted him on.

Even with a new obstacle, a roller coaster-like mining car where athletes had to pull themselves across with a rope and then balance themselves in the middle, Calahan says the hardest part was still the rock/sand/gravel pit. He actually thought the two Super G and Super M courses were just one big course, originally. But he had fun, especially cheering everyone else on.

"From now on, we might just form a cheering crew and cheer for everybody that is doing it,"



## Ax-Throwing Thrill

Paralyzed Veterans of America National Vice President Josue Cordova competed in a National Veterans Wheelchair Games first — ax throwing — which was an exhibition event at this year's Games in Minneapolis.



PHOTOS BY KERRY RANDOLPH

TOP TWO PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER DI VIRGILIO



## Adding More All-Stars



KERRY RANDOLPH

This year's National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG) featured not one, but two all-star games in Minneapolis. In the inaugural power soccer all-star game, Paralyzed Veterans of America National President and Chairman of the Board Robert L. Thomas Jr., above left, competed, but his team lost, 4-0, to a Minneapolis power soccer all-star kids' team. Meanwhile, the Minnesota Rollin' Twins rolled past the NVWG All-Stars, 24-2, in the Games' second annual wheelchair softball all-star game.



COURTESY OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



“From now on, we might just form a cheering crew and cheer for everybody that is doing it. It just kind of happened. When you are feeling the energy, you know what I’m saying, you just kind of get into it.” — **Darnell Calahan**

.....

Calahan says. “It just kind of happened. When you are feeling the energy, you know what I’m saying, you just kind of get into it.”

McKee had a bunch of family with her to watch her bring home the Super M title, knocking off seven other competitors, including the defending champ, PVA Cal-Diego Chapter member William “Willie” Hendrickson.

A 39-year-old Marine Corps veteran, McKee served from 2004 to 2017 as an aviation electrician and sustained a level L4 SCI in January 2016 from a motorcycle accident on her way to work. McKee had her two sisters (Tiffany and Andi), two nieces (Raven and Amber) and best friend, Kehaulani, there to root for her. They all drove from different states, including Virginia, Pennsylvania and North Carolina, and then met in Minneapolis. This capped the trip.

The Chesapeake, Va., resident motored through a new obstacle of moving pool noodles with no

problem. And the trip was worth it, even with a fun pre-event moment.

“So, at the beginning, before we drew our numbers, I was fine. And then when it was my turn to go, I got real nervous. And then the officials asked me how do I turn off my chair, just in case. Like ‘What? What do you think is going to happen? Now, I’m scared,’” McKee says. “But it was fun. It was fun.”

For more stories, including a feature on the youngest and oldest NVWG competitors (19 and 90 years old), visit [sportsnspokes.com](https://sportsnspokes.com) and our sister site, [pnonline.com](https://pnonline.com) and Facebook ([facebook.com/pnonline](https://facebook.com/pnonline)) for more photos. And to register for the 2026 NVWG, visit [wheelchairgames.org](https://wheelchairgames.org).

**S'NS**

## Record Deadlifting Power

Competing in the adaptive fitness deadlift event for the first time, Anthony Martinez lifted a National Veterans Wheelchair Games record 700 pounds inside the Minneapolis Convention Center.



COURTESY OF PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

# The Extra Point

## A Celebration Of Growth For The Paralympic Movement

by Darci Miller/Red Line Editorial

The red carpet at the 2025 U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Hall of Fame induction ceremony was a star-studded affair.

Held at the world-famous Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, Colo., the event was populated with some of the biggest names in U.S. sports history, local politicians and Kirsty Coventry, the newly elected president of the International Olympic Committee.

But for Christina Schwab, a member of the 2004 U.S. women's wheelchair basketball team who was inducted on July 12, she was most excited to see someone much less familiar to the general public: fellow inductee and six-time Paralympic medalist Susan Hagel.

