



30th National Veterans Wheelchair Games

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**First Timers  
First Impressions**

# First Timers

*Mile High about the Games*

by Michelle Spivak, public affairs officer, Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center

Veterans new to the Games are praising the event for its opportunities for athleticism, new friends, and the national exposure it gives Veterans in wheelchairs.



Jason LaFitte from Laurel, Miss.

John "Trey" LaFitte is a 27-year-old Marine Corps Veteran from Laurel, Miss. "I've always played sports and now that I'm in a chair, I'm not going to let it stop me from having fun," said LaFitte, an Iraq War Veteran. He is competing in 9-ball, table tennis and air guns, but handcycling and weightlifting are his true loves. Back at the VA Medical Center in Jackson, Miss., Jeffery Bennett, OEF/OIF patient representative, is cheering on LaFitte. "Ben-

nett was at my bedside just a few days after I was hurt and has been there ever since. He's a great friend," LaFitte said. He wants Veterans using wheelchairs to know that "we can still do 99.9 percent of what we did before. You need to participate to know you're still with it."

"I've been working seven days a week to get in shape," says Rene Peterson, a Desert Storm Veteran. The 47-year-old from Harrisonville, Mo., has been using a wheelchair since 2006. When he built up his strength, he decided to take on the challenge of the Games. "One of my life goals is to show people there are many things to do other than sitting at home and wasting away," said Peterson. He travels with a trailer promoting the Wheelchair Games, PVA, and his "never give up" philosophy.

Originally from Minnesota, Nikki Smith has made Denver her home for the last 12 years. Smith likes the lifestyle in the Mile High City because it is very easy to get around. "I decided this was the year to try out the Games, since they're right here in Denver," she said. An Air Force Veteran, Smith was in hospital administration so she appreciates the many employees and volunteers at the Games. Smith is another first-timer who says the best part of the Games is the camaraderie with fellow Veterans.

"I never came to the Games before because I was concerned about going public. I had a problem with the stigma of being in a wheelchair," said Leo Kelly of Mentor on the Lake, Ohio. "Seeing all of these other Veterans helps me get out and get going." Army Veteran Kelly served in Desert Storm in 1991. Kelly decided to take on as many sports at the Games as he can, including power-chair 200, motorized wheelchair rally, air guns and slalom.



Rene Peterson from Harrisonville, Mo.

Outgoing and hard-working Christie Hill-Smith is the Membership Program Manager for PVA's mid-south chapter. Hill-Smith, an enthusiastic advocate for persons with disabilities, has overcome many hurdles to be at the Games. Injured in Iraq in 2003, she is competing in 9-ball and swimming. "I'd like more communication about these Games," she said. "Veterans and civilians need to know so we get more people participating."

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**ATTENTION CAREGIVERS:** In appreciation for all that you do, a raffle is being held to award free massages on July 7. The massages will be provided by a registered and licensed massage therapist (and local VA employee). To enter, fill out an entry form at the hospitality tables in the Hyatt Hotel lobby or the Convention Center (Lobby B—Welton Street entrance). The drawing will be held at 6 p.m. today and winners will be notified this evening. All massages will be given at the Hyatt Hotel July 7.

# British Vet Calls Games a Light for Wheelchair Veterans

by Michelle Spivak, public affairs officer, Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center

Emma Burns is the youngest of the ten-member British team at the Games this year. The Brits have been coming to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games since 1987 and Burns says they are always welcomed warmly by the U.S. athletes. "They love to see us and there's nothing to compare to it in Britain," Burns, a Veteran of the Royal Navy, explains.

"I come for the camaraderie and especially try to catch first-timers," Burns says. "You know you go through a lot of grieving when this happens to you. But there is a light at the end of the tunnel, like these Games." The British team ranges from Veterans in their seventies to 29-year-



Emma Burns from Great Britain

old Burns, who has an ambitious schedule, competing in weightlifting, shot-put, javelin, discus and exhibition kayaking this year. "It's all about sportsmanship. The Games are always competitive but not in a nasty way. At the end of the day, we're all friends."

During the Opening Ceremonies Sunday, VA Secretary Erik Shinseki remarked about the British participation at the Games, acknowledging the team in his remarks. "As we celebrate the 234th anniversary of our independence, we are happy to welcome back our British friends to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games," he said. "Great Britain is, and has long been, our strongest ally."



(Left) The British team line up for the parade of athletes during Opening Ceremonies.

As much as possible, avoid overexposure in the mid-day sun. Sunburn decreases your body's natural ability to cool down. Due to the altitude here in Denver, the air is thinner and results in a more intense sun. People tend to burn easily at this higher altitude. The sun is strongest from about 11a.m. until 2 or 3 p.m., and this is when you are most likely to get burned. When you are out in the sun, wear sunscreen with an SPF rating of 30 or more that offers both UVA and UVB protection and wear light colored clothing. Try to stay in the shade as much as possible. As always, be sure to drink lots of water, especially in hot temperatures. Best of luck in your events!

