

It's Gold in Beijing!!!!

Following four years of dedication to training and to each other, the USA Women's National Wheelchair Basketball Team won the gold medal at the XIII Paralympic Games in Beijing, China. The national team was led throughout by head coach Ron Lykins (Stillwater, MN) and assistant coaches Rob Taylor (Tuscon, AZ) and John Sikora (Executive Director of HOPE Network). Team USA's journey to Beijing has taken them across the globe over these four years.

Early on, qualifying tournaments played a role in the development of the team and in positioning them for competitions. Significant international competitions included the 2005 Amercia's Qualifiers (Colorado Springs, CO), 2006 Roosevelt Cup (Warm Springs, Georgia) and The World Cup (Amsterdam), 2007 Osaka Cup (Japan) and Para Pan Am Games (Rio de Janeiro), and 2008 Osaka Cup (Japan), Roosevelt Cup (Georgia), North American Cup (Alabama), and the Paralympics (Beijing). The US Paralympic team was comprised of ladies with varying attributes that together bonded the team for success. The squad was built on a combination of experience (6 members of the 2004 Athens gold medal team) and skills (some including speed, ball handling, shooting, rebounding, and defense). Additionally, on and off the court personality and behavior was heavily taken into consideration. The team dedicated themselves to practice hard together at the numerous training camps, as well as alone during the weeks of time between camps. The team held training camps at US Olympic Training Centers (USOTC) in Birmingham, AL, Lake Placid, NY and Colorado Springs, CO. Besides basketball on the courts, the team had dedicated time with a nutritionist, sports psychologist, athletic trainer, and personal trainers to shape and build themselves as total athletes and to prepare intelligently for the major competition ahead.

The final preparation for the Paralympics was held at the USOTC in Colorado just before departure to Beijing. This comprised two days of instructions and receiving apparel. Practice wear, game clothing, and awards ceremony outfits were provided by Nike. Stylish opening and closing ceremony uniforms and outfits were supplied by Polo Ralph Lauren. Media preparation, a quick Mandarin language skills class, and proper etiquette for China were taught. Soon thereafter began the 26 plus hour trip to Beijing. Despite what seemed to be an everlasting flight, the arrival in Beijing was exciting. Celebration of the Paralympic Games and the exuberance of all the people of China was evident the moment we came off the plane. Banners and flowers greeted us everywhere. Housing in the Paralympic Village was in new high rise condominiums surrounded by water and flower gardens, fountains, sculptures and artistic architecture. The grounds were utterly beautiful. The Olympic Green (where the major athletic venues and social activities were located) was constantly a buzz with activity. Opening and Closing ceremonies were attended by 91,000 people who celebrated the day and the games with over 4000 athletes and 3000 staff members from the 148 countries attending the Paralympic Games. Hundreds of thousands of spectators and volunteers jammed the athletic venues for the events every day of the 11 day event. The Chinese delegation of volunteers were extremely helpful and gracious hosts.

Team USA was proud and excited to play in front of sold out arenas every day. The excitement of the thousands of fans was exhilarating and motivational to the team. The competitions that Team USA faced were tough and most tested their endurance, stamina, determination, and composure. The team was fortunate in the end to win all of their games. Team USA had great depth and all 12 players on the team saw significant playing time throughout the tournament. This flexibility of being able to play multiple line-ups created match-up difficulties

for Team USA's opponents. It also helped keep fresh, strong, and quick players on the court at all times which allowed them to capitalize on their strength...full court defense. The teams from Australia and Germany gave them the closest contests and pushed them to the very last moments of games before they could realize victory. Adding to the pressure of winning was that Team USA needed to combat both of these great teams twice each due to the structure of the bracketing. Nonetheless, Team USA needed to play to win every game regardless of the opponent, and that they did. In the end, the Americans persevered and were victorious....golden that is!

Game Results

USA 42	Germany 38
USA 61	Australia 42
USA 56	Great Britain 31
USA 68	Brazil 38
USA 75	China 31
USA 60	Australia 47 (Semi-Final)
USA 50	Germany 38 (Championship)

Upcoming Events

HOPE Network Takes to the Slopes

On January 26th, HOPE Network will return to Hidden Valley Ski Resort for the 27th Annual Healthsports Ski Classic. In keeping with the tradition, the event will return to its 3-day format, including the annual social event held on Tuesday evening. Another component that will return this year is the vendor fair. This fair will be held on Tuesday, January 27th at the resort and will have vendors from various aspects of living with a disability and adapted sports.

