

**THE AMERICAN VETERAN
AUGUST 2007 EDITION**

SEGMENT TITLE: WHEELCHAIR GAMES

DANIELA MARCHUS, HOST: OUR FIRST STORY TAKES US TO MILWAUKEE WHERE MORE THAN 500 VETERANS COMPETED IN THE 27TH NATIONAL VETERANS WHEEL CHAIR GAMES. PRESENTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND THE PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA, THIS IS THE LARGEST ANNUAL WHEELCHAIR SPORTS EVENT IN THE WORLD. COKE ARIAIL REPORTS THAT FOR MANY VETERANS IT'S A LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE.

OFF CAMERA ANNOUNCER: LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

ORLANDO PEREZ/WHEELCHAIR ATHLETE: UM, I GOT HOOKED IN MY FIRST GAMES, AND I'VE COME EVER SINCE.

TRICIA WILSON/WHEELCHAIR ATHLETE: IT IS REAL COMPETITION. IT IS REAL SPORTS, AND YOU ARE PLAYING TO WIN.

SCOTT WINKLER/WHEELCHAIR ATHLETE: IT GIVES ME ONE MORE CHANCE TO DO SOMETHING FOR OUR COUNTRY.

COKE ARIAIL/REPORTER: WHEN WE SEE A WHEELCHAIR ON THE STREET WE RARELY THINK OF OLYMPIC EVENTS, BUT THIS YEAR OVER FIVE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY PLUS MEN AND WOMEN HAVE ROLLED THEIR CHAIRS TO MILWAUKEE TO COMPETE. WAYNE MILLER IS A VIETNAM VETERAN AND A COUNSELOR WHO RUNS THE VET CENTER IN SILVER SPRING MARYLAND. HE'S BEEN COMING TO THE GAMES SINCE 1995, AND ALREADY HAS A SHELF FULL OF MEDALS.

WAYNE MILLER/WHEELCHAIR ATHLETE: I DIDN'T REALIZED WHAT THE REASON FOR GOING TO THE GAMES WERE, YOU KNOW, 'CAUSE WHEN I FIRST STARTED, IT WAS DON'T YOU DARE BEAT ME ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAD MORE OF A DISABILITY THAN ME. AND IT CLICKED. THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE. WE'RE HERE NOT TO WIN THE MEDAL, BUT TO TEACH SOMEONE ELSE HOW TO WIN THE MEDAL. AND WHEN I STARTED DOING THAT, LIFE GOT BEAUTIFUL.

ARIAIL: ORLANDO PEREZ IS ALSO A VETERAN OF THE GAMES. PEREZ, THE FATHER OF THREE, SAYS HE IS INSPIRED BY HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN.

PEREZ: FOR ME, TO GET BETTER IN THESE GAMES IS NOT JUST FOR A MEDAL. IT'S JUST 'CAUSE I NEED TO GET BETTER SO THE OTHER VETERANS AND THE KIDS THAT ARE WATCHING ME, THEY NEED TO

KNOW THAT IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO THEM, THEY GOT, THEY CAN BE AS GOOD AS ME OR EVEN BETTER.

ARIAIL: TRICIA WILSON IS A VETERAN, A MOTHER AND AN INDEPENDENT BUSINESS WOMAN. WHEN SHE FIRST CAME TO THE GAMES TWELVE YEARS AGO SHE WAS UNCERTAIN IF THEY WERE FOR HER.

WILSON: THERE WERE TWO MEMBERS WHO JUST DID NOT GIVE UP ON ME. AND I KEPT TELLING THEM, YOU NEED TO LEAVE ME ALONE, I'M, I'M HAVING A HARD TIME DEALING WITH THIS AND THEY DIDN'T. AND I THANK GOD EVERYDAY THAT THEY DID NOT LEAVE ME ALONE. AND FINALLY, THEY CONVINCED ME IN 1995 TO COME TO THE NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES. AND, IT ABSOLUTELY CHANGED MY LIFE.

ARIAIL: THE WEEK BEFORE THE GAMES SCOTT WINKLER BROKE THE PARALYMPIC WORLD RECORD FOR SHOT PUT. NOW HE HAS A NEW GOAL IN HIS LIFE.