Dr. Dan

**Dr Dan's Decree**

**Beating the Heat!**

With sun at its hottest in July, the temperature is rising and exercising in the heat under the hot sun puts extra stress on your body. Don't overexert yourself too quickly and give your body time to get used to the heat and humidity. This gradual increase helps you adapt to the conditions. You are an athlete, so make sure you dress like one. Wear smart fabrics or lightweight, loose fitting clothes, and keep drinking lots of water.

# Hot Shots

Photos from the  
2010 National Veterans  
Wheelchair Games





## NVWG Schedule

TUESDAY, JULY 6

8 a.m.	Bowling, Ramp Air Guns Softball, Games 1 & 2	Brunswick Zone Hyatt Capital Ballroom CCC, Exhibit Hall A
8:30 - 10:30 a.m.	Weightlifting Weigh-In	CCC
9 a.m.	Trapshooting Kayaking	Family Shooting Center Fishback Landing Park
9:30 a.m.	Softball, Games 3 & 4	CCC, Exhibit Hall A
10 a.m.	Air Guns	Hyatt Capital Ballroom
11 a.m.	Softball, Games 5 & 6	CCC, Exhibit Hall A
12:30 p.m.	Softball, Games 7 & 8	CCC, Exhibit Hall A
1 p.m.	Air Guns Trapshooting Bowling, 1 A, B, C, Stick & Handleball Kayaking	Hyatt Capitol Ballroom Family Shooting Center Brunswick Zone Fishback Landing Park
2 p.m.	Softball, Games 9 & 10	CCC, Exhibit Hall A
3 p.m.	Air Guns	Hyatt Capitol Ballroom
3:30 p.m.	Softball, Championship & Consolation Games	CCC, Exhibit Hall A
6:30 p.m.	Quad Rugby, Game 3 Power Soccer, Games 3 & 4 Slalom, Class 2 & 3 Table Tennis, Class 4, 5 & Standing Air Guns	CCC, Exhibit Hall C CCC, Exhibit Hall C CCC, Exhibit Hall B CCC, Exhibit Hall B Hyatt Capitol Ballroom

### Details, details, details...

**Hospitality:** Hospitality tables (located in the Hyatt Regency Hotel near the Altitude restaurant and in the CCC B Lobby at the Welton Street entrance) are staffed daily from 6 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Hospitality staff are wearing straw cowboy hats with a colorful bandana (or a military uniform).

**Lost and Found:** Contact the Command Center, Convention Center Room 703, if you have lost (or found) something.

**Medical Assistance:** Hyatt Regency Hotel, Room 519 and in the C Mezzanine at the Convention Center. Normal hours are from 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. daily. For non-emergent medical attention after 11 p.m., please call the hotel operator. Medical staff are also available at each event, identified by their red t-shirt with a white medical cross on the back.

**Durable Medical Equipment:** Mineral Hall D/E at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

**Memorabilia items:** Available throughout the week near the Awards table in Lobby C of the Convention Center. Stop by to pick up your favorite mementos of this great week!

**Internet Café:** Ten workstations are available at the Internet Café, located in B Lobby. Stop by to check your e-mail, Facebook or Games results! The Internet Café is open daily from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Special thanks to HP for making this service possible.

**Main Wheelchair Repair Shop:** Hyatt Regency Mineral B, C from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., extended when necessary.

**Invacare Minor Repair:** Service for minor repairs will be available at the Convention Center venues and at all off-site venues Monday, July 5 through Friday, July 9. They operate

7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

**Specialty (Sport Chair) Chair Corral:** Store your specialty chair in the Chair Corral in Exhibit Hall C. You may claim your chair one hour before your event(s).

**Emergency Repair:** Service will be available by calling (720) 939-6633 or (303) 359-6244.

**Transportation:** Buses run daily from 5:15 a.m. - 10 p.m. Buses to off-site venues will be loaded at the Transportation Hub outside of the Convention Center, B Lobby. Please check your specialty chair into the chair corral to be transported to your events. **Buses depart every 5 - 10 minutes.**

<b>Bowling</b> (a.m. session)	start loading at 5:45 a.m.
<b>Bowling</b> (p.m. session)	start loading 10:45 a.m.
<b>Trapshooting</b> (a.m. session)	start loading at 6:45 a.m.
<b>Trapshooting</b> (p.m. session)	start loading at 7:45 a.m.
<b>Kayaking</b> (a.m. session)	start loading at 8:15 a.m.
<b>Kayaking</b> (p.m. session)	starting loading at 12:15 p.m.

**Awards:** Immediate Awards will be given two ways. Most will be awarded in the Immediate Awards area located between Halls B and C. Team events, Slalom Super G and handcycling will be awarded at those event locations.

Delayed Awards will be given in Lower Lobby C, next to the memorabilia area and around the corner from the food court.

#### Award Presentations for July 6

10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.	Delayed
3:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Immediate
7:30 - 11:30 p.m.	Immediate