If you have never attended the "Learn to Ski Clinic" it is a great opportunity to explore a potential winter past-time at one of the most accessible ski resorts in Pennsylvania. This clinic is held during the week so that the slopes and lift lines aren't so busy that you have to worry about other skiers. The days are filled with an exciting mixture of entertaining adapted ski veterans and eager to learn novices. Whatever the skill level, this clinic produces fun and excitement, as well as, stories to be told for years to come.

The clinic is instructed by certified individuals who have gone through extensive training, on and off of the slopes, and each one has plenty of experience with our program, as well as, many stories to tell. Three Rivers Adapted Sports and Baltimore Adapted Sports programs provide oversight and guidance to old and new volunteers so that everyone has a great experience.

Interested participants should complete the enclosed registration form and return it to HOPE Network along with payment to reserve your preferred ski dates and times. Space is limited, so respond early.

HOPE is also, currently seeking instructors, volunteers, sponsors, and vendors for this event. For more information contact the Healthsports Office.

Steel City Starz

The Steel City Starz is entering into its 8th season as the only all-women's game in town (for women with disabilities). This year the team has decided to join the Keystone Conference, the local men's conference, in order get some additional playing time to prepare for the national tournament slated for March 2009 in Denver, CO.

This years' roster is still open to any women with a disability interested in playing a competitive sport. The team may add to the roster until the end of January, but has already begun practice and playing in anticipation of the national tournament. Sports wheelchairs are provided for all players.

In addition to team fundraising, the Starz received a grant from WOMEN of Southwestern PA to help support their season.

Starz Season Schedule:

October 24-25, 2008.....Keystone Conference Tournament, Erie, PA
TBD Starz vs. NY Western Wheels.....Rochester, NY
TBD Starz vs. PA Thunder & Lightning.....Slippery Rock University
January 17, 2009RIC Regional Tournament, Chicago, IL
February 14, 2009 Starz vs. Steelwheelers.....Oliver High School, Pittsburgh, PA
March 18-22, 2009..... National Wheelchair Basketball Tournaments, Denver, CO

Wheelchair Softball Team Looking to Compete in 2009

HOPE Network will start practice for a competitive, traveling wheelchair softball team in the Spring of 2009. Anyone with a lower extremity impairment is eligible to play. You do not have to be an everyday manual, wheelchair user, but must use one to play the game. Sports chairs will be provided to those individuals who do not already own one.

The game is played on a smooth, hard surface with a 16” clincher ball. The rules are similar to that of slow-pitch softball with a few minor modifications to the field dimensions. Players are not required to wear gloves, but all players must use an ASA certified aluminum bat. All teams must also have a quadriplegic in their line-up at all times. Teams may also be unisex.

Roster space will be limited and players/coaches will be expected to cover their own travel expenses. A team fundraiser is an option that can be discussed at a team meeting scheduled for March 7th. This meeting will cover travel options and game date selection, so please plan to attend.

Sponsorship opportunities exist for this team, including naming rights. Anyone interested in helping support the wheelchair softball team should contact the Healthsports Office.

Pittsburgh Steelwheelers Wheelchair Basketball 2008-2009 Season Schedule

October 18-19.....Adventist Knights Tournament, Washington DC
October 24-25..... Keystone Conference Tournament @ Erie
November 8-9.....Columbus Tournament, Columbus, OH
December 5-7.....Cleveland Tournament, Cleveland, OH
January 10, 2009.....Pittsburgh @ Detroit, MI
January 17, 2009.....Pittsburgh @ Rochester, NY
February 7, 2009..... Johnstown Tournament, Johnstown, PA

Premier All Sports Raffle - A Major Hit

The Premier All Sports Raffle has quickly become a much sought after ticket in town. Offering fantastic sports prize packages, the raffle is also a significant fund raiser for the Healthsports programs. This extraordinary raffle has a prize package that is outta sight! One winner takes all!!