"She's one of the women that got me playing women's wheelchair basketball," Schwab says. "I just gave myself goosebumps. To have her here, and that we're getting inducted at the same time — I owe so much to the women that came before us because they weren't getting the recognition. They were paying their way to compete, and we were lucky enough that we didn't have to do that. But the women here — Susan is one of them — she is a pioneer of our sport and of other sports, so I'm grateful to her."

### LONG TIME COMING

It's certainly been a long journey for Hagel — as well as the entire Paralympic Movement.

Hagel had a career spanning three sports — para archery, wheelchair basketball and para track and field — and six Paralympic Games from 1976 to 1996.

She's been witness to an incredible evolution since being injured in a car crash in 1968.

"I was injured many years ago, in an era where I was refused service in a restaurant because they didn't serve people like me," Hagel says. "I started in sports in the early '70s, when there was absolutely no recognition. People had no idea that the Paralympics were even happening."

Recent changes, including the U.S. Olympic Committee's (USOC's) 2019 decision to become the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) have helped increase the visibility of para athletes, Hagel says.

"It was like night and day in regards to people understanding what the Paralympics were and recognizing the athleticism of athletes with disabilities," she says. "So, that was just the most wonderful thing."

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Honorees pose with Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) CEO Sarah Hirshland, USOPC Board Chair Gene Sykes, International Olympic Committee President Kirsty Coventry and Colorado Springs Mayor Yemi Mobolade during the 2025 U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Hall of Fame induction ceremony at Colorado Hall at The Broadmoor July 12 in Colorado Springs, Colo.



© GETTY IMAGES/MATTHEW STOCKMAN



Susan Hagel is honored during the 2025 U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Hall of Fame induction ceremony at Colorado Hall at The Broadmoor July 12 in Colorado Springs, Colo.

That growth was in full view at the Hall of Fame induction, where Hagel, the winning 2004 women's wheelchair basketball team, Steve Cash (four-time Paralympian and three-time gold medalist in sled hockey) and Marla Runyan (two-time Paralympian, six-time Paralympic medalist and two-time Olympian in track and field) were honored alongside Olympic legends.

The Olympic side of the class was made up of some of the most celebrated names in U.S. athletic history, including Gabby Douglas (gymnastics), Allyson Felix (track and field), Kerri Walsh Jennings (beach volleyball), Bode Miller (alpine skiing), Serena Williams (tennis), the 2020 men's bobsled team, Anita De-Frantz (legend; rowing), Flo Hyman (leg-

end; volleyball), Mike Krzyzewski (coach; basketball) and Phil Knight (special contributor; Nike founder).

Seeing their names alongside the likes of Williams and Felix may have been a bit jarring, but the Paralympians were more than ready to step into the spotlight.

"It's a long time coming," wheelchair basketball player Patty Cisneros Prevo says. "We deserve it just as much as Olympians, and we haven't had that recognition, the awareness, the education, the funding, the pay equity, as the Olympians. So, I'm incredibly grateful for the pioneers that kept pushing. Nobody knew about the Paralympics, and we were so often confused with the Special Olympics. So, I feel like, yes, I'm



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Members of the 2004 U.S. women's wheelchair basketball team are honored during the 2025 U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Hall of Fame induction ceremony at Colorado Hall at The Broadmoor July 12 in Colorado Springs, Colo.

super grateful and happy, and also, we deserve it. So, we should be here."

#### HISTORY-MAKERS

This group of Paralympians also made history with their inductions.

Hagel is the first archer, Olympic or Paralympic, to be inducted; the 2004 women's wheelchair basketball team is the first in its sport to be inducted; and Cash is the first individual sled hockey player to be inducted.

Runyan, a visually impaired athlete, has the distinction of being the only U.S. athlete ever to compete in both the Olympics and the Paralympics.

