



Athlete Profile (National)

Mike Vanderveen – Proud to be an American!

Mike Vanderveen has enjoyed competitive sports for years, but he is a first-timer at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. In July, he heads to Anchorage, Alaska to compete in the 26th annual Games. Vanderveen, a 56-year-old Marine Corps veteran from Dayton, Ohio, says, “It’s an honor and privilege to compete in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. I’m excited to be going and will try my utmost to bring pride and honor to my home town of Dayton and the Buckeye State. My anticipation level is off the charts!”

A combat-wounded infantryman who served in Vietnam, Vanderveen was injured when he stepped on a mine box, which is an orange crate with a layer of plastic explosives and nails, glass and similar materials, while his unit was under attack. The injuries required both of his legs to be amputated below the knee.

Without regard to the personal sacrifices he made, Vanderveen has great pride in his fellow veterans and this nation. “Everyone needs to do what they can to support our veterans who have disabilities and are still athletes, and understand that we are competing for all mankind,” he said. “We are proud to have served our great country. God Bless the U.S.A.!”

Despite his injuries, Vanderveen has played wheelchair basketball on a local team for 11 years and wheelchair softball for three. Now, he’s up for the challenge of competing with more than 500 other veterans at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. In Anchorage, Vanderveen has signed up to compete in basketball, bowling, air guns, table tennis and softball. This marks his first time competing in wheelchair basketball since he injured his back in 1997 in a wheelchair basketball game.

Vanderveen first heard about the Games when they were held in Dayton in 1992, but was unable to attend because of scheduling conflicts with his local basketball team. He read about the Games in *Sports and Spokes* magazine and *Paraplegia News*, and decided it was time to enter the competition this year. “I just want to do well in my events and contribute to the team,” he said.