The 2009 raffle includes:

All expense paid trip for 2 to the NCAA Men’s Basketball Final Four in Detroit, Michigan
(Includes roundtrip airfare, airport limo pickup, 3 nights stay in Hyatt Hotel,
tickets to the semi-final and championship games, \$800 spending money)

- (2) 2009-2010 regular season Steelers home game season tickets
- (2) 2009-2010 regular season Pitt Men's Basketball home game season tickets
- (4) tickets to the 2009 Pitt vs. Notre Dame football game
- (2) tickets to 5 home games for the Penguins 2009-2010 season

Call the HOPE Network office now to purchase tickets!

Past Events

The 18th Annual Hoops Classic

Hope Network's major fund raising event, The Hoops Classic, was held for the 18th consecutive year on Saturday, June 14th. The beautiful Galleria at Pittsburgh Mills in Tarentum has been the site of the event for the past 3 seasons. Once again, a couple hundred teams of basketball enthusiasts participated in the day long event as they vied for bragging rights as Pittsburgh's best blacktop b-ballers. Everyone, from the 8-year olds and up to the 50-something, had a great time. Special event contests, including the ever popular 3-point shoot-out and the action-packed 2-man hot shot, provided lots of entertainment between games and offered very cool prize packages to the top three contestants in each event. Cavanaugh Inc's "Come Ready or Never Start" program provided free basketball skills clinics throughout the day for anyone interested in improving their physical conditioning, mental sharpness, and their game. The event was supported by major sponsors including UPMC Health Plan, Giant Eagle, HealthCare Benefits, AC Dellovade, American Beverage Corporation, Oxford Club, and Blackburns Physicians Pharmacy.

Look for The Hoops Classic to return in June 2009 for another FANtastic extravaganza!!!

16th Annual Chuck Scally Memorial Open for Golfers with Disabilities

On August 11, 2008, 30 golfers with disabilities converged on Fox Run Golf Course in Beaver Falls, PA to claim the championship title. This unique tournament designed for people with disabilities takes on the typical 4-man scramble format, but the outcome is anything but typical.

Eight, predetermined, 4-man teams competed on the challenging 18-hole course to see who would emerge victorious this year. First place went to Jerry Swidzinski, Jack Swidzinski, Herb Cavalier, and Robin McCreary who finished 9 under par. The second place team was made up of Pat Corr, Bob Glorioso, and Tom Guidas finishing 5 under par. And third place was claimed by Howard MuMau, Bob Pilewski, Jim Hoolahan, and Gil Ruffing finishing at 4 under par.

It was a big day for Jack Swidzinski. Not only did he take home a first-place trophy, but he also claimed the longest drive on hole #1 and the closest to the pin on hole #6. Jim Studebaker took the closest to the pin on hole #15 and Tony Sertick has the longest putt on hole #18.

Scally Memorial Open Continued....

Special thanks to **Marc Kowatic of Hanger Orthotics and Prosthetics** for sponsoring the event dinner. Marc has sponsored this meal for many years. Also, thanks to all of the volunteers and golfers who make this event possible each year, the prize donors, hole sponsors, Fox Run Golf Course, and TRAS for co-sponsoring this event with HOPE Network.

HOPE Network Casts a Few Stones

On Saturday, November 15th, the Pittsburgh Curling Club donated 2-hours of ice time to teach individuals with and without disabilities the sport of curling. This is the second time that HOPE Network has partnered with the curling club to get people out on the ice. It was a very small, but intimate group that attended the clinic, therefore allowing each participant to have some on-on-one attention from the members of the curling club, and learn how to cast a few stones.

HOPE Network would like to thank the Pittsburgh Curling Club for all of their time and dedication to getting an adapted curling team started and sparking an interest in people that might have never been considered. A couple of us have even joined the club because of the amount of fun and support this local group is.

The Pittsburgh Curling Club will be conducting several other “Learn to Curl” clinics throughout the remainder of the season. Anyone who is interested should visit their website at www.pittsburghcurlingclub.com, look at the dates for the clinics, and select a one that works best for you. Then, contact Fiona Shearer to get on the schedule for your clinic of interest. The clinics are free of charge, but definitely not free of excitement. We all look forward to seeing you out on the ice-Cheers!