"You have to recognize these landmark milestones, including the rebranding of the USOC to the USOPC," Runyan says. "We all have to be under the same roof. We all have to be under the same governance infrastructure. You're starting to see television coverage catch on. We're seeing more equity in accommo-

dations and performance gear. We didn't have that in my day. We didn't have the same uniforms. And I hope to see this continue to evolve where Paralympians have more sponsorship opportunities so that they can focus on their specific athletic endeavor, just as Olympians do."

Now, Runyan hopes to see even more progress in the years ahead.

"So, we're seeing this movement. It's moving, but it feels like, for me, from my perspective, a little bit of a glacier pace. But we're getting closer," she says. "I'm so proud of the evolution of the Paralympic Movement. I'm so encouraged, and I credit the Paralympians of today with carrying us forward the way they have and their unbelievable athleticism and performances that just keep capturing the world's attention."

Hagel has dedicated much of her life to the disability community. In addition to her pioneering Paralympic career, she worked as a rehabilitative therapist for

41 years at Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute in Minneapolis, helping people understand their disability and what it's like to live with it, see a future, get back into the community and adapt to a new lifestyle.

Now, with the Paralympics on a bigger stage than ever before and Hagel taking her place in U.S. sports history, the future for athletes with disabilities has never been brighter.

"There's a lot more acceptance now and recognition of people with disabilities in regards to skills," Hagel says. "And with people being seen, there also becomes more acceptance and more recognition and less prejudice. We've come a long way but still have a long ways to go."

*Darci Miller is a freelance contributor to SPORTS 'N SPOKES on behalf of Red Line Editorial, Inc.*

**S'NS**



# S'NS Replay



- Madelyn Wilson was announced as the 2025 *SPORTS 'N SPOKES* (S'NS) Junior Athlete of the Year this month (p. 28) and just as the names and faces have changed over the 39 years of the honor, so, too, has the award itself.
- Ashley Hovey and Tyler Byers, upper left, received plaques as co-winners in 1995.
- Jessica Galli, upper right, received a certificate in 1999.
- From 2004 to 2020, a silver platter served as the award, with Adrina Castro, above, receiving the last one in 2020.
- PVA Publications Web Content Manager Christopher Di Virgilio redesigned the award starting with Zachary Carter, far left, in 2021 and again with Delmace Mayo in 2022, left.

PHOTOS ALL PVA PUBLICATIONS FILE PHOTOS





# People

## Lind Fulfilled After Spirit Of The Games Honor

by John Groth

After his fellow veterans selected him as this year's National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG) Spirit of the Games award winner, Jesse Lind reflected after the closing ceremony.

The 44-year-old Marine Corps veteran has attended each of the past 12 Games, nearly all of them with his now-15-year-old son, Julian. He's about family first. Both propping up his own — and his military one.

So, with Julian by his side inside the Minneapolis Convention Center in Minnesota on July 22, Lind came up with one word — fulfilled.

"Because early on in my athletic career, I realized that being positive was contagious, just as much as being negative was contagious. I mean, when you have a negative attitude, negativity is contagious. And so, if you can keep a positive

them voting for me for Spirit of the Games, it's rewarding because it lets me know that my thought process is real."

### TEAMING UP FOR SUPPORT

Lind was selected as this year's Spirit of the Games award winner at the 44th NVWG, co-sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA).

The award recognizes an athlete who is nominated by his or her peers and whose attitude, sportsmanship and courage reflect the best of what NVWG represents to all athletes.

A PVA Mid-Atlantic Chapter member, Lind served from 1999 to 2001 in aviation operations and was injured in a car accident in California when he was 18 years old and early on in his career, sustaining a spinal cord injury with level T10, T12 and L2 fractures that left him an incomplete paraplegic.

His first NVWG was in 2013 in Philadelphia, and he hasn't missed one since.

This year, Lind competed in air rifle, shot put, pickleball, cornhole, wheelchair softball, disc golf

CHRISTOPHER DI VIRGILIO



Jesse Lind, right, with his son, Julian, after receiving the 2025 National Veterans Wheelchair Games Spirit of the Games award in July.

and wheelchair basketball, winning gold in wheelchair basketball and earning a bronze in the Open V division discus with a 6.54-meter throw.

