

ParaSport[®]

MAGAZINE

FALL/WINTER 2024



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ONTARIO

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WELCOME

Community. Connectivity. Continuity.

Every year, December 3rd is designated International Day of Persons with Disabilities. As one would expect, this is a significant day in the calendar for ParaSport® Ontario and our members.

Social media and various media outlets take the opportunity to promote disability diversity, inclusion and accessibility, be it in adapted sport and recreation, everyday community life, or the workplace. This is all positive and necessary for inclusion to become a standard of practice and commonplace in everyone's minds.

The key messages on this day and what it signifies are needed, but to have a true and lasting impact they need to remain ingrained in everything that we do each day... not just living in our minds for one day a year.

Specifically, for ParaSport® Ontario, this means for sport organizations, policy makers, and builders, to always include people with disabilities in planning and decision-making to ensure that initiatives are accounting for the need to remove barriers to access and participation across a variety of domains. When a community has increased knowledge and understanding about disability inclusion, the confidence to create accessible programs follows. When people with disabilities are included in decision-making, programs are created to meet the true needs and gaps in the system.

By co-creating and meeting the needs of people with disabilities, sustainability and continuity in programming is reinforced over time. When integrated with able-bodied programming, instead of "one and done" programs or adapted programs that fade out over time with lack of support and funding, true inclusion is achieved.

We have seen this succeed firsthand in limited communities across Ontario, most recently in the Niagara Region, where new adapted programs can be created with all stakeholders at the table. Disability education clearly changed mindsets for people of all ages and abilities.

As we look forward to 2024, we hope for the same level of true disability inclusion and integration in more communities across the province. I have seen this in recent conversations with more and more communities and organizations looking to build more adapted programs and accessible facilities. By advocating for embracing inclusion in beginning planning stages and incorporating diversity and lived-experience in key decision-making, ParaSport Ontario will continue to be present across the sector, helping connect people and facilitate discussions to ensure as many gaps are met as possible and sustainable change is achieved for all.

James Murphy
Executive Director, ParaSport® Ontario



ParaSport® MAGAZINE

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ParaSport® Magazine

The Official Publication of ParaSport® Ontario

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Starr Hansen, SJ Design Studio

Advertising Sales – ProMedia Communications

ParaSport® Magazine is published two times a year by DT Publishing Group, Inc. for ParaSport® Ontario (PO). PO accepts no responsibility for injuries, damages or losses arising out of the use or misuse of ideas, opinions, activities or products contained in this publication. Where appropriate, professional advice should be sought. All material submitted to the magazine becomes the property of ParaSport Magazine.

Canadian Postmaster: Please send address changes to ParaSport Ontario, 3701 Danforth Avenue, Toronto, ON M1N 2G2.

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ParaSport Ontario acknowledges the financial support from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) for ParaSport Magazine. MTCS is committed to inclusion and accessibility.



Publications Mail Registration #10293
Canadian Mail Agreement #40069170
Printed in Canada.

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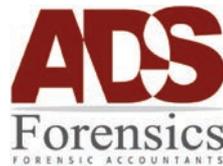
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ONTARIO ATHLETES Carry Flags for Canada in Chile

Para-cyclist Shelley Gautier (Niagara Falls, Ont.) and wheelchair tennis player Rob Shaw (North Bay, Ont.) led Canada into the Santiago 2023 Parapan Am Games as the team's Opening Ceremony flag bearers.

An 18-time world champion dating back to 2009, Gautier continues to be one of the best para-cyclists in the world in the road race and time trial events. Santiago 2023 was her third Parapan Am Games, after Guadalajara 2011 and Toronto 2015. A two-time Parapan Am silver medalist, the 55-year-old is also a three-time Paralympian (2012, 2016, 2020) with a bronze medal from Rio 2016.

Shaw has been Canada's leading wheelchair tennis player for more than half a decade. He arrived in Santiago as the defending Parapan Am gold medallist, taking home the title at the Lima Games four years ago. The 33-year-old, who now lives in Kelowna, B.C., was the first Canadian tennis player – standing or wheelchair – to win a medal in singles at a multi-sport Games. He's won 22 International Tennis Federation (ITF) singles and 22 ITF doubles titles, and made his Paralympic Games debut at Tokyo 2020. "It's one of the greatest honours an athlete can be given and something you never think will happen to you," said Shaw about being a flagbearer.



Photo courtesy of Canadian Paralympic Committee.

Photo courtesy of Canadian Paralympic Committee.



SANTIAGO 2023 Parapan American Games

A Canadian Team 140 athletes strong represented the Maple Leaf in Santiago, Chile, at the 2023 Parapan Am Games in November. Fifty-four of those athletes are from Ontario.



Santiago
2023
Juegos PanAm | ParapanAm

Canada participated in 14 of the 17 sports on the program in Santiago: boccia (13 athletes including four competition partners), CP Football (14), goalball (12), Para archery (1), Para athletics (18), Para badminton (9), Para cycling (8), Para judo (2), Para swimming (14), Para table tennis (5), Para shooting (2), wheelchair basketball (24), wheelchair rugby (12), and wheelchair tennis (6).

“Through the performances of our athletes, we celebrated the power of sport and the transformative impact of inclusion – with podiums, personal bests, individual triumphs, and incredible stories,” said Karolina Wisniewska, co-chef de mission of the Canadian Parapan Am Team. “Santiago provided so much compelling competition for athletes pursuing a spot at the Paralympic Games or those getting their first taste of major international competition,” added Josh Vander Vies, co-chef de mission.

Bios of each athlete on the Canadian Parapan Am Team can be accessed at Paralympic.ca/Santiago-Team-Canada.



Photo courtesy of Canadian Paralympic Committee.



ETCHED IN STONE

U.S. Paralympian and United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee Hall of Fame athlete **MUFFY DAVIS** was honored in Sun Valley, Idaho, with a stunning statue along the Row of Champions on Festival Meadow.

Fun Photo Call for All

ParaSport® Ontario (PO) is looking for photos of you or your friends or family in action. PO's **Disabled Sports Photo Call** welcomes images of any parasport or adapted recreation activity for inclusion in the organization's various promotions that show how many fun options there are in Ontario.

Before submitting, be sure you are a ParaSport Ontario member (it's FREE), and that you have the subject's

permission to use the image. A photo release can be provided. Photo subjects under 18 require a parental release. The image should feature an individual with a disability participating in a sport or recreational activity. Amateur and professional photos are welcome.

To upload images, log in to your Member account at parasportontario.ca and click the Photo Call link. You can add as many photos as you like.

Money Matters

By Devin Heroux, CBC Sports

For years, Canada's para-athletes have been asking why they don't receive money for medals at the Paralympics, while Canadian athletes who win medals at the Olympic Games receive financial rewards. It appears that those questions are finally about to be answered.



Karolina Wisniewska

done," said Karen O'Neill, CEO of the Canadian Paralympic Committee. "As much as we can say change is slow and steady, there's got to be some action. It's a priority."

Canadian Olympic athletes who win medals are financially rewarded for their success – \$20,000 for a gold, \$15,000 for a silver and \$10,000 for a bronze. Canadian Paralympians who reach

In an exclusive interview with CBC Sports in Santiago, Chile, ahead of the 2023 Parapan Am Games, Canada's Minister of Sport and Physical Activity said that an announcement is coming.

"We're going to get it done... I assure you that before Paris [2024 Paralympic Games] there will be some really exciting news on that front as there should be," said Carla Qualtrough. Qualtrough won three bronze medals in swimming at the 1988 and 1992 Paralympics, as well as four World Championship medals for Team Canada.

"It's such an obvious gap and it's time to get this

the podium receive nothing financially. And it's been that way since the country's medal bonus program – the Athlete Excellence Fund – began more than 25 years ago.

It now seems that Canadian Paralympians being financially rewarded for their efforts is imminent. "Everyone talks about equity and how it should be the case. Well, here we go. If money for medals comes to pass, I'll be thrilled because that's putting your money where your mouth is," said Karolina Wisniewska, co-chef de mission of Team Canada at the 2023 Parapan Am Games. Wisniewska is a three-time Paralympian and winner of eight Paralympic medals in para alpine skiing.

Photo courtesy of Brock Niagara Penguins





L to R: Brad Pemberton, Michael Robertson, Tess Trojan and Mike Trojan

Photos by Michael Schneider

By James Murphy
Executive Director, ParaSport Ontario

The 6th Annual ParaSport® Ontario Para Pro-Am Golf Tournament featured what the event's guests had dearly missed over the last few years – a return to a full gathering for attendees including a brunch and awards ceremony before teams hit the course in the afternoon.

Tournament chairs Bernard Gluckstein, Tim Christie and Mike Trojan contributed immensely in welcoming 28 teams in 2023, with each corporate team being offered the unique opportunity to play with a PGA of Canada Pro golfer and a paragolf athlete, and witness first-hand a display of amazing abilities on the links.

A move to Deer Creek Golf Course in Ajax, ParaSport Ontario (PO) found a partner that believes in inclusive communities and has invested significantly in creating the very best in accessible facilities. Beginning with our first meeting, Spencer Gray and Rebecca Bush helped create a day that would celebrate excellence in

parasport, provide a great golf venue, and a platform for PO to showcase our appreciation of the people who contribute so much to our work in making an impact for people with disabilities across Ontario.

With 250 people in attendance from across Ontario, including clients and families from adult and children's

Removing Barriers to Participation

ParaSport® Ontario's 6th Annual Para Pro-Am GOLF TOURNAMENT

rehabilitation centres, all were able to witness over \$100,000 in adapted equipment displayed, presented and awarded to PO's Play to Podium Fund recipients.

Paralympians and golf superstars like Kurtis Barkley, Greg Westlake, Kevin Rempel, Garrett Riley and Nasif Chowdhury greeted youth attendees, signing autographs and posing for photos together. These ambassadors inspired our young attendees who came from across the region to experience the Para-Golf Ontario/Golf Canada First-Tee demonstration and take part in a variety of parasports like wheelchair basketball, sledge hockey, and sitting volleyball.

A Community Impact Award was presented to the Ontario Volleyball Association for its



Daniel
MacLaren



Guests at the
6th Annual Para Pro-Am

leadership in creating and promoting inclusive sport. Garrett Riley received the Ambassador of the Year Award for his continuous efforts to showcase parasports and advocate for inclusion at Try-It sessions across the province.

Eleven leaders were also celebrated for "Championing ParaSport" as participants in every Para Pro-Am tournament since its inception, and were presented with a personalized Golf Canada golf bag.

Event emcee Joanne Smith introduced two of this year's Play to Podium Fund recipients including Rouzalin Hakim who thanked ParaSport Ontario, Ossur Canada, and PBO Toronto for the donation of a prosthetic running blade and knee which allow her to stay active and thrive after her injury! Rouzalin's speech was a morning highlight, followed by an autograph session for kids in attendance who had in hand a recent edition of *ParaSport Magazine* which included a page on Rouzalin.

Simon Mazi-Keep accepted a new sport wheelchair, thanking everyone for their support of the Play to Podium Fund. Simon told tournament guests that this equipment would allow him to reach the next level of performance



L to R: Scott Westlake, Jim Westlake, Greg Westlake, Matt Friesen and Brian Cvetovic

in wheelchair basketball as he aims to play for Team Ontario.

Out on the course, food stations and refreshments donated by FoodDudes (Derek Wasser) were phenomenal, providing a wide array of options of the highest quality and beyond what golfers could ever ask for on the course.

At day's end, with a two-way tie for first at -16, the winner was decided under a newly-created, equitable, fun format of best two-out-of-three game of Rock-Paper-Scissors. It was won by Team Westlake, represented by a composed Greg Westlake, the longest serving captain of Canada's

Para Ice Hockey Team. Team Westlake, comprised of Jim, Greg and Scott Westlake, Mike Friesen and PGA Pro Brian Cvetovic, moved on to the PGA of Canada RBC Scramble Ontario Regional Final.

The tournament was an amazing event, bringing together many community groups and members to showcase parasport opportunities for all. Community champions of inclusion were on full display. A great afternoon of golf supported the Play to Podium Fund. The goal of the Fund is to remove the high cost of adaptive equipment for people with disabilities as a barrier to participation in sport and recreation.



