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Patrick Anderson: Wheelchair Basketball Star

By Stephen Michael Kerr

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Winning one Paralympic gold medal is challenging enough. Winning two in consecutive Paralympics is even more difficult. But that's exactly what Patrick Anderson and his Canadian Wheelchair Basketball team did, whipping Australia, 70–53 in the finals Sept. 28 to capture their second gold in as many Paralympics.

Regarded as one of the best players in the world by his peers and the media, Anderson helped Canada completely dominate the Australians from start to finish. Canada, winners of eight straight, led 21–14 after the first quarter, then took a 37–26 lead into the locker room at halftime and never looked back.

Anderson, named Most Valuable Player of the tournament, poured in 13 points and grabbed 13 rebounds in the finals. He also showed his crisp passing ability by dishing out seven assists. Teammate and close friend Joey Johnson led all scorers with 15 points.

"It is a strange feeling, a strange emotion," Anderson says of winning the gold. "It is like being inside a bubble. We needed to win, and we did."

As a kid, Wheelchair Basketball was the last thing on Anderson's mind. Born Aug. 22, 1979 in Edmonton, Alberta, he took up the sport many able-bodied kids in his country played: ice hockey. He was enjoying the rewards of the sport, and the joys of being a kid.

But all that abruptly changed. One day, when Anderson was nine, he was struck by a drunk driver at a picnic, and became paralyzed for life.

Instead of allowing the accident to permanently end his physically active lifestyle, Anderson showed the same courage and tenacity he displays on the court. Once he became involved in Wheelchair Basketball, he was hooked.

"I started playing, and I liked it," he says simply.

His 15-year career as a player is impressive. Besides his two Paralympic gold medals, Anderson took Most Valuable Player honors and a gold in both the 1997 and 2001 Junior World Championships, a bronze in the 1998 Gold Cup World Championships, and has won a combined eight championships with Ontario and Twin City. He has also played in Brisbane, and currently plays for a team in Germany.

Anderson downplays his role during the tournament, preferring to give credit to his teammates.

"What we did in Athens is a result of team effort," he insists. "All players worked very hard to get this result."

When he isn't dominating on the basketball court, Anderson enjoys playing music. "I very much like singing and playing the guitar," he says. "I have made some discussions (about a music career), but nothing is certain yet. We'll see in the future."

As to that future, Anderson plans to spend some time with his family in Canada before returning to play in Germany. Though he is thrilled to have won two Paralympic medals, he has an even bigger agenda: promoting Wheelchair Basketball.

"Our goal as a team was to play well," he says. "We wanted people to see our success, realize what Wheelchair Basketball is all about and take it to the next level, hoping that other teams will follow. "I think we did that here, and I am proud of it."

For complete coverage of the 2004 Paralympic Games, visit:
<http://www.athens2004.com/en/>

Stephen Michael Kerr is the publisher of Adaptive Sports & Recreation, a free ezine devoted to sports for people with disabilities. To read previous issues, visit:<http://archives.zinester.com/41809>

The Truth About Disneyland And Disabilities

By Chris Elliott

Today, even disabled people can enjoy the wonder of Disneyland! If you are on crutches, you should ponder renting a Disneyland Scooter to get about the estate. The lease fee is \$35 per day, with a \$20 deposit. A valid driver's license is important, and you should be eighteen years old or older.

You can also choose to lease a wheelchair, which is not electronic. The rental fee for a wheelchair is \$8 per day, with a \$20 deposit. You do not need to lease your wheelchair or Scooter from Disneyland. You can choose to rent the apparatus from a undisclosed company, and have the wheelchair or scooter delivered to your hotel room. You may discover that it is cheaper to rent from a private company, as contrary to renting from Disneyland.

Cast members and assistance personnel will be happy to help with Visitor wheelchair transfers, and if you should part with a wheelchair or scooter that you've rented from Disneyland, wholly demonstrate the ticket for the wheelchair or scooter, and Disneyland will happily supply you with another one. Even so, if you lose a wheelchair or scooter that was rented from an outside company, Disneyland will not be capable to help you replace it, and you may have to pay the rental company the full price of the chair. This is something to consider when you are attempting to decide whether to rent from Disneyland or a private company.

All of the restaurants and shops are wheelchair reachable, as are the entertainment areas. When it comes to wheelchairs, your problem will be accessing some of the rides. Various rides are not suitable for individuals who are in wheelchairs, while others are perfectly apt. For example, you will not be able to appreciate Donald's Boat, Sailing Ship, or Tarzan's Tree house.

However, there are innumerable attractions that you can appreciate, such as The Disney Gallery, Disneyland Monorail, the Disneyland Railroad, the Tiki Room, The Gold Horseshoe, It's A Small World, Mark Twain Riverboat, and Tom Sawyer Island. Some attractions will require you to be transferred from your wheelchair, such as Alice in Wonderland, Indiana Jones, and the King Arthur Carrousel.

Whether or not you can enjoy a ride in your wheelchair, or you must be transferred from your wheelchair to the ride, you can in actuality enjoy most of the rides at Disneyland. Do not allow the fact that you can't walk about the park keep you from planning a Disneyland Vacation. Now there is no more excuse not to go have fun at Disneyland!

Chris Elliott manages

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and

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