

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Athlete Profile (National)

Charles Allen – More give than take

Charles Allen, a 37-year-old Army veteran from Cedar Hill, Texas, believes that participating in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games is all about sharing. “Being at the Games is not just about me,” Allen says. “It’s about sharing this journey with my daughter and passing on what I’ve learned to the newcomers.”

The former infantryman was injured at age 21 in a training accident at Fort Hood while serving with the cavalry scouts. Like many who experience a life-changing accident, Allen knew he needed to rely upon the experience of others to help get him through. “Life is not over because I am injured,” he said. “It might not be the life I had planned, but it was a new beginning, like being reborn.”

Accepting and learning to live with his disability has been a journey for Allen, one filled with both physical and mental challenges. Allen’s wife Julie and 16-year-old daughter Charlesha, have traveled with him on this tumultuous journey. “My daughter has watched me gain confidence and self-esteem,” Allen explained. Charlesha, who was only two years old when Allen was injured, has often accompanied her father to the Wheelchair Games, where Allen excels on the basketball courts and the other sports venues.

“The physical challenges of being in a wheelchair are tough enough, but I found the mental challenges particularly difficult to handle,” Allen said. He now considers himself to be a “veteran” of the Wheelchair Games and believes it is his obligation to pass on what he has learned from the challenges he has faced. “The older guys taught me when I was new,” he said. “Now, it’s time for me to help steer someone else in the right direction.”

Allen was introduced to wheelchair basketball while still undergoing rehabilitation at the VA medical center in Dallas. “Playing basketball makes me forget about the chair,” he said. “I get so focused on winning the game, I forget all about any problems.” His hard work, dedication and training paid off five years ago when he was accepted as a member of the Dallas Wheelchair Mavericks. In 2007, the Mavericks won their seventh National Wheelchair Basketball Association championship.

Whether he’s with his Maverick teammates, his family or fellow veterans at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games each year, you can count on Charles Allen to share the benefits of his experience. At the Games, he moves with ease on the courts and he shares his motivation with newcomers to the Games. “When I talk to the new guys, I tell them to start with the basics. To survive, you have to stay active. It takes time, so be patient and don’t give up.”

In 2006, Charles Allen was chosen as the annual event’s Spirit of the Games Award recipient, the highest honor bestowed upon one athlete each year for demonstrating athletic excellence, sportsmanship and strength of character.