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ParaSport® Ontario's PLAY *to* PODIUM FUND

By Daniel Vieira

For some, the desire to play basketball comes with the need of a sports wheelchair. Playing hockey... a para ice sled. Biking with friends... a handcycle. Sprinting around a track... a racing wheelchair. Boccia... a ball ramp.

One of the biggest barriers between sport and people with disabilities is the high cost of adaptive sports equipment. ParaSport® Ontario (PO) helps to remove that barrier through its Play to Podium Fund. With corporate and community support, PO provides people with a disability with the equipment they need to get in the game for fun, fitness and friendships.

ParaSport Ontario was proud to donate over \$100,000 in adaptive sports equipment through the Play to Podium Fund in 2023. This included para ice hockey sledges, sport wheelchairs for wheelchair basketball and wheelchair tennis, a handcycle, wheelchair curling equipment and even a prosthetic running blade. PO is committed to helping people with disabilities to be active and do what they love.



*ParaSport Ontario was proud to award **SIMON MAZI-KEEP** with his own sport wheelchair so he can continue to pursue his goals in wheelchair basketball.*

Simon is a 15-year-old high school student from Niagara Falls who was born with hereditary spastic paraplegia. His disability impacts mobility and strength in his legs. Simon started participating in parasports when he was just eight years old, joining the local Brock Niagara Penguins club. He has participated in many different parasports with the Penguins including handcycling, boccia, sitting volleyball, sledge hockey and wheelchair basketball.

Simon now focuses most of his playing time on sledge hockey and wheelchair basketball, as he enjoys "the fast pace of those sports." He's a member of the Niagara Thunderblades sledge hockey team and also plays in PO's Niagara Sledge Hockey League. But his primary passion is basketball.

That passion and dedication to wheelchair basketball is evident through the multiple clubs with which he trains. He plays for the Burlington Vipers and the Twin City Spinners, based in Waterloo, about



Photo by Ruth Wanless

an hour and a half drive from his home in Niagara Falls.

This past summer, Simon also trained with the Variety Village wheelchair basketball team, which involved an even further commute. On top of that, he attended two Team Ontario training camps this year. His game continues to improve, and Simon acknowledges how busy his sports life is but assures that it's worth it.

With his new sports wheelchair, Simon has set his sights on "being a Paralympian, playing for a college wheelchair basketball team in the United States and maybe even playing in Europe." He says that the new chair means a lot to him as playing wheelchair basketball is what he loves to do most and appreciates how it will help him continue to improve his game and achieve his goals.

On a Roll on LAND and WATER

MARILYN ABBS was a Play to Podium Fund recipient in 2023 as well, with a tennis wheelchair to help her take her court game to the next level.

Marilyn was a latecomer to parasports. A failed back surgery in 2006 and an unsuccessful knee replacement surgery in 2013 left her with mobility issues. But her desire to continue to be active remained intact. Marilyn, who lives in Fort Erie, joined the South Niagara Canoe Club in 2017 where she developed a passion for canoe/kayak, her “bread and butter” sport as she calls it.

Success on the water came quickly. She has laid claim to the Para Women’s Individual Title for the Western Ontario Division as well as gold and bronze medals at the Canadian Sprint Canoe/Kayak Nationals this past season. Marilyn feels that she has “checked a lot of boxes” in her canoe/kayak career, which led her to wheelchair tennis.

She joined the Fort Erie Tennis Club just two summer seasons ago, and competes as part of Ontario Para Network’s Provincial Tennis League, participating in match days across the Greater Toronto Area.

Marilyn was thrilled to receive her own tennis wheelchair from ParaSport



Ontario and sponsor Sunrise Medical. Her love for the sport grew which saw her finish sixth at the Birmingham Canadian Wheelchair Tennis Nationals in Nova Scotia in 2023. That result affords Marilyn with an overall Canadian ranking of sixth for Wheelchair Tennis’s Open Women’s Category. Marilyn attributes some of that success to her new custom chair which is more responsive on the court, helping her improve her game.

Marilyn is a member of the Brock Niagara Penguins parasport club. She holds a position on the Board of Directors for the South Niagara Canoe Club and has been a ParaSport Ontario Ambassador at events such as the Empire

Sportsplex Grand Opening in Welland and the Niagara Parasport Festival in Fonthill. She also started Para Dragon Boat racing last year, winning gold in the Para Open Standard Category, which made for three Canadian National Championships in one year for Marilyn.





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- OBSA High Performance Camp
- Regionals Open Goalball Tournament
- Provincial/Eastern Canadian Goalball Championship
- Equipment Loaning Program
- OBSA Sports Days
- OBSA Outreach Programs

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Ontario 

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ENABLING CHANGE

Driving Toward Inclusion

With the support of a grant from the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, championed by Minister Raymond Cho, ParaGolf Ontario is developing tools and educational resources to raise awareness about the value of accessibility to the game of golf.

Through the EnAbling Change Program, the grant recognizes the importance of inclusiveness and accessibility for people of all abilities. ParaGolf Ontario has played a vital role in promoting and supporting accessibility for individuals with diverse disabilities for 38 years. The golf community will now have access to resources and guidance regarding accessibility concerns and solutions.

Paragolf is the fastest growing parasport, and is pushing for inclusion on the Paralympic Games program. ParaGolf Ontario (PGO) is broadening that scope of inclusion. PGO is creating more opportunities to participate and investing in adaptive golf to lessen financial, educational and medical barriers. It is these barriers that limit participation of people with disabilities at the amateur, professional and Paralympic levels.

PGO is providing the necessary support to enable everyBODY to enjoy golf throughout all ages and stages of life regardless of congenital or acquired disabilities, or lives affected by illness, progressive neurological conditions, stroke, intellectual or sensory limitations and aging.

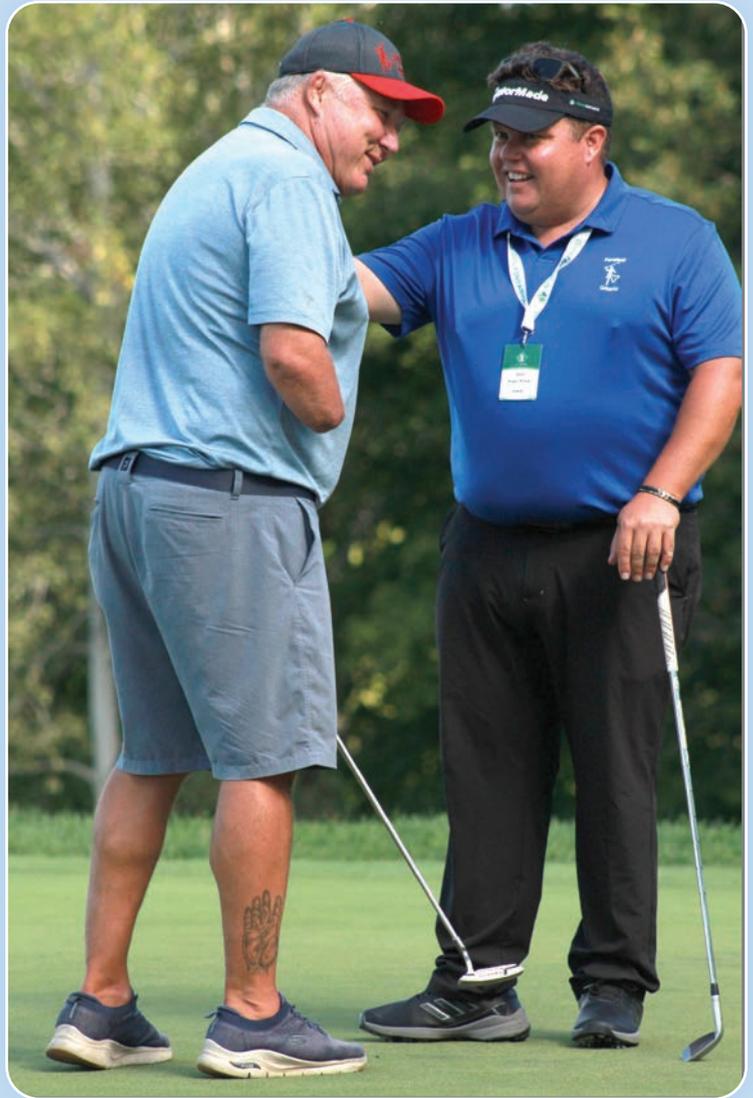
As a competitive high school athlete, I sustained a life-altering injury. I was fortunate to have coaches who helped me continue on a path of athletic excellence in wrestling, football and rugby, even as an arm amputee. After university I experienced



international competition with the Canadian Moose World Travelling Hockey Team. My time working at Variety Village taught me about the excellence that exists in the parasport community, knowledge that I often used during my career as a high school teacher.

I've carried that passion into my role with ParaGolf Ontario to create opportunities for others. Thanks to the EnAbling Change Program, we accelerated the process of supporting persons of all abilities to participate in the game of golf. This 16-page program is part of that commitment in hopes that it inspires professionals, golf course managers, equipment manufacturers and retailers to join us in welcoming everyBODY into a sport that has embraced equitable participation for centuries.

Ken Mulgrew
President, ParaGolf Ontario



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ParaGolf Pathways

By Joe Millage

ParaGolf Ontario (PGO) is creating pathways to make it much easier for persons with disabilities to participate in the great game of golf.

With assistance from the Province of Ontario – Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, and committed partners in Golf Canada, Golf Ontario, ParaSport Ontario, the PGA of Canada, Disability Today Publishing Group and WorkBay, PGO is paving those pathways. New opportunities are being welcomed by individuals, families and organizations that represent golfers and potential golfers with physical, sensory, medical, intellectual, developmental, neurological conditions which were once perceived to be barriers to participation.

PGO is also providing guidance, resources, support and connectivity to golf facilities, teaching professionals, volunteers, equipment manufacturers, retailers and fitters.

The activities in our EnAbling Change initiative have been in development for decades. Programs were created by a dedicated group of volunteers beginning in the 1960s and more formally organized after the Toronto Olympiad for the Physically Disabled in 1976.

ParaGolf Ontario began as the Ontario Amputee Sport Association (OASA), a prominent member of Sport for Disabled – Ontario.

Other member groups included the Ontario Blind Sports Association, Ontario Cerebral Palsy Sport Association and Ontario Wheelchair Sport Association. Together they formed a network that provided opportunities for disabled athletes to compete throughout the province and in many cases earn their way onto provincial, national and Paralympic teams.

As many parasports grew in prestige and popularity, the

early 2000s saw many of these sports integrated into “mainstream” provincial sport organization (PSO) competitions such as those hosted by Swim Ontario and Athletics Ontario.

In that same decade, Sport for Disabled – Ontario became Paralympics Ontario, and then renamed again to ParaSport® Ontario. Then Executive Director Cathy Vincelli and her team envisioned and trademarked the

name ParaSport which is now used internationally.

The concept of integration with Ontario’s PSOs was progressive, but in not all cases productive. The base of para-athlete participation began to decline. A number of PSOs struggled to provide the necessary resources and expertise to recruit and train athletes with disabilities in their respective sport, and offer a competitive schedule.



It was in that era, with sports for amputees like swimming and track and field and others moving to PSO governance, that the volunteers at OASA moved to focus specifically on golf. With a new mandate, the association's name was changed to ParaGolf Ontario to reflect the new direction and ensure that golfers with disabilities had events in which to compete and network with peers.

Historically, amateur golf has always had a "handicapping system" to allow golfers of varying abilities to compete equitably. Courses have several tee decks to accommodate power differential, and with friendly play there are numerous ways to ensure inclusion for all.

In practical terms however, inclusivity has not truly been embraced. Women, juniors and persons with disabilities often have had limited access to tee times, and cost was certainly a significant impeding factor.

"The Times they are a Changing." I'm certain that Bob Dylan wasn't thinking about golf when he wrote that iconic song. But the golf world is changing, quickly.



New formats such as SIM golf and target games like TopGolf and PopStroke are growing rapidly in popularity. The "First Tee" program encourages early entry to the sport with a purpose-built program for children aged 4–12. Golf Canada has invested significant resources to support inclusivity as a pillar of its First Tee program.

With the EnAbling Change – Driving Toward Inclusion project, PGO has found that golf professionals, coaches, and program directors are on board. They are welcoming of resources that expand their capacity to teach the game.

Internationally, the European Disabled Golf Association is leading the way in getting golf included on the Paralympic Games program.