He had an eventful and memorable final Games day.

Less than two hours before the closing ceremony and award presentation,

Lind scored 32 points to lead Team Huskies to a 61-52 victory over Team Bulldogs in the gold-medal wheelchair basketball game. He closed the first half with a buzzer-

attitude, a positive outlook, the morale always stays high, you know? So, I've always tried to be that positive voice, you know, in the huddle, on the sidelines, try to gas people up. I try to keep things positive because it's important," says Lind, who's an avid wheelchair basketball and wheelchair softball player. "And so,

Jesse Lind competed in cornhole and was named the 2025 National Veterans Wheelchair Games Spirit of the Games award winner in Minneapolis.

COURTESY OF PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA



“You know, they say that you can’t pick your family. But I disagree — because I chose y’all. And evidently, y’all chose me. It’s an honor. Thank you.”

— Jesse Lind

CHRISTOPHER DI VIRGILIO



Jesse Lind, No. 15, speaks in a Team Huskies huddle during July’s National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Minneapolis.

beating putback off Army veteran Gene Calantoc’s miss to tie the game at 31-all. And then he scored 20 points in the second half to help push his team to the victory.

Lind says friends came and told him at halftime that Team Bulldogs was leaving the middle lane open. So, they exploited that in the second half.

“When you’re playing, it’s hard to analyze. So, people from an outside perspective were seeing things that I wasn’t seeing,” Lind says. “So, when I went back in the second half, I started exploiting their weakness and what people were saying, and it worked.”

And right there on the sidelines with him was Julian, who Lind says is like his and any team he’s playing on’s biggest fan and de facto coach.

“Oh, man. He’s my road dog. He’s my biggest supporter, my biggest fan since he was a little guy,” Lind says.

Afterwards, Julian was still wide-eyed.

“It was surreal,” he says of his dad’s championship-game performance.

Julian’s also learned a handful of lessons from his dad, too.

“He’s really great for proving that people can overcome really anything that’s handed to them, good or bad, specifically bad,” Julian says. “Even, you know, if people get hit with the worst possible thing they could have ever have, you literally think your life’s over, you pop out here, it’s a game-changer. It changes your life.”

It’s changed both of theirs.

And Lind wants to show that a person’s mindset is one major key in overcoming life’s obstacles.

“At any time you want to feel bad about yourself, you know, you look around and realize that someone has it worse, you know what I mean? And you make peace with your situation. Make the best of it,” he says.

#### FAMILY & HONOR

Later, the pair celebrated the Spirit of the Games award together. As Lind wheeled up to the stage, with veter-

ans yelling “Jess-e, Jess-e,” to receive the award, he waved and pointed to the crowd a few times, while Julian recorded the moment from their table before joining his dad on stage. Once up there, Lind kept his speech short and sweet before handing the award to Julian and they shared a handshake and a hug.

“You know, they say that you can’t pick your family. But I disagree — because I chose y’all. And evidently, y’all chose me,” says Lind, who lives in Little River, S.C. “It’s an honor. Thank you.”

Along with the honor, Lind received a trip from First Nation Group that’s valued up to \$2,000 anywhere in the U.S. The company will also sponsor his 2026 NVWG attendance in Detroit, paying for lodging and travel for Lind and one guest.

“I’ve literally been saying for the last probably eight years, I’m like, ‘I’m gonna win that someday. I’m gonna win that someday.’ And the day finally came,” Lind says. “It was an honor.”

S’NS

# Outdoors

## Mountains, Adventures & More

by John Groth & Brittany Martin

**D**uring Paralyzed Veterans of America's (PVA) inaugural Grand Teton Outdoor Experience event in late June, Tonya Andrews experienced quite the meaningful, picturesque and cool experience out on Palisades Reservoir in eastern Idaho.