WANTED: Input from Healthsports Participants

Thanks to all of you who answered our survey. We are currently in the process of analyzing all of the data that was received. This survey will allow us to focus on “your” areas of interest when establishing our calendar of events.

This comprehensive survey included areas of interest such as participating in sports and fitness activities to being an observer of sport-related activities. We also wanted to know what barriers were faced when considering participation in any activity and how far you would be willing to travel to participate.

In our continued efforts to provide quality, low-cost programming, we need to hear from you all. Let us know what you would like to see on the next calendar of events. If there is enough interest in the activity and it can be economically provided, we will look into providing it. So, stay tuned for some exciting new activities and opportunities from HOPE Network.

Donations

A significant percentage of HOPE Networks’ operational budget is dependent upon, and supported through, private donations. There are many ways to donate to HOPE Network including :

- \$ monetary donations made directly to the HOPE Network
- \$ in-kind donations (i.e. equipment, services)
- \$ the United Way Contributor’s Choice Program (**Code #968193**)
- \$ the Combined Federal Campaign (**Code #47982**)
- \$ Volunteerism

Any of these methods of support will help to continue all of HOPE Network’s programs. Additionally, they provide great opportunities for you to experience the world of adapted sports. All donations are tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated!

Thank you to recent donors/contributors:

AC Dellovade
American Beverage Corporation

Bender Consulting Services
Blackburns Physicians Pharmacy
Brookside Lumber
Choice Care Physicians
Comcast
Consolidated Communications
CORE Network
Crossgates
Freedom Forge Foundation
Giant Eagle
Grogan Graffam
Grubb & Ellis
Health Care Benefits
Healthsouth Harmarville
Highmark
Keystone PVA
McKeesport Hospital Foundation
Matta Motors
Mills & Henry
Minuteman Press
Optometric Assoc of Pittsburgh
Oxford Athletic Club
Quickie
ReMed Recovery Care Centers
Respironics
Riverside Care Center
Roth Carpet
St. Mary School
The Second Mile Foundation
Union Orthotics & Prosthetics
University of Pittsburgh
UPMC Health Plan
Watson Institute
Women of SW PA

Individuals:

William and Adele Abbott
Art Borland
David Frankovich
Patty and Jay Irrgang
Kevin Keane
Mark Kowatic
Clark Manny
Rose Marie Natoli
Antoinette Pilarski
Donna Polito
Donna Van Kirk
Richard A Zappala Family Foundation

Calendar of Events 2009

Fitness & Conditioning.....	every M, W, F 10AM – 1PM
Aerobics (call in advance).....	every Wednesday @ 12:15PM
CLO New Horizons.....	On-going
Juniors' Saturday Sports Spectaculars...(held at The Children's Institute).....	Monthly
27th Annual Healthsports Ski Classic (Hidden Valley).....	January 26-28
Wheelchair Basketball National Championships (all Divisions), Denver, CO.....	March 15-22
Wheelchair Softball.....	every Saturday at 1PM starting April 4th
Water Skiing.....	June-September
Cycling.....	April-September
Golf Clinics.....	April
Golf Outings (monthly).....	May-October
Pittsburgh Marathon.....	May
19th Annual Hoops Classic.....	June 6
Paintball Tournament.....	June
Tennis Clinic.....	July
Scally Golf Tournament.....	August
Steel City Starz (women's basketball).....	Sept-March
Pittsburgh Steelwheelers (men's basketball).....	Sept-March
Pittsburgh Steelwheelers (quad rugby).....	Sept-March
Curling.....	Sept-March
Wii Tournament.....	TBA
Social Sports Gatherings (Pirates, Passion, Steelers, etc).....	TBA
Preparation for Big Game Hunting.....	TBA

TBA = To Be Announced

**Check out the new HOPE Network website for information and updates on scheduled events at
www.hopenetwork-pa.org.**

HOPE Network is always looking for more people to become involved with our various programs. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, instructor, and/ or participant, give us a call TODAY!!!

For information and to register for events, call 412-826-2703