In Ontario, Minister Raymond Cho, MPP, made PGO aware of a funding opportunity to make golf more accessible. With an EnAbling Change grant titled "Driving Toward Inclusion", the funding has been instrumental in confirming PGO's belief that "Everyone wins when everyBODY plays".



MEET A PARAGOLF FOURSOME

Roman Tietz

BORN: 1960 | **HOMETOWN:** Sault Ste. Marie (now Toronto) | **JOINED PARAGOLF ONTARIO:** 2018

How did you hear about paragolf?

From a fellow skier at the Adult Disabled Downhill Ski Club.

How old were you when you started golfing?

50

What is your best golf story? Sinking an 80-foot putt at Lebovic Golf Club.

What other sports do you participate in? Skiing, scuba diving, cycling and personal fitness.

Do you have a hero or mentor? Terry Fox. His Marathon of Hope was the start of a huge fundraising campaign for cancer research and showed the world the sheer determination of a hero with different challenges.



What is your current goal? To drive a golf ball over 200 yards.

Obstacles you would like to see eliminated? Climbing stairs to a hole.

On a tough day what motivates you to play? The anticipation of hitting some amazing shots and socializing with other paragolfers.

What would you say to someone considering paragolf? You can learn or advance your golf game while playing alongside other inspirational golfers. A membership with ParaGolf Ontario will ensure that you are out golfing and having fun at least five to six times in a season.

Dan Oettinger

BORN: 1943 | **HOMETOWN:** Vineland, Ontario | **JOINED PARAGOLF ONTARIO:** 2000

How old were you when you started golfing?

With ParaGolf Ontario, I was 44, the same year that I started taking violin lessons. I got to Grade 6 with violin. I'm still struggling with golf. I didn't grow up around golf and had little interest. I used to watch football on TV. When football ended, golf showed up, so I let it run. The more I watched, the more interested I got.

When I was 29, I had cancer, resulting in the amputation of my left leg at the hip – a hip disarticulation. At the time, I worked with a guy who was a golf fanatic. I assumed that with a full-length prosthetic leg I would not be able

to swing a club and remain vertical. He taught me how to swing, and not fall down. So, I bought an old set of clubs for about \$30, went to the range and started pounding balls. I took some lessons from an instructor who didn't try to make me do what I couldn't do. He helped me do what I could, but do it better.

Do you have a mentor? One of my bosses, Don Ward, helped me learn about priorities. "Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good," he'd say.

What is your current goal? Live to 100 so maybe I can shoot my age.

Brock Potter

BORN: 2006 | **HOMETOWN:** Whitby, Ontario | **JOINED PARAGOLF ONTARIO:** 2020

How did you learn about paragolf?

My older brother played on the local tours and I wanted to try to compete too... with "able-bodied" golfers. My dad looked to see what was available for "adaptive" golf. He found ParaGolf Ontario for me.

How old were you when you started golfing?

Around six or seven I was hitting balls off the dock at the cottage and then started lessons at 10.

What's your favourite golf story?

I played in the CJGA U11 tournament at Eldorado when I was 10 and came in first place for my age group! That's when I officially became hooked on golf.

Do you participate in other sports? I have my sights set on making the National Sitting Volleyball team. I practice with a few of the national players. I also enjoy swimming and pickleball.



Do you have a hero or a mentor?

I have a lot of mentors in my life in each sport who I ask for advice.

What is your current goal? My goal in golf is to get my handicap down to 15 so I can get a world individual ranking! I am 5th in the world with Stableford rankings on WR4GD.

What motivates you? I look to what the future can hold. Each day offers a life lesson!

Best golf experience? Playing in the Canadian All Abilities Championship in Kamloops, B.C. I was four inches away from a hole-in-one on #6 (the hardest par 3 I've ever played).

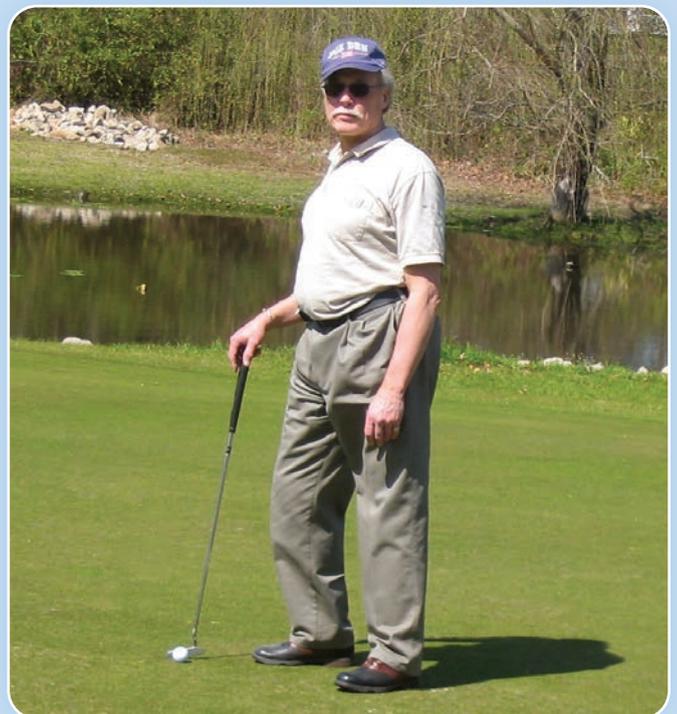
What would you say to someone considering paragolf? ParaGolf Ontario is such a great organization and it really helps juniors. It offers a lot of opportunities! I have a blast golfing with everyone!

Obstacles you would like to see eliminated?

Stairs. And the refusal of some golf courses to let those with a walking disability drive the cart close enough to the green to make playing more enjoyable.

What would you say to someone considering paragolf?

Join us. It's a great game, and a great group of people enjoying the game. Some of my best times have been golf games with best friends.





Tess Trojan

BORN: 1989 | **HOMETOWN:** St. Catharines | **JOINED PARAGOLF ONTARIO:** 2021

Where did you hear about paragolf? Through Joe Millage. He was ParaSport Ontario's Board of Directors Chair at the time, and approached my dad.

How old were you when you started golfing?

I hung out with my parents riding in the cart when I was young but didn't officially start with my own clubs until I was nine.

What other sports do you participate in?

Special Olympics golf, basketball, speed skating, 10-Pin bowling and Niagara Junior Ice Dogs Special Needs Hockey. I like to play tennis too, and enjoy biking, hiking and working out.

Do you have a hero? All people who face adversity with their chin up and go for it – from the greats to everyday people. I have many professional golfers I look up to like Brooke, Lexi, Lydia, Rory, Jordan and Tommy. I love watching them succeed but it helps me see that they too have struggles and don't always have their best.

What is your most memorable event?

Sitting on the Para Athlete Panel at the ParaSport Ontario Festival. I am also very proud to be the first Special Olympic Athlete to be honoured on the Wall of Fame at both my High School and the Niagara Golf Wall of Fame.

What is your current goal?

Reducing my handicap that was at 17.5

but now 16.5. I really want to break 90 in competition and play more consistently in the 80s.

Obstacles you would like to see eliminated?

Reducing "assumptions" so I can be heard and seen.

What motivates you to play or practice?

My Mom. But I try to set goals and make them visible. Most days I have a plan and do my best to stick to it. I really love to practice and can't wait to see my coach.

What is your best golf story?

I recently got my second hole-in-one in Hilton Head on the Port Royal Robbers Row Course. The course was set up with very difficult pin placements because a competition was scheduled for the next day. It's a difficult hole surrounded by sand. My first hole-in-one came at a Special Olympics fundraising event in Florida. After a super shot played by Rod Black, I rolled it up from just inside the fringe into the hole. It was pretty special.



What would you say to someone considering paragolf?

Come out and watch us golf or ask how to get involved. We are a welcoming group of all ages and playing abilities. It won't take long before you feel like you belong and are valued.

Golf After Amputation or Stroke

By Tracy Martin, Providence Healthcare

The Recreation Therapy team at Providence Healthcare Unity Health Toronto has offered a golf program for patients since the idea was proposed by a Dalhousie University Recreation Therapy summer student in 2009.

For many years, Providence's golf program was supported by the Canadian Amputee Golf Association. The last two years have seen support from ParaGolf Ontario (PGO). In fact, PGO Directors Roman Tietz and Brad Warren attended some of the sessions to provide information on pathways to community inclusion as well as recreational and competitive opportunities. They shared some technical advice and some laughs with the group.

The Providence program runs throughout the summer months with up to half a dozen participants each session. The first session is indoors and starts with introductions, an inspirational video highlighting the benefits of golf, and ends with practice time for putting and chipping. The second session is a community outing to the Toronto Dock's Driving Range to put into practice what participants have learned.

The program includes inpatient and outpatient participants. It teaches a new skill, and reintegrates patients into the community through the game of golf.

All about encouraging and supporting each other, one patient shared that "This program has given me more self-esteem." Others said, "The golf program gave me encouragement – I can do it!" and "This was a good thing for me. I learned to adapt."

One program participant had been a competitive golfer but was uncertain about ever golfing again after losing his leg. At first reluctant, the program reignited his passion and confidence in the game. He'll be returning to provide encouragement and golf technique advice to the Providence golf program participants next year.

About Providence

Providence Healthcare has earned a reputation as a leader in geriatric and palliative care, and stroke, neuro and amputee rehabilitation. Tracy Martin has been on staff for over 30 years and her passion for her work and the people in the programs remains evident.



Ages and Stages

Emerging Excellence

A newcomer to paragolf in 2023, sixteen-year-old **Russell Aide** has been golfing since he was seven, playing at his local course in Stirling, Ontario. He remembers his best golf story to be his first tournament victory when he was 12. "I had shot my best score ever of 74, with my first eagle, holing out from 112 yards," he shares. "My score was tied for first, and we went through eight playoff holes for me to win."

Russell's most memorable event was the R&A Junior Open in Monifieth, Scotland. The tournament invites the top juniors,



16 and under, from around the world. He was invited to play by the European Disabled Golf Association as their first-ever representative at this Open.

Working on his game to hopefully earn a spot on a college golf team, Russell finds motivation from his hero Terry Fox, who he says "inspires me by his perseverance through disability and hardship." Russell says that he is also motivated by the competitive golf, the feeling of community, and his friendships with other disabled golfers, that he finds with ParaGolf Ontario.

Playing the Long Game

Mary Wilson grew up in Cannington, Ontario. With a family cottage on Lake Simcoe, it was Cedarhurst Golf Club in Beaverton where she was introduced to golf at just six years of age.

She's a life-long participant in sports. After playing on her university's Intercollegiate Basketball Team, she moved on to marathons, and excelled at long-distance running. Then came triathlons, culminating with the grueling Ironman in Hawaii. She found delight in mountain bike relay racing too.

All the while rewarding, her athletic adventures took a toll on her body and she now lives with a condition called Muscle Guarding.

With all of her other sports activities, family and a high-profile job, golf always

took a back seat. "But retirement has brought me back!" exclaims Mary. She's embracing the opportunity to continue in a sport that she loves while trying to minimize the aging process.

Mary learned about ParaGolf Ontario in 2023 from Joe Millage who was championing the organization and the sport during social time at a Mixed Match competition at their club – the Oshawa Golf and Country Club.



"I attended a clinic where I met a golf instructor who I enlisted to get some of my distance back. I was delighted to hear about the expansion of paragolf into debilitating health issues!" she explains. "I now cherish time on the golf course playing, competing and socializing."

First Tee for Youth

First Tee is a youth development program that provides children with life-enhancing experiences through golf. First Tee – Canada offers accessible and inclusive programming at golf courses, schools, and community centres, striving to ensure that the sport of golf reflects the diversity of Canadians.

In 2023, First Tee – Ontario partnered with ParaGolf Ontario. This partnership introduced children with disabilities across the province to inclusive and accessible golf. Three ParaGolf Ontario members, Kevin and Brock Potter and Kenny Wittmann, were trained as on-course First Tee coaches, facilitated by PGA of Canada's Mike Martz.

"Most of these coaches have a background teaching golf to children, but it was exciting to see how enthusiastic they were to learn how to incorporate the life skills component specific to First Tee," said First Tee – Ontario Program Manager, Amaya Athill.

Throughout the 2023 golf season, ParaGolf Ontario included First Tee clinics as part of its expanded tournament schedule, including clinics at the ParaGolf Ontario Championship at Fanshawe Golf Course and the ParaSport Ontario Para Pro-Am at Deer Creek.