For the first time in her life, the Air Force veteran and PVA Lone Star Chapter member went sailing. Even with multiple sclerosis (MS), she learned that didn't have to be a limitation using the Tetra Watercraft and its sip-and-puff mechanism and joystick to set the sail and steer.

After some lessons from Teton Adaptive Program Director Josh Noteboom, Andrews learned to control the boat herself and that using the Tetra Watercraft was similar to driving her power wheelchair. For her, it was a thrilling experience.

"I think my favorite part of my sailing is when everything kind of clicked," says the 45-year-old, who served from 2002 to 2008 and lives just outside of Dallas. "Like,

all the lessons he had given me, and like, I was deciding where the boat got to go, like, I got to choose, 'OK, we're going to the right or the left or whatever.' I think once I became the captain, that's when it was like, 'Oh, this is awesome.'"

### INAUGURAL EVENT

Andrews was one of nine PVA members who participated in the inaugural outdoor experience event in Jackson, Wyo., and surrounding areas. It was put on by the organization, along with Teton Adaptive, based out of Jackson. PVA had a similar event in Breckenridge, Colo., in August and plans to hold one in Carrabassett Valley, Maine, in February.

PVA members had to apply for the program and were narrowed down to the nine, plus their family or caregivers. The program will continue to be limited to ensure ample adaptive equipment and per-

sonnel are available to effectively serve the group.

PVA Sports and Recreation Program Manager Katelynn Johnson says the department heard from members that they were interested in more outdoor recreation opportunities.

"We do a lot of team sports and a lot of competitive things, but outdoor recreation is something we haven't had a lot of so far," Johnson says. "And there is a lot of research in the physical, social, mental, emotional well-being, all these benefits of being outdoors, whether you're doing

Tonya Andrews enjoyed her time trying out the Tetra Watercraft during Paralyzed Veterans of America's late-June Grand Teton Outdoor Experience.

CHRISTOPHER DI VIRGILIO



BRITTANY MARTIN





“For so long, I wasn’t able to move. I was so sick. I couldn’t do anything. And now that I’m able to do it, I mean, PVA just gives you so many opportunities to move and get outside and use what you can of your body. And that’s what I wanted to do.” — **Tonya Andrews**

.....

an activity or just in nature, and so we really wanted to add that because it’s something we thought our members would really benefit from, and we wanted to provide that opportunity to potentially educate them on a new activity they could then go do with their families.”

With this new event, members participated in plenty of outdoor activities.

On the first day, one group started out with adaptive cycling and did some parking lot lessons at Teton Adaptive before taking on the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort trails, while another group rode a gondola up to the Teton Mountain Range to check out the views before the groups switched activities.

Day two featured adaptive yoga, sailing with a Tetra Watercraft, kayaking,

paddleboarding and fishing on the Pali-sades Reservoir in eastern Idaho, and the final day involved a choice of three activities inside Grand Teton National Park, including a hike or adaptive cycling to Phelps Lake, adaptive cycling from Taggart Lake to the Jenny Lake Visitor Center or a boat ride on Jenny Lake.

They ended the experience with a cookout and bonfire at the home of former GAP CEO Art Peck, who, with his wife, Kirsten, volunteered to host the evening’s festivities.

Additionally, PVA members’ caregivers and family members participated in horseback riding, water sports and hiking adventures.

First-year Teton Adaptive Executive Director Adriene Henderson says PVA

reached out to the organization and its past program director over a year ago about their project to venture into more outdoor recreation activities.

Henderson says Teton Adaptive wanted to give participants a taste of what Wyoming is like and for people to try some different adaptive outdoor activities for the first time.

“I hope it provides them two things — one, an incredible week where they get to spend time with other people who are venturing into this, spend time with their loved ones that are here and spend time with their team and just realize what’s possible, and then two, I hope that we’re able to find some things for them that can translate into their everyday lives,” Henderson says.

CHRISTOPHER DI VIRGILIO



Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) members, Teton Adaptive staff and PVA staff attended a cookout during the Grand Teton Outdoor Experience.



