



## **Athlete Profile (National)**

### **Johnnie L. Williams – Continuing the Tradition**

Johnnie L. Williams entered the U.S. Army on June 13, 2001. Following basic training at Fort Benning, Georgia, Williams was stationed at Fort Gordon, also in Georgia, where he received training in satellite communications. Completing that training as a Private First Class (E-3), Williams, 23, was sent to Germany for three months. In February 2003, he was deployed to Iraq.

Johnnie Williams served in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. On May 5, 2003, he was injured when the Humvee he was driving in a convoy was sideswiped by what is believed to have been a civilian-operated vehicle. He lost control of the vehicle and, in the accident that resulted, sustained a spinal cord injury. It resulted in paraplegia, and Williams was retired from the Army at the rank of Sergeant (E-5) with an honorable discharge.

A native of Tampa, Florida, he underwent rehabilitation at the spinal cord injury center at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Tampa.

Injured only a little more than a year, Williams was busy preparing to compete in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in St. Louis last year. "Being an athlete before my injury, I wanted to continue that tradition," Williams said. "I have been looking forward to coming home from the Games with some medals—hopefully gold—in weightlifting." Participating in the novice division at the 2004 Games in St. Louis, the last time Williams competed, he brought home three gold medals in the weightlifting, discus and shot-put events, and a silver in javelin.

Johnnie Williams is determined to stay active and maintain his strong competitive spirit. No longer a novice, watch this experienced wheelchair athlete compete in Games at the 26<sup>th</sup> annual event in Anchorage, July 3-8, 2006.