Also in 2023, Golf Canada's First Tee program was awarded the Innovation in Adaptive Sport Award for advancing accessible environments through leadership and innovation at the Variety Village Active Living Conference. Variety Village supports children with disabilities through sports, skill development and other inclusive and accessible programming.

First Tee – Ontario looks forward to impacting more youth with disabilities through golf in partnership with ParaGolf Ontario in 2024. To learn more about programming near you, visit firstteeontario.ca or email firsttee@golfcanada.ca.

Freshman Class of 2023

Holland Landing's **Christopher Doerner** learned about paragolf from his sledge hockey buddy, Matt. They both play for the Markham Islanders Sledge Hockey team. Matt told Christopher and his dad to come out and try it.

The nine-year-old had gone to the driving range with his dad and grandad, and had hit a few golf balls off the dock at their cottage, but sledge hockey and swimming were his sports. He was also on his school cross country team, running a modified race at the area cross country meet. "I am not the fastest on the team, but I was chosen to participate because of my positive attitude and for always cheering on my teammates," he tells.



For Christopher, golf is really challenging, but fun, and a great way to spend a day outside with his family. One of his favourite golf memories in 2023, his first year playing paragolf, was a day with his dad at Watson's Glen... and Legends of Niagara. "And I liked the clinic at Coppinwood, where instructors taught me how to improve my swing.

"My swing is a little like Happy Gilmour's because that's how I use my unique abilities [disability] to my advantage," he smiles. "My first season was amazing. I learned a lot and got to play some really great courses. My Grandad was super jealous."

The Glucker Cup

In conjunction with ParaSport Ontario's Para Pro-Am Golf Tournament, and in partnership with ParaGolf Ontario, a second competitive event was hosted at a world-class golf venue – the Lebovic Golf Club. Made possible by Dr. Joseph Lebovic and the Rotary Club of Whitby, and ParaSport Ontario Board of Director Bernard Gluckstein, the event was christened "The Glucker Cup".

The tournament showcases talented golfers with disabilities and truly embraces accessibility and inclusion.



The event hosts paragoners with skills that range from world-class to beginner, and has become a highlight on the ParaGolf Ontario season schedule. Watch for the event's next date on ParaGolf Ontario's website.

Bernie Gluckstein (on right) with provincial team coach Reggie Millage and First Tee paragoner Christopher Doerner.

Elevating Coaches



*Glenn Cundari,
COACH+ Founder
& Lead Coach
Developer*

Sport is a shifting landscape. These shifts are creating places for safer, more welcoming and meaningful sport activities. At the centre of this is the coach, the person who shapes the future of these experiences.

Taking on the role of a mentor is difficult, especially as, in many cases, coaches may not know they are someone's informal mentor. However, the commitment and skill required to be a coach often go unnoticed. It's time we more clearly recognize the coach's pivotal role in fostering inclusivity and provide them with the support they want, need and deserve.

Coaching is more than just drawing up plays or refining techniques. It is about nurturing individuals, understanding diverse backgrounds, and creating an environment where every athlete feels valued. Inclusive coaching goes beyond the game itself; it

is about recognizing and appreciating each athlete's unique strengths. Coaches, therefore, need to be equipped with tactical acumen and cultural competence to create a space where everyone thrives.

Professional development programs tailored to address the intricacies of inclusive coaching should be a cornerstone of any sport organization's strategy. Coaches need to be well-versed in diversity, equity, and inclusion, ensuring they can navigate the complex landscape of athletes from various sporting contexts and backgrounds.

And so, coaches need ongoing support and resources to stay abreast of the evolving dynamics within sport. By supporting coaches in developing these essential skills, organizations contribute to building a sport culture that is genuinely inclusive.

Want to chat more about coaching and coach development? Contact COACH+ at (705) 492-2152 or email glenn@improveyourcoaching.ca. Visit improveyourcoaching.ca or @improvedcoach on Instagram.

GRASS ROOTS TO WORLD CLASS

Paragolf is FUN and some of our athletes are also VERY GOOD

The list below recognizes Ontario Athletes in the WR4GD (World Ranking for Golfers with Disability). Source: World Amateur Golf Rankings; wagr.com/wr4gd-ranking.

The World Ranking for Golfers with Disability ranks the top golfers with a disability on the basis of their average performance in Counting Events over a rolling cycle of the previous 104 weeks.

WR4GD Men

Gross: Kurtis Barkley 5th, Chris Willis 20th, Russell Aide 44th (top Junior in the world)

Net: Kevin Delaney 4th, Rodney Reimer 15th, Chris Willis 20th

Stableford: Gerald Brandt 20th, Brock Potter 61st (Junior).

WR4GD Women

Gross: Natasha Stasiuk 15th (1st in Canada)

Stableford: Tess Trojan 9th (1st in Canada)

Gross Play is straight up – most often what you will see if you watch golf on TV.

Net Play is your score after you deduct your golf handicap.

Golf Handicap is how your best scores relate to par.

Stableford is a scoring system that gives points for how you score in relation to par, often taking your handicap into consideration. The higher score in a Stableford format wins (eg. -1 for a net double bogie, 0 for a net bogie, +1 for net par, +2 for net birdie, etc.). It's a great way to add some variety to your golf season and a fun way to competitively level the playing field for golfers of varying abilities. In ParaGolf Ontario seasonal events we include Gross, Stableford and Scramble options.

PARAGOLF ONTARIO ▫ **Schedule of Events 2024**

APRIL

- Spring Tune-Up Clinic (most likely on simulators)
- ZOOM presentation on rules and competitions update
- Announcement of PGO First Tee program dates and locations

MAY

- Season Opener – Niagara (including AGM and 2023 Awards)
 - Fanshawe Golf and Country Club, London

JUNE

- Toronto "6" Tournament

JULY

- ParaSport Ontario Para Pro-Am (Invitational) at Deer Creek Golf Club

AUGUST

- Glucker Cup (Stroke Play and Stableford)
Sponsored by Gluckstein Lawyers

SEPTEMBER

- Season Finale at Watson's Glen

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

- Canadian All Abilities Championship
- USGA Adaptive Open (qualification required)
 - Ontario Adaptive Championship
- Michigan Amateur Golf Association Open (July 27 and 28)

All events are tentative. Check paragolfontario.ca for updates and registration details (available mid-March 2024).

RULE 25

For the Love of the Game

Golf Canada (together with its provincial affiliates), the United States Golf Association and the United Kingdom's Royal and Ancient Golf Club share a determined interest in making golf accessible to people of all abilities as a life-long sport.

Toward this goal, a major effort has been made to simplify the Rules of Golf. The introduction of new types of competitive play makes it easier for golfers to establish and calculate accurate handicaps, promote a prompt pace of play, and address concerns about player conduct, safety and care of the course.

As part of this process, Rule 25 specifically seeks to open new doors of opportunity for golfers with disabilities.

Rule 25 Overview

Rule 25 applies to all competitions and all forms of play. A player's category of disability and eligibility determines whether the specific modified rules in Rule 25 apply, including:

- Players who are blind (includes certain levels of vision impairment)
- Players who are amputees (those with limb differences and limb loss)
- Players who use assistive mobility devices
- Players with intellectual disabilities



It is acknowledged that there are many players with other types of disabilities such neurological conditions, orthopaedic concerns, short stature, and players who are deaf. These additional categories of disability are not covered in Rule 25 as, to date, no requirement has been identified for modification of the Rules of Golf for players with these disabilities.

The Equipment Rules apply without modification, except as provided in Section 7. For information on the use of equipment (other than a club or a ball) for medical reasons, see Rule 4.3b.

Generally, assistive medical devices and supports are approved by the governing body of an event, provided they serve a bona fide medical purpose and do not give the player a significant advantage over other competitors.

Golf Canada, Golf Ontario, ParaSport Ontario, Variety Village and a growing number of golf facilities and academies are offering programs that are specifically designed to assist golfers with disabilities to develop skills, gain confidence and progress to both recreational and competitive play.

Golf rules can seem complicated. You can ask what your options are. If playing in an event with no official, you can play a second ball – record both scores (original and second) and get a decision after the round.

If you have a question or a suggestion related to modified play or rules, contact ParaGolf Ontario at rules@paragolfontario.ca



Rod Reimer, world-class paragoner and ParaGolf Ontario Volunteer Director (on left).

Join ParaGolf Ontario Today!

In a short video by Arthur Miller, he speaks about wanting to complete a marathon and how he quickly realized that he needed to become more physically fit just to begin training to run a marathon's 26.2 miles. In his words, "I had to get ready to get ready." This makes sense to ParaGolf Ontario because we're serious about helping you derive the greatest joy from a game we love.

Whether you are an accomplished golfer or someone who may be ready to get ready, we will be there to assist you.

Benefits of joining ParaGolf Ontario include:

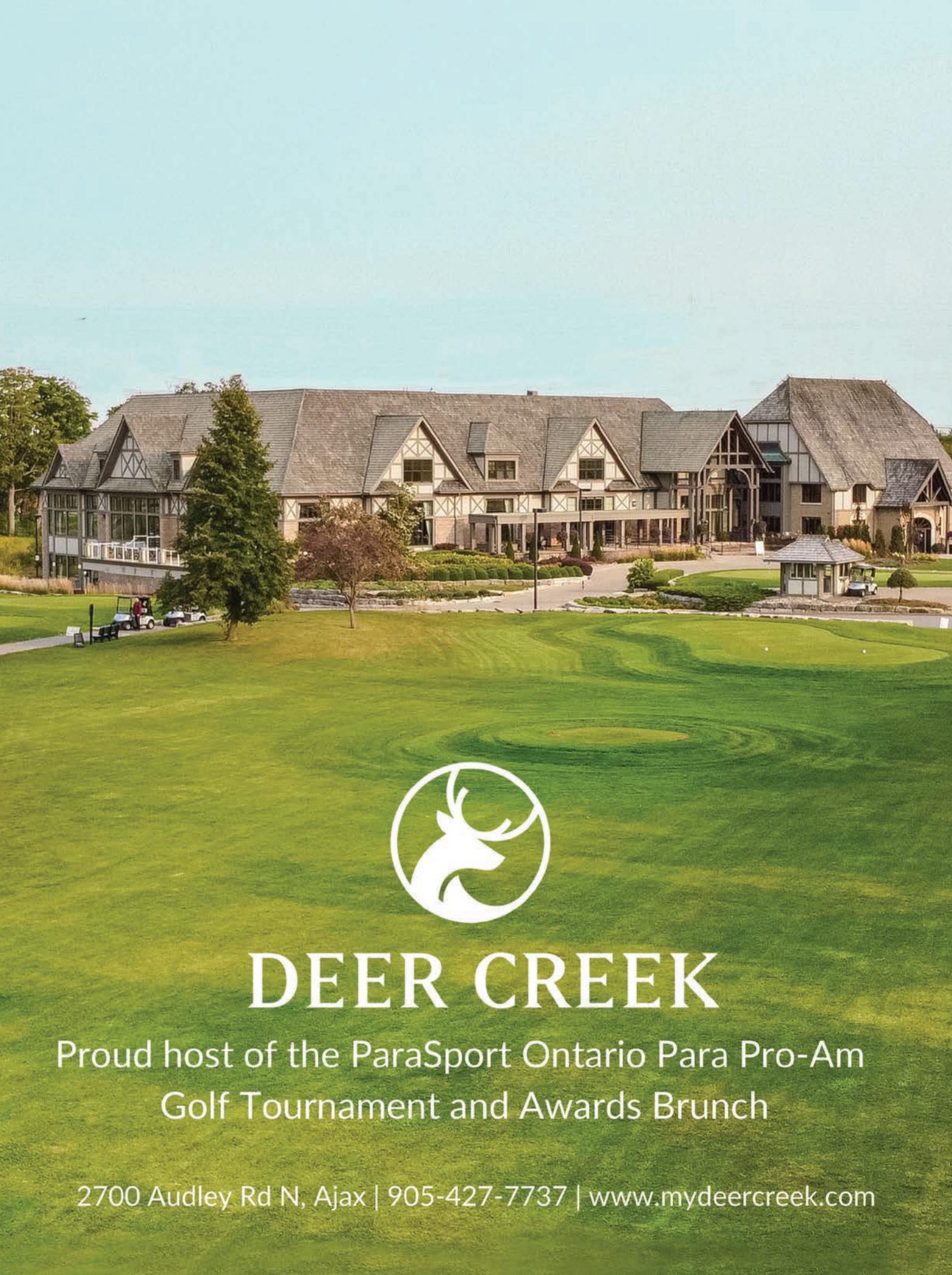
- 1 Events and connectivity to provincial, national and international opportunities.
- 2 Reduced golf fees.
- 3 Updates on rules and ideas for modified play.
- 4 Travel reimbursement.
- 5 Training assistance.
- 6 Membership in a community that embraces accessibility and inclusivity.
- 7 Resources, guidance and support for instructors and event organizations.