### A SCREAMINGLY GOOD TIME

It certainly did that for 68-year-old Tim Martin.

The Marine Corps veteran's screams and cackles could be heard all over the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort trails as he went wild on an adaptive mountain bike.

Rocky terrain, dirt paths, trees, branches, winding trails — he tried to handle them all and lived out some of his craziest dreams.

Martin has level C5/C6 spinal cord injuries after two cervical fusions from being involved in two separate motor vehicle accidents in 2001 and 2013 at the same intersection in Kenosha, Wis.

Even after a fall and some scratches during that opening day on the bike, he didn't care. He just wanted to keep zooming down again.

"I said yesterday, 'I wouldn't change a thousand days for the day yesterday.' Mountain biking down the mountain, it was so damn exhilarating. I mean, so damn life-changing. I just think it's gorgeous out here. And I just had such a ball yesterday. I think all day yesterday I had adrenaline going and it was so much fun. I mean, really fun," says Martin, a Wisconsin resident who served from 1977 to 1982 as a combat engineer and heavy equipment operator. "I'd like to trade my recumbent bike in for one of these mountain bikes now because I'm addicted to the trails."

Andrews left with some memories and grateful appreciation, too.

"For so long, I wasn't able to move. I was so sick. I couldn't do anything," Andrews says. "And now that I'm able to do it, I mean, PVA just gives you so many opportunities to move and get outside and use what you can of your body. And that's what I wanted to do."

For more information, visit [pva.org/sports-recreation/outdoor-recreation](http://pva.org/sports-recreation/outdoor-recreation).

For more stories, photos and video from the event, visit [sportsnspokes.com](http://sportsnspokes.com) and [pnonline.com](http://pnonline.com).



Paralyzed Veterans of America Wisconsin Chapter member Tim Martin, in front, wheeled through Jackson Hole Mountain Resort trails on an adaptive mountain bike.

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### More Pickleball

Learn more about the wheelchair athletes playing at the 2014 Paralympic USA Pickleball National Championships! Check out the article for additional content, photos and coverage on up at the November event held in Boca, Fla.

**WHEELCHAIR PICKLEBALL**  
Get ready for some exciting action at America's (PVA) is hosting an invitational Pickleball 14-16 in November. Check out the article for additional content, photos and coverage on up at the November event held in Boca, Fla.



### September 2025

PVA Wheelchair Basketball Camp	September 4-7, 2025	Spokane, WA
PVA Trapshooting Series: North Central	September 5-7, 2025	Sioux Falls, SD
PVA Boccia Tournament Series: West Virginia	September 9-10, 2025	Martinsburg, WV
PVA Billiards Tournament Series: Great Plains	September 19-20, 2025	Omaha, NE
PVA Wheelchair Rugby Camp	September 25-27, 2025	San Diego, CA
PVA Bass Tournament Series: Okie Open	September 26-28, 2025	Eufaula, OK

### October 2025

PVA Intro to Paracycling Series: Denver	October 3-4, 2025	Denver, CO
PVA Off-Road Paracycling Camp: Pocahontas State Park	October 16-18, 2025	Chesterfield, VA
PVA Billiards Tournament Series: Mid-South	October 17-18, 2025	Memphis, TN
PVA Pickleball Camp	October 18-19, 2025	San Antonio, Texas
PVA Off-Road Paracycling Camp: Bentonville	October 23-26, 2025	Bentonville, AR
Paracycling: High Performance Road Racing Camp	October 27-31, 2025	Colorado Springs, CO

### November 2025

Intro to Paracycling Series: Phoenix	November 12, 2025	Phoenix, AZ
PVA Off-Road Paracycling Camp: Phoenix	November 13-16, 2025	Phoenix, AZ
PVA Billiards Tournament Series: Buckeye	November 14-15, 2025	Westerville, OH