WINKLER: I DON'T REALLY WANT THE MEDALS. WHAT I GET IS, IF I CAN INSPIRE ONE PERSON OUT OF 100, THAT IS MY GOAL IN LIFE.

NATURAL SOUND: YOU DO 1, 2, THEN DROP, THEN PUSH, ELBOW UP HIGHER.

ARIAIL: THE WHEELCHAIR GAMES ARE HELPING SCOTT ACHIEVE THAT GOAL. A VERY SPECIAL FEATURE OF THE GAMES IS KIDS DAY WHERE LOCAL DISABLED YOUTH IN WHEELCHAIRS CAN COME AND INTERACT WITH THESE ATHLETES.

NATURAL SOUND: IF YOU'RE HAVING FUN, GIMME THUMBS UP, GIMME A SMILE. GIMME A WINNING SMILE. THAT'S THE WINNING SMILE.

WINKLER: I ACTUALLY WANT TO DO IT BECAUSE THEY PICKED ME AS, PICKED ME UP AS A MENTOR FOR KIDS, AND I THINK THAT'S GREAT. TO ME, I LOOK AT THE KIDS AS OUR FUTURE.

WINKLER: WE CLEAR THE PATH. THEY PAVE IT WITH GOLD.

ARIAIL: FOR MANY OF THESE ATHLETES THE GAMES ARE OFTEN A FIRST STEP IN CREATING A NEW LIFE.

MILLER: THERE ARE NO WORDS OR FEELINGS OR ANYTHING. IT'S THE SAME AS YOUR FIRST HOMERUN. IT'S THE SAME AS YOUR FIRST STRIKE OUT. IT'S THE SAME AS YOUR FIRST DATE.

PEREZ: SPORT IS JUST THE BEGINNING. IT'LL TRANSFER INTO THEIR LIVES, AND THEN IT WILL BECOME SOMETHING BIGGER. I CAN GO TO SCHOOL. I CAN BECOME A LAWYER.

WILSON: EVERY TIME YOU GET A NEW VETERAN HERE, EVERY TIME YOU GET A ROOKIE, AND YOU GET THEM TO COME TO THE GAMES, IT IS LIKE YOU EXPERIENCE YOUR ROOKIE YEAR ALL OVER AGAIN. YOU LOOK AT THEIR FACE FOR THE SAME SIGNS THAT YOU HAVE. YOU LOOK AT IT, AND YOU KNOW WHEN THEY JUST GOT HOOKED. LAUGHTER.

NATURAL SOUND: YOU DIDN'T THINK I COULD DO IT, DID YOU? I KNEW YOU COULD!

PEREZ: WE ARE VETERANS. WE ARE FAMILY. WE COMPETE AS HARD AS WE WANT ON THE COURT, WE LEAVE THE BLOOD IN THE COURT, BUT WHEN WE COME OUT, WE'RE BROTHERS, BECAUSE WE ALL GOT INJURED DOING THE SAME THING, DEFENDING THIS COUNTRY AND LOVING THIS COUNTRY SO MUCH.

MILLER: IF TOMORROW MY DREAMS ARE GONE I'VE WORKED FOR ALL MY LIFE, AND I HAD TO START AGAIN WITH JUST MY CHILDREN AND MY WIFE, THANK MY LUCKY STARS TO BE LIVING HERE TODAY 'CAUSE THE FLAG STILL STANDS FOR FREEDOM, AND YOU CAN'T TAKE THAT AWAY.

MARCHUS: FOR ABOUT ONE-QUARTER OF THESE VETERANS THIS WAS THEIR FIRST TASTE OF ORGANIZED WHEELCHAIR SPORTS COMPETITION. SCOTT WINKLER HAS SINCE BROKEN HIS OWN WORLD SHOT PUT RECORD AND HOPES TO DO IT AGAIN SOON. SCOTT AND ORLANDO PEREZ HAVE BEEN SELECTED TO COMPETE THIS YEAR IN THE PARALYMPIC GAMES IN BRAZIL.

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