



Athlete Profile (National)

Angel Nieves – It Pays to Play!

Angel Nieves, of Bayamon, Puerto Rico, is a 50-year-old combat-wounded veteran of Vietnam. Serving in the U.S. Army, he worked in both the infantry and communications operations. During his service in Vietnam, the Puerto Rico native was injured when a truck in which he was traveling wrecked, injuring all of the soldiers in the vehicle. Nieves was in a coma for three days, and sustained significant injuries to his arm and back that resulted in spinal cord damage.

In July, Nieves will make the long trip to Anchorage, Alaska, to compete in the 26th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, marking his tenth time competing in the annual event. "Attending the National Veterans Wheelchair Games is a great experience because we are able to meet so many different people from across the United States and Great Britain," said Nieves, who is attending with 11 other wheelchair athletes on the Puerto Rico team.

Nieves will compete this year in the bowling, table tennis and field events (which include discus, shot-put and javelin), in the open division, class IV (paraplegic) category. Nieves, who speaks primarily in Spanish, says, "Seeing veterans achieving their personal goals, working together and enjoying each others' company brings me much happiness. Events such as this give my attitude a huge boost. Participating in the Wheelchair Games gives me so much self-confidence and pride."

Returning from the Games with three silver and one bronze medal the past two years, this athlete, like many others, enjoys not only the competition but also the great camaraderie that the National Veterans Wheelchair Games always seem to inspire. "I see great courage in all of the other athletes at the Games," he says. "Many of the other veterans have disabilities that are worse than my own but they give 120 percent of themselves when they compete. That is awesome."