Click on "Become a Member" at paragolfontario.ca.

Introductory Offer... with thanks to support from the Province of Ontario's EnAbling Change Program, sign up for your initial event as a non-member. Contact info@paragolfontario.ca.

ParaGolf Ontario appreciates the support of our sponsors, friends and partners also working to enhance accessibility and inclusivity.





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Chris STODDART



Life Before and After the FAST LANE

By Max Warfield

In a world where resiliency is survival, Chris Stoddart has taken persistence to an imposing level, compiling six gold, one silver and five bronze medals in international competition. At one time, he held world records in the 100, 400, 800 and 1500m events in his wheelchair racing category. Yet, his personal road travelled to get to those achievements is equally impressive, if not more.

Stoddart participated in multiple sports: basketball, swimming, skiing, racquetball and sledge hockey which the seventy-something-year-old, life-long athlete still plays today. But it was wheelchair racing that was his specialty.

Overcoming health issues to become an athlete is not what makes him special. His knack for winning is not what is so rare. Rather, it is the endless amount of obstacles Stoddart conquered and their preposterous nature.

Stoddart is a parasport pioneer and visionary, in the sport in which he excelled most no less. He began competing from the sport's primitive advent until its modernization. In that era, Stoddart had to deal with unfairness on a level that borders illegal today; all the while keeping his good nature and respect for others intact.

Born with spina bifida, Stoddart chose to crawl everywhere he went up until his high school years, earning the nickname "Spider". He was born

to athletic parents who golfed and curled. His father was a Second World War veteran.

While very young, in Toronto, Stoddart endured a lot of teasing. His grade school mates would refer to him as "Chris the cripple". Then his parents bought a grocery store in Arthur, Ontario (north of Orangeville), a small town that took him under its wing.

"When we moved to Arthur from the big city, it was different," said Stoddart. "They didn't 'tolerate' my disability, they just acted like it wasn't there. I used to crawl around a lot. In physical education class, we used to do laps in the gym, and I would crawl as fast as they would run. I did whatever I had to do to prove I was no different than anyone else, just a little bit crazier."

As high school ended, Stoddart had plans to become a radio announcer, believing it was a good fit for his interests and abilities.

"At Ryerson [now Toronto Metropolitan University], I studied radio, TV, newspaper... all aspects of communications. I wanted to be a radio announcer, but I soon found out that it wouldn't be that easy. For television, I couldn't get into the control rooms to work the controls – this was the early 60s. They worried I might knock over a light stand mount. I told them I love Bill Hewitt, the Maple Leafs play-by-play guy, and disc jockey Wolfman Jack, and I just hoped to do radio. It didn't fly. They said no."

So, he left. He enrolled at Seneca College and became its first-ever disabled student. One problem, however. Seneca didn't have an elevator to the second floor. "My classes were on the second floor," Stoddart remembered. "I had the custodian, who got to know me very well, carry me up the stairs. Four or five times a day he carried me to class."

That memory sparked another instance later in life. "I got carried up



Photo by Doug Griffin, Toronto Star



the stairs twice on my honeymoon. We went to Barbados. Everyone got off the plane, and I waited. The flight attendants asked if I was getting off the plane and I said 'no', that's what the wheelchair is for. And so I waited and waited again, until this massive man came on-board. He looked at me and said, 'are you kidding me?' He picked me up with one hand and took me off the plane. I was assured that it wouldn't happen again. But it did.

"Leaving Barbados, I waited an hour on the tarmac, with people on the plane getting bothered by the delay, until the same huge guy came. It was his day off. When he saw me he was so mad at his co-workers. He picked me up with one hand again, got a standing ovation in the airplane, and away we went."

While attending Seneca College, Stoddart got a phone call one evening from his brother who had just read an article about a wheelchair basketball league that was looking for players. They needed more bodies so they could qualify for the National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA). "He thought I should play," said Stoddart. "And so, I did, becoming an original member of the Toronto Thrush Thunderbolts, only the second Canadian team granted inclusion in the NWBA (the other in Vancouver). That phone call changed my life." Wheelchair basketball led him to wheelchair racing.

"Wheelchair racing was invented to get people physically active and healthy moreso than for competition," Stoddart explained. "When you're a wheelchair user, if you sit

and do nothing, you turn into a couch potato. It's worse even if you have a medical issue, like a pressure sore that you don't feel. Being active keeps the blood flowing all of the time. When you get older in a chair and you get fat, it's tough. You have to stay in shape even more than an able-bodied person. I've lost a lot of contemporary friends already."

Wheelchair racing as a sport began in the 1960s but it looked much different then. "I hear reporters mention 'legends' of wheelchair racing now and they speak of someone from the '90s," Stoddart shared. "We were doing it at a time when we were doing it to show people we could get a job! We weren't doing it to show how fast we could go. It's amazing how over time, racing chairs went from 75 pounds (35 kg) to 20 pounds



Photo courtesy of Chris Stoddart



Photo courtesy of Chris Stoddart

In its infancy, wheelchair racing was most commonly found in hospital hallways, with patients dashing up and down the hospital halls. “Coaches didn’t coach much. No matter what you did, it was, ‘good job!’”

(9 kg) with technology. I liked those early years the best, because we got to tinker with our chairs and modify them ourselves.”

In its infancy, wheelchair racing was most commonly found in hospital hallways, with patients dashing up and down the hospital halls. “Coaches didn’t coach much. No matter what you did, it was, ‘good job!’”

“It was so condescending,” shared Stoddart. “I knew I could do better. Then I met Graham Ward who was coaching runners in the ‘70s. He thought a wheelchair racer should train the same way. He trained us just like the able-bodied team. I never would have achieved the success that I managed without his training and encouragement.”

Ward trained athletes and coaches. Because he was the head coach at

Variety Village, many coaches in the ‘80s and ‘90s were beneficiaries of his influence.

Wheelchair racing was less ruthless in the fundamental years. The accolades Stoddart earned are impressive, yet he remains humble. “In my day I raced with guys like Rick Hansen and Mel Fitzgerald. I knew where I was in the pecking order!” he chuckled. Against those legends and others, few imagined the diminutive Stoddart to become a legend himself. But the size disadvantage never daunted him.

“I was always the smallest growing up, but I had a lot of friends who’d stick up for me. Not the biggest — but you can’t look at the guy beside you. Just because he’s bigger than you, doesn’t mean he’s faster. Doesn’t mean he’s stronger. He might be a big

guy with a weak mind. Might be a big guy that doesn’t do a lot of training and figures he can get by on strength alone. You never know. It’s not an excuse when you lose, but it’s a nice feather in your cap when you win.”

Stoddart was small, yet he was the very first to wheel under seven minutes in the 1500m in Canada (his personal best ultimately came to rest at 4:20 min/sec). He was the first wheelchair racer to push sub-20 seconds in the 100m. He was the first wheelchair racer entered in the Toronto Marathon.

With all of this experience, Stoddart offers youth this advice: “Young athletes need to like what they do. First and foremost, you need to have fun. If it’s not fun, then you won’t put in those extra hours to reach another level. Your body will tell you if you’re



Photos courtesy of Chris Stoddart

years. I believe that in retirement you have to stay active. Try to take your sport, whatever that may be, and do it recreationally. Enjoy it in a new way without any pressure on you. It's far better to go out and do a mile every day at a nice leisurely pace, than to sit at home and reminisce about how fast you used to be able to do it."

Retirement from world-class racing was tough on him at one time. It was part of his identity. That part was gone. He was incredibly fit. He was now putting on unwanted weight. He revolutionized the sport. He was now just another "glory days" guy in a wheelchair. But that's when he realized something very important to the rest of his life. "Who are you now. What are you doing now? And that's when I dove back into sports just for the fun of it. I'm still an athlete. I'm still pushing my envelope."

going to be successful in it. Remember to stick up for yourself. Somewhere along the line you realize that if you don't open your mouth, you're not going to have a voice. So you gotta speak up at times. There were a few times... I wouldn't back down."

In 2023, Stoddart published his autobiographical book titled *Life in the Fast Lane* (find it on Amazon). "I am satisfied with the book but it is for such a small market. More people see it as an 'overcoming a disability' story more than a sports book. You know, only those who made it to the Paralympics are the ones getting talked about and that bothered me. I wanted to spotlight the athletes who got the sport going in the beginning, regardless of how they ended up in the pecking order."

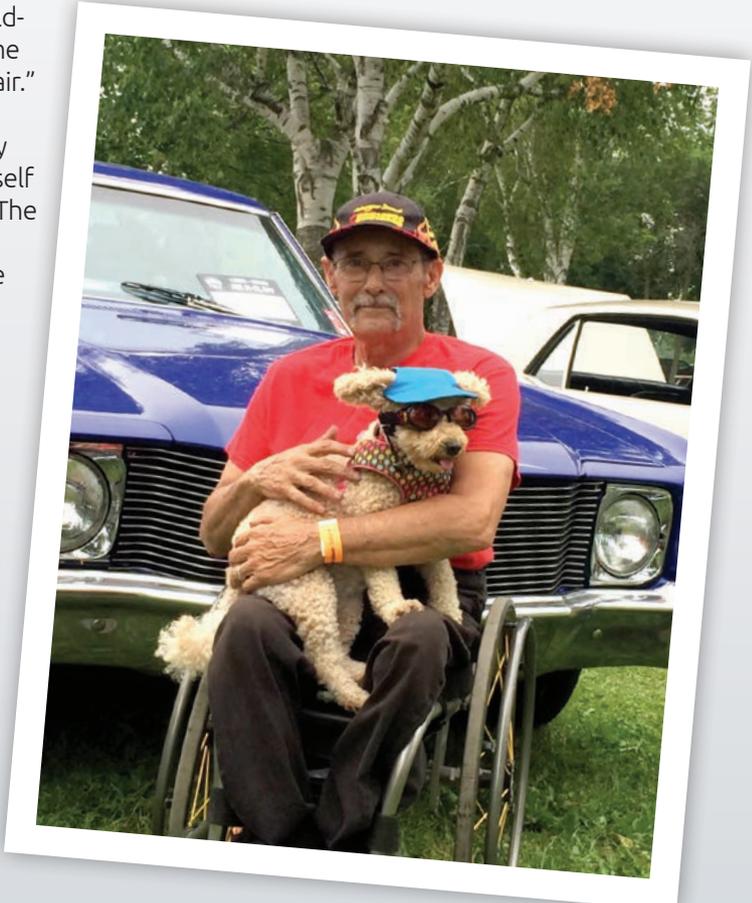
And for more exciting news for Chris, an executive producer of sports documentaries, Tom Boswell, recently reached out to him. He is preparing a documentary covering 1970s sports, and "he wants me to come to England to narrate my part, which is the 1976 Olympiad for the Physically Disabled in Toronto." It will feature Stoddart, Jesse Owens, Carl Lewis and others when complete.

Life after competitive sport,

despite his pioneering contributions and unprecedented results, was difficult. "When I retired I felt like I dropped off the map. There was no follow-up. No one called you. It took me a few years to get comfortable in my own skin again – to go from world-class racer to some guy in a wheelchair."

The routine of training every day and keeping himself ready was gone. The accolades of life as an elite athlete were gone. He quickly realized that he needed new priorities. Bass fishing became one of them, but it wasn't enough.

