



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Blinded Military Members and Veterans Invited to USABA National Sports Festival;
Blind Athletes Also Set To Compete In Inaugural State Games of the West in Seven Sports

(Colorado Springs, Colo.) – The United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA), in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Blind Rehabilitation Service, the Blinded Veterans Association and the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund is extending an invitation for blind and visually impaired service members and veterans to participate in the USABA National Sports Festival to be held in Colorado Springs, Colorado, July 22-28, 2008.

In order to meet the growing rehabilitation needs of our military members and veterans who incurred vision loss as a result of military service, USABA will provide sports clinics with instruction from Paralympic athletes and USABA National coaches in the sports of judo, wrestling, track & field, swimming, powerlifting, tandem cycling and goalball (a team sport specially designed for blind and visually impaired athletes).

“In alignment with USABA’s mission to enhance the lives of people who are blind and visually impaired through sport and physical activity, USABA is excited and honored to provide our wounded service members and veterans, the opportunity to experience how sport can lead to a more active lifestyle despite vision loss.”, said USABA Executive Director Mark Lucas. “USABA is proud to expose these men and women to new ways for them to maintain an active lifestyle while participating in recreation, sports and competitive sport.” said Lucas.

In addition to the 20-25 military members and veterans expected to attend the USABA National Sports Festival, an additional 50-60 additional blind and visually impaired athletes from across the nation are also expected attend. Coaches and Paralympic athletes will also instruct participants on how to adapt each sport for a blind or visually impaired athlete and how to successfully advocate and integrate each athlete into local community-based sports programs.

The Festival, held at Colorado College, July 22-25, will culminate with blind and visually impaired athletes integrating and competing in the Inaugural 2008 State Games of the West, hosted by the Colorado Springs Sports Corporation, July 24-27. The State Games of the West features more than 8,000 (sighted) athletes from 13 Western states, competing in 31 sports. USABA will compete in these Games alongside their USABA peers and sighted athletes in judo, wrestling, track & field, 5k run, swimming, powerlifting and tandem cycling.

For more information on the USABA National Sports Festival and to receive a registration packet call Mark Lucas at (719) 630-0422 or go to www.usaba.org.

Information on the 2008 State Games of the West is available at: www.stategamesofthewest.org

About USABA: *Since its founding in 1976, USABA, a community-based organization of the United States Olympic Committee, has reached thousands of blind individuals. The organization has emerged as more than just a world-class trainer of blind athletes, it has become a champion of the abilities of Americans who are legally blind. USABA's Mission: to enhance the lives of blind and visually impaired people by providing the opportunity for participation in sports and physical activity.* For more information, go to www.usaba.org

About BVA: *Since its founding in 1945, BVA, the only congressionally chartered organization dedicated to the issues of blinded veterans has advocated for blinded veteran benefits and quality of life improvements. The BVA Mission is: To promote the welfare of blinded veterans so that, notwithstanding their disabilities, they may take their rightful place in the community and work with their fellow citizens toward the creation of a peaceful world. To preserve and strengthen a spirit of fellowship among blinded veterans so that they may give mutual aid and assistance to one another.* For more information, go to <http://www.bva.org>

About Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund: *Established in May 2004, the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund is a nonprofit 501 (c) 3 organization that has provided over 7,500 grants totaling over \$18.5 million in assistance to our Nation's wounded heroes and families.* For more information, go to <http://www.semperfifund.org/>