



## **Athletic Profile (National)**

### **Alan (Doc) Babin Eyes the Gold in Alaska**

There's no stopping Alan (Doc) Babin now.

One of the first soldiers injured in Iraq, the 25-year-old U.S. Army veteran has come a long way since being seriously wounded on March 31, 2003. After 70 surgeries and numerous hospital stays, he is now preparing to compete in the 2006 National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Anchorage, Alaska.

You can see the competitiveness in his eyes as he talks about the Games, saying "I wish they were tomorrow!" At last year's event, Babin's first, he won the silver medal in the motorized wheelchair rally and placed fourth in bowling in his category, which is based on each athlete's level of injury to ensure fair competition. This year, he vows to "bring home the Gold." And the motto he's taking to this year's Games? "Believe in yourself."

That is what has kept the Round Rock, Texas native going as he struggles to learn to do the simple things all over again. An Army medic with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, Babin had come to the aid of a fellow soldier who had been shot in the head. While attending to the wounded soldier, Babin was hit several times by small arms fire that tore through his abdomen, damaging about 90 percent of his stomach.

While recuperating at Walter Reed Army Medical Center he suffered meningitis and a stroke that left him paralyzed. At the Wheelchair Games, he will compete in the quadriplegic category. He is signed up for the bowling, shot-put, weightlifting and quad rugby events in Alaska.

Despite the setbacks, Babin remains determined to one day live a normal and healthy life. Earlier this year he took steps toward that goal by participating in the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Snowmass Village, Colo. It was at this event that he skied alongside his father, Al, Sr. who said that skiing beside his son was "one of the highlights of my life." With the help of his mother, Rosie, Babin remains committed to overcoming the many obstacles that he is now facing.

The Games help him do that. "Having the National Veterans Wheelchair Games to look forward to helps keep me motivated to keep training," Babin said. "I have looked forward to seeing many of the veterans I met at last year's Games. I grew up playing baseball, soccer and taking martial arts classes. I hope to be able to participate in those sports again and to train for track events and quad rugby in the next year."

"Never, never, never give up," he says.