"When I found sledge hockey I found that I was as fast in the sled as I was in the chair. I played for the Markham team for about 15



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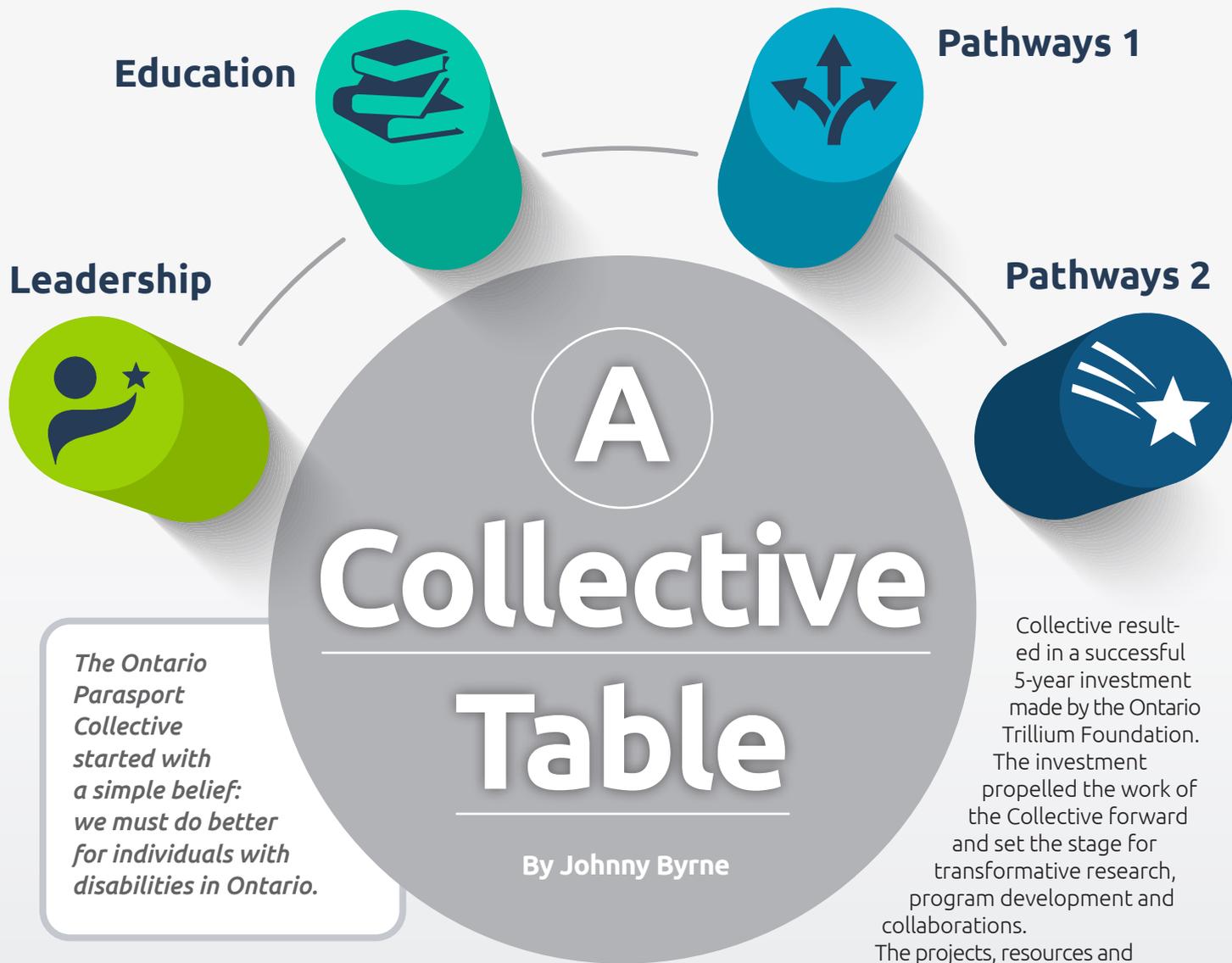
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Collective resulted in a successful 5-year investment made by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The investment propelled the work of the Collective forward and set the stage for transformative research, program development and collaborations.

The projects, resources and research made possible through the grant is impressive. What was just as important was bringing like-minded individuals together, united by a common cause. The Collective became a network to share, support and learn from each other.

That Collective helped organizations and individuals through a pandemic and provided a place for support as we emerged from it. The bonds created and inspiration provided by the OPC is summed up by two quotes from Amy E. Latimer-Cheung, Professor at Queen's and Director – Canadian Disability Participation Project 2.0.

The 2015 Parapan Am Games and the Accessibility for Ontarians with a Disability Act provided an opportunity for a community of leaders to come together to focus on enhancing access and engagement to sport for Ontarians with a disability. A Games Legacy Initiative revealed the importance and value of moving forward as a united and committed group.

In 2016, that group developed a vision for collaborative action to guide, support and align efforts. The Ontario Parasport Collective (OPC) was built on the contributions of willing partners and based on leadership and readiness.

These dedicated and diverse partners were committed to making parasport a priority. Partnerships with the Ontario Government (Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport) and its investments in equipment and programming helped further engage the partners in the Collective.

Working together as a group to develop key priorities which address the most challenging gaps in our system, the Collective identified four "pillars". These pillars guided our work together. The work and results achieved by the committed individuals and organizations in the



“The research we accomplished would have been nearly impossible without the OPC. The partnerships we forged to do the work opened gateways never previously available to our team. It was meaningful to do work that made a scientific contribution to create products with potential to impact change.”

Latimer-Cheung added: “The OPC membership lived a lot of life together – we survived a pandemic together on Zoom. Despite much of our interaction being online, we developed friendships that fed our souls in a time when we needed it most. I would venture to say that the OPC supported the wellbeing of some of Ontario’s most influential parasport leaders and it is because of this collective support that the sector is able to re-establish itself post-pandemic.”

The OPC wasn’t an organization that was looking to compete for funding or membership. It was a group of people committed to doing better. It provided the “table” for people to convene and share. It was the people and their commitment to individuals with a disability that was the magic that made the impact. We look forward to the ongoing work that these people and others will do, always striving to do better for individuals with disabilities in Ontario.

LEADERSHIP PILLAR PROJECTS

To develop the current and future capacity of sport leaders, including coaches, officials, classifiers, volunteers, and administrators who lead parasport in Ontario, priority focus areas were determined to be resources and inventories, and training and professional development.



NCCP Coaching Athletes with a Disability eLearning

All Ontarians have been able to access the NCCP Coaching Athletes with a Disability eLearning at no cost since September 2021. This resource continues to be available until March 31, 2024. Access the course at: <https://www.coachesontario.ca/programs-resources/coaching-in-parasport/cawad>.



Volunteer Training Program and Resource

A module was developed to help volunteers effectively assist athletes, spectators, and coaches with diverse disabilities. Volunteers’ respectful interactions and communication are key to ensuring a positive experience for everyone involved in an event and/or program. Created by experts in the fields of disability, sport, and exercise, this module covers the following key topics:

- Defining and describing disability.
- Communicating respectfully and effectively with persons living with disabilities.
- History of Para sport and the classification process.
- Benefits of sport participation for persons with disabilities.
- How to facilitate positive, inclusive sport experiences for persons with disabilities.

Access the module at:

<https://cdpp.ca/sites/default/files/inclusion-module/#/>.

Training and Managing Disability Sport Event Volunteers: Recommendations and Resources Course

A module featuring evidence-informed recommendations and tools to assist in planning for sport events, these resources were developed in partnership with knowledge-users (e.g., volunteers, athletes, sport administrators) in the disability sport community.

Developed by the Ontario Parasport Collective and the Canadian Disability Participation Project (CDPP) to support the effective training and management of event volunteers, the goal of these recommendations is to help sport event organizers develop a comprehensive volunteer program. Volunteer satisfaction and retention of trained volunteers for future disability sport events and programs were objectives as well.

Access this module at: <https://cdpp.ca/sites/default/files/event-managing-resources/#/>. A 22-page resource document (Evidence-Informed Recommendations for the Management and Training of Disability Sport Event Volunteers) was also produced by CDPP: https://cdpp.ca/sites/default/files/VolunteerTrainingRecommendations_CDPP_June2023_PDF.pdf.

Over 800 sport leaders have utilized the code for free access to the NCCP Coaching Athletes with a Disability resource in the last two years. More than 650 volunteers participated in Volunteer Training at the 2019 and 2023 Ontario Parasport Games – Durham Region.

The better educated that coaches are when it comes to working with athletes with disabilities, the more enjoyment athletes will experience which in turn leads to enhanced retention of participants.

EDUCATION PILLAR PROJECTS

To develop and leverage partnerships and build capacity for parasport at all levels within the education sector, priority focus areas included inclusive physical literacy, resource development and inventory, and research and knowledge transfer. Overarching goals were to ensure more youth are participating in quality parasport programs and that more teachers, schools and school boards are engaged and supporting parasport involvement.



Phase II of the project featured a festival-style celebration at each school at the end of the project with the support of a visiting provincial sport organization. The pilot project, hosted in the 2017-2018 school year, welcomed 21 educators and 700 students. The Phase II events, hosted in the 2018-2019 school year, included 27 educators and 3,000 students.

Experiences from this project validated the need for classroom engagement and educator professional development to include parasport-specific activities in the classroom. Research within this project found that educators felt more confident and had the tools to incorporate parasport lessons in their programming following their participation in the project.

Abilities Centre Durham

Initial projects focused on the development of physical literacy through parasport exposure and skill development using both a direct involvement and “train the trainer” approach. Participating schools had the opportunity to access adaptive sport equipment and followed the existing Canadian Paralympic Committee FUNdamentals resource for instruction. Educators and their students in the Durham Region were invited to spend a day at the Abilities Centre in Whitby to learn about parasports first-hand and left with resources to continue teaching skills in their classrooms. The project was focused on Grades 2-6.



Enhancing the knowledge of coaches also improves the technical abilities of athletes, leading to more athletes experiencing success in the sport of their choosing.

The CDPP volunteer trainings and resources will continue to be utilized by multi-sport events, championship tournaments and many other sports events. The recommendations from the resources can also be used in other sectors that involve inclusion of individuals with disabilities.

The OPC worked diligently over the past five years to enhance the parasport community for athletes, families, coaches, officials, volunteers, and community partners. The research, resources, and programming produced by the collaborative efforts of OPC members is a testament to the power of a shared vision and collective action.



Submitted by Leadership Committee Leads Mercedes Watson and Darda Sales.



Disability-Centred Movement: Supporting Inclusive Physical Education Resource

In association with Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA), a resource was developed with content tailored to two main audiences: Ontario elementary and secondary educators, and community organizations (including parasport organizations). The Disability-Centred Movement resource is organized by four main components: 1. Where Do I Start?; 2. Understanding the Individual Education Plan in Physical Education; 3. Physical Education Program Planning in Various Settings; and 4. Physical Activity Programming Outside of the Classroom and in Community Settings.

The content tailored to educators focuses on how to plan an inclusive physical education program for students with various disabilities. This information is important for parasport organizations as well, to better understand how inclusive physical education works in the school setting. Understanding the school system and what inclusive physical education looks like in the classroom is an essential first step in working with educators in the school setting.

Additional material provides physical activity leaders outside of the classroom (this can include community organizations, parasport organizations, recreation leaders, and intramural leaders) with information on:

- different settings, including self-contained and integrated settings, and considerations for engaging participants in physical activity in each setting;
- strategies to support participants with disabilities in physical activity programs when using a self-contained and/or integrative approach to physical activity, and;
- guiding questions for support with program planning, including attention to the physical and emotional safety of participants.

OPHEA's launch webinar for the resource saw the highest attendance rate of any of their launch webinars. There have been 11 in-person sessions for over 330 educators of the resource to date.

OPHEA is currently working with the OPC on a legacy project which includes professional development and resource support for educators, administrators and administrative staff from sport organizations to enhance relationships between the parasport and education sector.

Submitted by Education Committee Leads Kirsten Bobbie and Christina Swett.

PATHWAYS 1 PILLAR PROJECTS

This OPC Pillar was divided into two streams – Pathways 1 and Pathways 2 – and worked to align and integrate the para-sport pathway for Ontarians through three focus areas: 1) Participation Pathway, 2) Para Pathway Development, and 3) Ontario Excellence Pathway. Priority areas for the Participation Pathway included awareness and first-involvement, grassroots community participation and community transitions to sport. The primary goal was to improve entry and increase participation rates of children with disabilities in sports.



The Art and Science of Play

To achieve this goal, Pathways 1 developed several tools to help guide exploration of the complex area of grassroots participation and identify project priorities: i) values and guiding principles, ii) systems impact grid, iii) entry and participation mapping, iv) Pathway Ideas Incubator.

We identified six elements of the “entry and participation system” to concentrate our work on (Entry, Participation, Transitions, Pathway Development, Pathway Support and Sector Capacity) and four key strategies (facilitating entry, building connections and paths, strengthening community capacity and adopting innovation) to deliver a focused outcome: increased participation.