### December 2025

PVA Bowling Tournament Series: Nevada	December 4-7, 2025	Las Vegas, NV
PVA Boccia Tournament Series: New England	December 6-7, 2025	Brockton, MA

### January 2026

PVA Wheelchair Rugby Invitational	January 28-February 1, 2026	Louisville, KY
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### February 2026

PVA Boccia Tournament Series: Bayou Gulf States	February 7-8, 2026	Gulfport, MS
PVA Airgun Tournament Series: Central Florida	February 14-15, 2026	Orlando, FL





# EVENT SCHEDULE

## FY26

### February (Continued) 2026

PVA Bowling Tournament Series: Florida Gulf Coast	February 25-27, 2026	Tampa, FL
PVA Outdoor Experience: Maine Winter Sports	February 25- March 1, 2026	Carrabassett Valley, ME

### March 2026

PVA Bowling Tournament Series: Tri-State Tournament	March 13-15, 2026	Beaverton, OR
PVA Billiards Tournament Series: Mid-Atlantic	March 14-15, 2026	Midlothian, VA
PVA Bass Tournament Series: Southeastern Challenge	March 27-29, 2026	Appling, GA

### April 2026

PVA Bass Tournament Series: Bluegrass Bass Bash	April 10-12, 2026	Kuttawa, KY
PVA Off-Road Paracycling Camp and Race: Pocahontas	April 16-19, 2026	Chesterfield, VA
PVA Bass Tournament Series: Citrus Slam	April 17-19, 2026	Kissimmee, FL
PVA Bowling Tournament Series: Texas	April 22-24, 2026	San Antonio, TX
PVA Billiards Tournament Series: Mid-America	April 23-25, 2026	Oklahoma City, OK
PVA Wheelchair Pickleball Tournament	April 25-26, 2026	TBD

### May 2026

PVA Bass Tournament Series: Land of Lincoln	May 1-3, 2026	Sesser, IL
PVA Bocchia Tournament Series: Puerto Rico (Year-End)	May 2-3, 2026	San Juan, PR
Intro to Paracycling Series: Salt Lake City	May 4-5, 2026	Salt Lake City, UT
Intro to Paracycling Series: Milwaukee	May 20-21, 2026	Milwaukee, WI
PVA Trapshooting Tournament Series: Vaughan	May 22-24, 2026	Elburn, IL
PVA Bass Tournament Series: Buckeye Bash	May 29-31, 2026	Cortland, OH
PVA Airgun Tournament Series: Texas	May 30-31, 2026	San Antonio, TX

### June 2026

PVA Bass Tournament Series: Capital Clash	June 5-7, 2026	Waldorf, MD
PVA Wheelchair Basketball Camp	June 8-14, 2026	Arlington, TX
PVA Trapshooting Tournament Series: Wisconsin	June 12-14, 2026	Green Bay, WI



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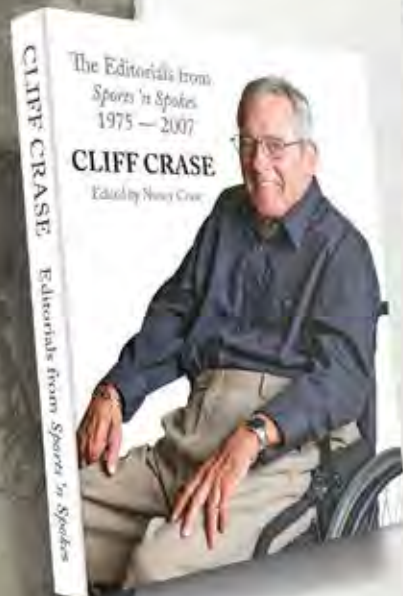
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Edited by Nancy Crase



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# Final Frame



## High Five!

Mudonna, right, mascot for minor league baseball's St. Paul Saints, gets an enthusiastic greeting from a participant during the National Veterans Wheelchair Games' Kids' Day July 19 at the Minneapolis Convention Center in Minnesota. Photo by Kerry Randolph.



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