

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Athlete Profile

Robert Delaney – Brings Competitive Spirit to the Games

Robert Delaney is a 22-year-old U.S. military veteran participating in his first National Veterans Wheelchair Games this July in Anchorage, Alaska. At the event, he will compete in his favorite wheelchair sport – the slalom. The event tests competitors' skill, strength and speed around a challenging obstacle course and relies heavily on wheelchair handling skills. In some ways, it mirrors the obstacles many wheelchair users face in everyday life. According to Delaney, he has "mad wheelchair skills," that should serve him well in this particular competition. At the Games, he will also compete in air guns and two swimming events. "I am a very competitive person and sports have always been a big part of my life," he said.

Delaney has only been in a wheelchair since February 2006, after an all-terrain vehicle accident on December 4, 2005, left him a paraplegic. A combat veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Delaney served in the Persian Gulf as a 2nd class officer in the Navy before he was injured. Because of the recent nature of his spinal cord injury, Delaney has not gone through rigorous training in his wheelchair, but is relying instead on his competitiveness and previous experience with sports for success in the Alaska Games. A resident of Chula Vista, California, he receives continuing medical care and rehabilitation at the VA San Diego Healthcare System. It was his recreation therapist there who told him about the Wheelchair Games and suggested he sign up to compete.

In his youth, before he joined the Navy, Delaney enjoyed playing baseball, football and soccer. As far as his events at the Wheelchair Games, he said, "I'm looking forward to competing and kicking some butt!"

This is Delaney's first trip to Alaska, and along with competing he looks forward to seeing the sights and enjoying his fellow veterans' companionship and camaraderie. "I am totally stoked about going to Alaska, and know it will be an incredible experience," he said. While there, Delaney is also interested in seeing how the other veterans deal with their injuries and have adapted their lives to new situations. He hopes that learning from them will give him insight into his own new lifestyle when he returns home.