Through consultations and partnerships with OPC members, academic researchers, community development leaders, systems-change experts and the development of a “Pathway Ideas Incubator”, the Pathways 1 Pillar generated 18 projects aligned with the six areas of systems impact.

System Impact: Entry

- Entry Map
- Playgrounds to Podium

System Impact: Participation

- Community Clubs
- Post-secondary Institutions

System Impact: Transitions

- Transitions from Children’s Rehabilitation Centres (Empowered Kids Ontario)
- Try-it Conversions

System Impact: Pathway Development

- Blind Soccer
- Powering Forward (powerchair hockey)
- Para-Alpine Pathway (inter-pillar initiative with Pathways 2)

System Impact: Pathway Support

- 1:1 Community Volunteer Training
- Continuing to Play

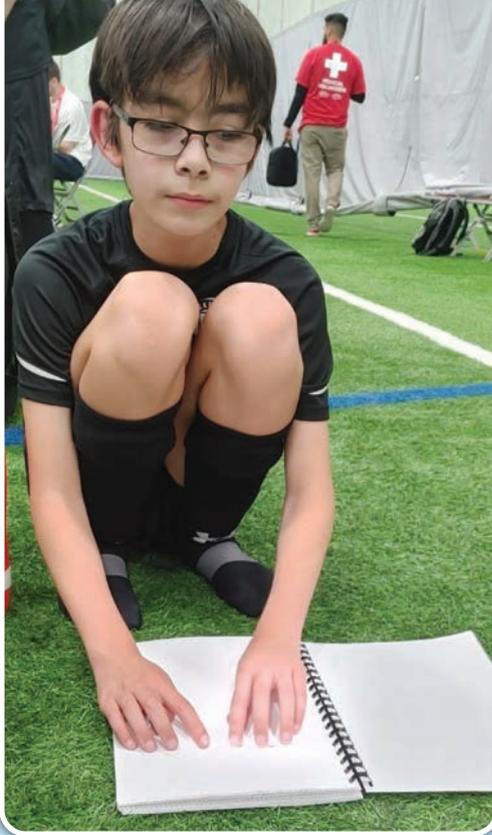
System Impact: Sector Capacity

- Parasport Games Volunteer Training
- Disability Sport Event Volunteer Guide (inter-pillar initiative)
- Introduction to Social Return on Investment Training for Grassroots Sports
- Parasport Resource Hub (inter-pillar initiative)
- Community Inclusion Lab
- Active Start Incubator
- Inclusive Facilitator Training

The projects ranged from the “art” of design thinking to the “science” of advanced coach training and pandemic response to public health guidance. In addition, a number of other projects were generated by the Pathways team that will be implemented through the Quality Participation Lab in 2024 (eg. Children’s Storybooks).

Project Highlights

The Powering Forward, Blind Soccer and Para-Alpine projects demonstrate the immediate impact of investment on entry and participation. Powering Forward surveys and research identified needs, gaps and interests of individuals who use a powerchair to participate in programs and activities across the province. A new powerchair hockey initiative is now available in the Durham Region.



The Para-Alpine initiative, delivered by CADS (Canadian Adaptive Snowsports), facilitated coach engagement, training and resources to support the growth of para-alpine interests in the Northern Region of Ontario. The Thunder Bay Adaptive Ski Workshop for example, engaged ski centres (Loch Lomond and Mt. Baldy), instructors, a para racer, five families with a child with a disability, Lakehead University and George Jeffery Children's Rehab Centre.

The Blind Soccer project consisted of OBSA-facilitated (Ontario Blind Sports Association) coach training, development, and recruitment to increase expertise and involvement in blind soccer. This project led to coaches and officials certification, and the expansion of existing infrastructure to include new grassroots programming and continued momentum for sport growth, resources and connections.

University Campus as a Community Hub: this post-secondary institutions project demonstrated the role that Ontario's universities can play as community leaders in participation. Pilot projects on campuses across Ontario have provided the opportunity to explore how institutional assets can be leveraged to create opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in campus recreation.

Community Inclusion Lab and Active Start Incubator: this project consists of several inter-related pieces – a Community Inclusion Lab for promotion of quality participation, an Active Start Incubator aimed at developing innovative entry programming, inclusive facilitator training and social return on investment for community organizations. It is designed to continue the work of the Pathways 1 team.

Impact

More Possibilities. More opportunities are needed for children and youth with disabilities to enter and participate in a wide range of sports and to demonstrate the possibilities to parents. The blind soccer and powerchair sports initiatives impacted populations with fewer opportunities to play while the para-alpine project impacted northern populations with limited resources and unique barriers of geography.

More Benefits. Participation in the pilot projects delivered physical, social, emotional and health benefits associated with physical activity and socialization. New programs, new coaches and new resources offer a promising and exciting recipe for continued impact.

More Perspective. Working together with partners from different sectors provided fresh perspectives, shared solutions and reinforced the impact of lived-experience.

The importance of initiating connections, resources and contacts across the province has, and will continue to, create more opportunities for persons with disabilities to play and participate. Each charter (project) has recognized the need, interest, gaps and opportunities for persons with disabilities, volunteers, practitioners, coaches, and families to get involved in sport and recreation in Ontario.

Path Forward

The five-year exploration allowed for a deeper understanding of parasport entry and participation and an opportunity to develop maps, uncover hidden assets, work with new partners, build new models and to bring the insights of innovation to the grassroots level.

We learned that:

- barriers to entry and participation are complex.
- participation is different than quality participation.
- critical research and knowledge is under-used.
- community support for participation differs from community investment.
- community development offers a valuable perspective.
- focused leadership in grassroots participation and entry is important for systemic change.

The path forward requires more inclusion of people with lived-experience, more validation of research in community settings, more training, more access to resources and more collective leadership, stewardship and creativity. The path forward combines the science of research with the art of community and lived-experience. We are much more aware of "what we don't know" but are confident we can build on what we learned. There is much more to do.

Submitted by Pathways 1 Committee Leads Dave Sora and Archie Allison.

PATHWAYS 2 – EXCELLENCE PILLAR PROJECTS

The purpose of this Ontario Parasport Collective Pillar was to facilitate the development of high-performance athlete planning and support specific projects linked to Gold Medal profiling. Success was determined by improved performance and results by Ontario parasport athletes.



Photo courtesy of Cross Country Ontario

Objectives

1. Support a deliberate strategy to engage Provincial Sport Organizations (PSOs), Multi-Sport Organizations, Disability Sport Organizations and National Sport Organizations (NSOs) in high-performance planning.
2. Support the effective use of sport science and sport medicine to underpin talent identification and confirmation, aligned with NSOs to support the search for new athletes.
3. Align PSOs with their respective NSOs in operational areas identified with the Sport Audit Framework.

Project Scope

- 42 individual projects supported across 14 individual PSOs over a five-year period.
- 651 individuals impacted by enhanced programming.
- 75% success rate at achieving desired KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).
- 68% increase in direct investment from PSOs towards para-specific projects over five-year period.
- Total enhanced investment of \$375,000, ranging from \$10,000 to \$40,000 total allocation to each sport partner.

Impact: Individual Level

The Pathways 2 Pillar created physical profiles on national and provincial targeted athletes:

- Identifying differences in capacity and areas for improvement.
- Setting standards for targets.
- Informing athletes on current and desired state to improve on-snow performance.
- Informing discipline-specific practitioners to modify athlete programming.

Impact: Systemic Level

The Pathways 2 Pillar supported Cross Country Ontario in developing a Para Nordic Skiing Review, rendering a 48-page review that was structured in three phases:

1. Environmental Scan – examining eight organizations in 30-60 minute interviews, looking at pros and cons to shape the ideal model for Nordic Skiing.
2. Internal Review – included interviews with eight stakeholders.
3. Program Model Development – integrated findings into a roles and responsibilities matrix that refined and clarified roles of the Para Nordic Coach, District Development Coordinators and the Para Nordic Committee.

Four key recommendations were tabled, notably hiring a part-time Para Nordic Lead to focus primarily on the recruitment of volunteers, coordination of programs and management of logistics, and included:

1. Implementing staffing and job description changes.
2. Revising the terms of reference to align committees with the new model.
3. Increase club capacity to better serve athletes with a disability at a local level.
4. Integrate High-Performance.

Overall, developing and implementing a province-wide KPI into the Canadian Sport Institute Ontario's flagship program, the Ontario High Performance Sport Initiative, targeted sports are now encouraged to deliberately improve the number of Paralympic athletes with the goal to be one strategy that addresses the systemic gap of limited depth within the Paralympic athlete pool.

The Potential

Canada is currently ranked 23rd in the world at the Summer Paralympic Games for medals won. Canada is currently ranked third in the world at the Winter Paralympic Games for medals won. To improve Canada's summer performance and sustain and improve its winter performance trends, Ontario must continue to focus on positioning deliberate support for parasport athletes and coaches aspiring to perform at domestic and international events.

Submitted by Pathways 2 Committee Leads Murray McCullough and Gwen Binsfeld.

For Fitness Sake!

*“Your adversity
can be the reason
you stop or the
reason you grow.*

**YOUR CHOICE,
YOUR OUTCOME.”**

Let’s talk about the age-old question that is always surfacing in our diverse group, ‘to train or not to train?’ But before we dive into the multi-layered topic of working out, let me give a little bit of my background.

My name is Rouzalin and I am a two-plus-year amputee who has experienced her share of trials and tribulations, dark moments, sleepless nights, and countless tears.

However, I am also the same person who keeps proving to myself just how resilient and driven I am. I’m sure that you’ve felt the same fears

and tears, and you are likely just as resilient as me! For me, the only thing that shed the slightest light in the darkest of days was fitness.

I had always been into sports, activity and working out. So, when I lost my leg I was more lost than I had ever imagined I would be. "Can I go back to working out?" I wondered. "Am I doing more damage than good to the rest of my body? Am I more prone to injury now? Where do I start? Which workouts are safe?" I questioned. And most poignant, "How will it feel to go back into a gym with fully-able people?" I had just survived the most traumatic experience of my life and repeatedly asked myself if being active was really a priority?

I can easily recall returning home from rehab – the pain, the struggle, the insecurities, the exhaustion. I live alone in a three-floor home, so life got real tough real quick as an above-knee amputee.

Early on in my return, I had a bad fall and desperately needed a RMT (Registered Massage Therapist). My RMT was over an hour away and that was a drive I wasn't capable of handling at that moment. I took myself to the nearest clinic. That day changed my life. Little did I know that that fall was the best thing to happen to me at the time. Attached to this local clinic was a perfectly placed gym.

I don't remember the massage, but I do remember walking (with my first leg and two crutches) into

that gym. That was the first sense of hope that I felt since my accident. As happy as I was, those familiar questions raced in my mind. This was a new place with strange faces in an unfamiliar environment... talk about a rush of anxiety. I figured that if I gave it a shot for a week, stayed focused, and visited during quiet times of the day, then I would really see if it was something I could commit to. Was it easy? Absolutely not. I was just learning how to walk... what was I doing at a gym?

I had a lot of gym experience prior to my accident so my biggest fears weren't so much about the workout part as much as my insecurities. I was horrified of what people would think, how they would look at me, and how different I looked next to the beautiful girls beside me. This I know for sure – the gym is where everybody looks at every body and mine wasn't like any of theirs. I now look different, walk differently, have a bionic leg, and I didn't know what I was capable of doing.

I knew I would be stared at and thought of differently. I really wasn't in a good mental state to handle any more emotions but I knew it was something I had to do for myself. I would sit in my car before going in and give myself a pep talk to summon the courage to walk through the door. "Just go in for 30 minutes" I'd bargain with myself.

