



Athlete Profile (National)

Jimmy May – Perfect Attendance at the Games!

In the 26th year of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, Jimmy May, a disabled U.S. Army veteran from Midlothian, Va., is competing in his 26th annual event. "It's a record that can never be broken," he says with pride. "There may be someone who comes along and does 25 or 30 years, but not from the very first year!" May was recognized during the 25th annual Games last year for his perfect attendance. "I heard about the Games and supported them during that first year and I have attended every one of them since." He is one of only two veterans still competing in the national rehabilitation program who can lay claim to that record.

For May, it's not just the competition at the Games but the social interaction and the camaraderie that makes all the difference. "After attending for 25 years, I have two or three hundred friends that I always see there," he says. I don't know them all by name, but I see them at the Games."

A combat-wounded veteran of Vietnam, May, 56, was injured when he was stuck in the back with a homemade mortar shell. A paraplegic, he currently receives care at the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Va., host of the very first Wheelchair Games back in 1981. May was 30 years old at the time. "Now, I just try to keep up (with the younger athletes) as best as I can!" This year, May is signed up to compete in table tennis, bowling, softball and basketball, but he has tried many of the other events over the years as well.

There are many factors that keep Jimmy May coming back to the Games each year. "I love to compete and I love to win," he says, citing basketball and softball as his two favorite events. While he has collected more than 90 winning medals from his quarter of a century competing, they are not the driving force for May's flawless attendance. Many of his fondest memories over the past 25 years have centered on the people he's met and the places he's been.

Each year, May does his best to pass along to the newcomers what he's learned over the years, encouraging the first-timers to get involved. "Just roll over and introduce yourself," he tells them. "Enjoy the friendship, the camaraderie and being around other people just like you."

"The National Veterans Wheelchair Games have been a big part of my life since my injury. I would encourage every veteran to get involved. I play many sports and have won many medals, but the most important thing is just being able to be with my veteran friends."