One day, in my car, as I stared at the gym doors, having my usual "Mazda Meditation", I wondered to

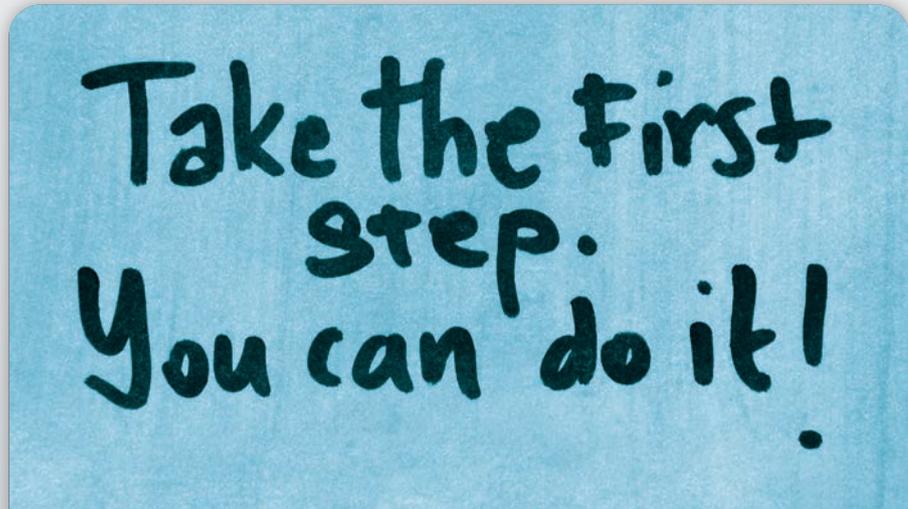
myself: "If I were able-bodied again and saw a person who looked like me get out of a car and open those gym doors to go workout, what would I think?" The answer: I would aspire to have their strength and dedication. I wouldn't judge them on how they worked out or what they looked like. They would motivate me to work harder.

So, why do we always think people are negatively judging us? Do we all instinctively assume the worst, or is it just me? When you really think about it, why would anyone judge someone else for trying their best?

Today, I can't even count the number of times that people from my gym have come up to me to tell me how much I motivate them or how they admire me. And some don't spare me any details, sharing how they were having a bad workout and saw me doing my best which kept them going. Those interactions have completely changed my mindset at the gym and even how I feel when I notice people looking at me in public, away from the gym. Don't get me wrong, I still get some gruesome questions and horrific stares, but I've learned to deal with those differently!

I have now been working out at the gym for over two years. It still has its challenges, but I've come to appreciate... "what doesn't?" I figure, I don't have a perfect day every day at work, but I still go. So why wouldn't I do the same for my body?

I'm not saying that you should join a gym today. What I am saying though, is that attention to our physical health is crucial. That can vary from anything from yoga to strength training, or walking, hiking or biking. It doesn't matter. But setting a goal and committing to it does matter. Our bodies need to move, and any form of physical activity is beneficial in a multitude of ways like weight loss, strength, balance, recovery, blood circulation, digestion, and mental health too of course!



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“... setting a goal and committing to it does matter.”



Try different activities to see what you find most rewarding. My best advice to you would be, whatever your activity of choice, always sign up or consult with a professional for three important reasons: 1) safety, 2) confidence, and 3) accountability.

Starting an activity routine might seem overwhelming. The way I looked at it was... there's always an excuse to be found as to why not to do something and there's always a reason to be had why we should. I hope you team up with a reason, and not an excuse. Your body and mind will thank you for it every time. Remember, it's not going to be perfect, but it will be worth it.

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Photo by Tetraski

WINTER

WONDERLAND

Snow Gliders and Ice Sliders for All Abilities

By Kimberley Barreda
adaptiveskiing.net

No friends on a powder day. Every diehard alpine skier and snowboarder knows this to be an absolute truth. Nothing compares to the feeling you get when you look outside and see endless pillows of fluffy, glorious piles of fun calling to you, teasing you with sparkling perfection, waiting for you to plow through and bask in the ultra-smooth ride that is FRESHIES!! There is nothing like it.

So, what are your options when Mother Nature invites you to play? You choose. With the right equipment for the conditions, we can all get outside and play in it.

Both alpine (downhill) and nordic (cross-country) skiing are adapted sports. There is equipment and programs for virtually all disabilities, sit-skis, standing frames, ski bikes, extension assists, tethers, and more. Depending on your area, you can rent a sit-ski with outriggers or join a club to test different setups to find your perfect ride.

If barreling down a mountain in a tiny metal bullet at warp speed while dodging tourists gives you second and third thoughts, but you still want the experience of being outside



Photo by Tetraski



Photo by Gliding Stars

and challenging yourself against the snow, nordic skiing gives you the same gliding fun and access to nature without the stress and line-ups. Nordic clubs maintain thousands of kilometres of groomed trails and a nordic pass is a fraction of the price of an alpine one. See adaptiveskiing.net for current models, pricing, demo schedules and more.

The price for equipment is about the same, with a good average-to-advanced-user ski frame being in the \$3,500 range. Ski poles and outriggers are extra and can run an additional \$200 to \$500 depending on material and your skiing level. If you're planning to compete or race, expect to spend double that for custom equipment.

The Tetraski is the world's only electronically-controlled ski system for individuals with complex disabilities. It's controlled with a multi-positional joystick for hand or foot operation or sip and puff (more at tetraski.us).

For arm and hand amputees, TRS Prosthetics (trsprosthetics.com/product/snow-skiing) has you covered with the DH Racer with pre-flexed poles that use a quick release snap-in system for alpine and the Ski-2 pole mounting system designed for nordic and moguls. With or without a cable, it gives you the leverage you need to skate or plant your poles quickly and precisely.

Snowboarding, once the bane of skiers and resorts everywhere, offers some additional accessible products,

with the advancement in able-bodied equipment that crosses over to adaptive.

QuickSett (black-line.co/en) rotators let you set and release the position of your foot in your snowboard binding. So, if you've been holding off on snowboarding while wondering if you'll be able to ensure that your foot and leg are in the right position to ride the lift or to skate on flats, a simple Bluetooth command takes care of that for you.

Off the Beaten Track

And then there's the new kid on the hill – snowbiking! A snowbike is essentially a bike frame with three skis, where you sit on the seat and steer by pushing on the handlebars. Check them out at sno-go.us.

For those needing some additional knee and ankle support, the ski-mojo exoskeleton ski bracing system (ski-mojo.ski/en) will help absorb impact while maintaining proper alignment and easing pain.

If back country exploring is more interesting, snow-shoeing is a great (and ancient) option. A good set of lightweight shoes and trekking poles (redfeather.com/collections/mens-snowshoes/products/trek) will get you out in the snow anywhere you like, be it your backyard or local park, and no lift ticket required! Forearm crutch users have options with SideStix crutches (sidestix.com) with a snowshoe base. Another option for snow-shoeing is combining it with a snow slider, which is like a

nordic passenger ski designed to be pushed by an ambulatory person on flat terrain (dishon-ezdesign.com). The handle takes the place of poles, maintaining stability for the driver.

How about hockey sleds (no mullet required). One of the most affordable pieces of adaptive winter sports equipment with sleds under \$1,000 (uniqueinventionsinc.com) and sledge sticks in the \$100 – \$200 range, you can use them for hockey, recreational skating and even ice fishing. Add a push handle for younger kids or those with less mobility.

Standing skaters who need support can go with a pre-made skate frame (glidingstars.org/standard-ice-walker) or easily make your own from PVC tubing and some Youtube videos.

Warm as Toast

Staying warm is a major part of winter fun and there are plenty of choices to ensure just that. Good base layers are a must and adding some heated gloves or coats (firedupx.com) will make your day toasty warm. The portable Torch Coat Heater (anseris.com) is another option, as it's just that – portable, so you can use it in any coat. For gloves, Mobile Heat (fieldsheer.com) are very comfortable and padded as well, making them easy on your hands while using crutches or outriggers. With a line of heated socks (safer than heater packs in boots for those with limited sensation) and dog coats makes this product one of my favourites.

For amputees looking for a more permanent solution, try a heated socket from Costello Prosthetics (costelloprosthetics.com). Developed by an amputee who invented the warming sleeve for phantom limb pain, the socket system keeps your limb warm and comfy, so a cold leg (or arm) won't end your day.

Northern Exposure

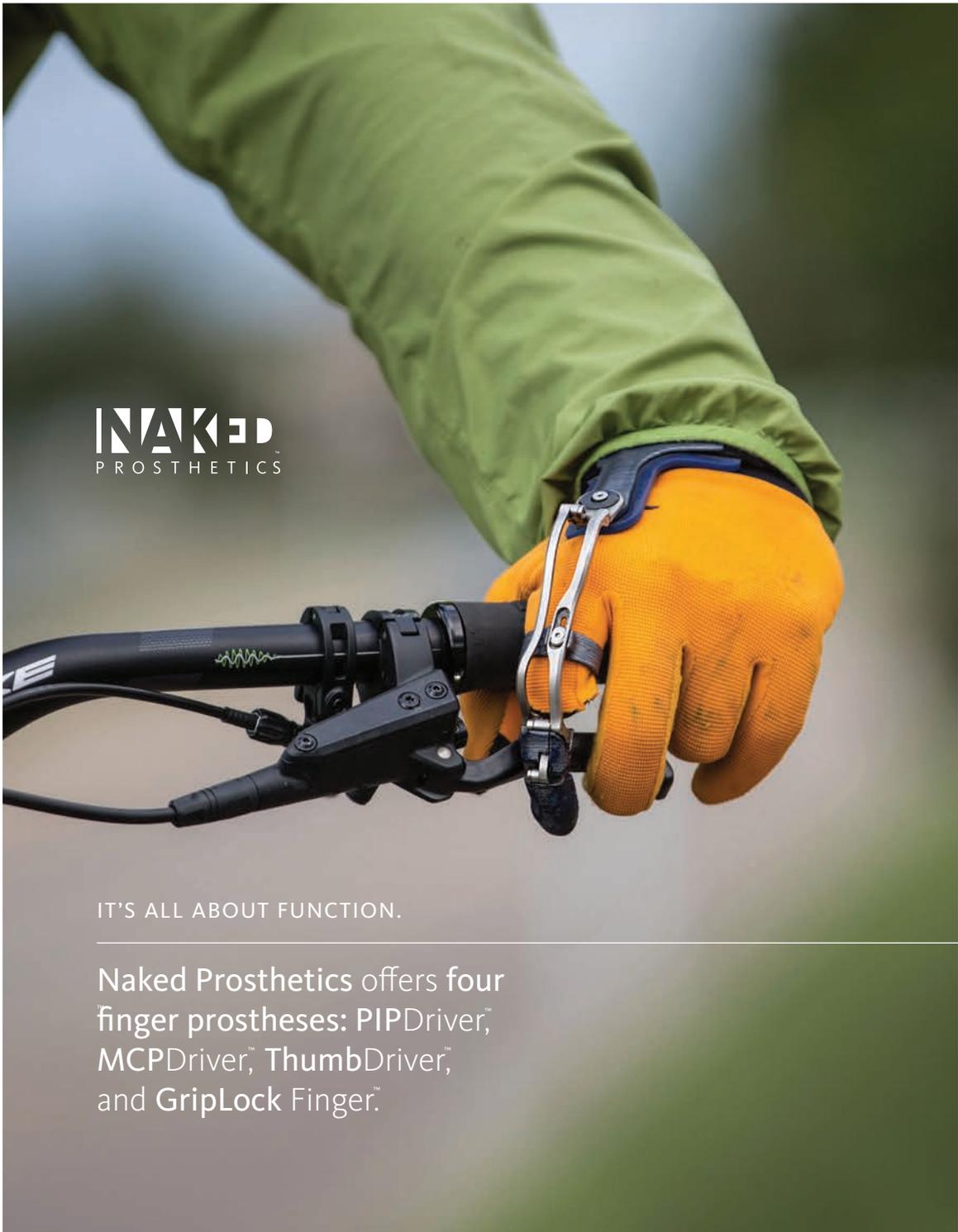
Another important consideration is exposure. Winter light can be flat and deceptively dim, but can still cause sunburn. And cold air quickly chaps exposed skin. Try a layer of Original Ski Balm (originalskibalm.com) for skin and lips to prevent wind and sun burn, even on those bluebird days.

And finally, getting to the hill safely is important too. Heated sidewalk mats from HeatTrak (heattrak.com) keep the surface warm enough to prevent snow or ice from accumulating. Combine that with some cleats for your shoes or boots from YakTrax (yaktrax.implus.com) or Stabil (Stabilwork.com) for ultimate stability.

Pray for snow and see you on the hill. Unless it's a powder day.

P.S. Did You Know? The father of adaptive skiing was an amputee. Fresh Tracks (freshtracksfilm.com) is the story of Paul Leimkuhler, the inventor of adaptive ski outriggers and the man who launched the adaptive skiing movement.





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