

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Athlete Profile (National) Wayne Field – Looking to Get Beat!



That is correct. Wayne Field is looking forward to going to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Anchorage, Alaska so he can get beat. To clarify, he quickly adds, “To get beat by people I have helped.” Field, who has won over 200 gold medals in swimming competitions, helps other athletes with disabilities at the swimming clinics he conducts.

Field has coached a number of wheelchair athletes and has watched them pass him by in the lanes. “They come back and they beat me,” he says, and he considers those his proudest moments in 14 years of competition. “The end result – if I could help all of those people beat me who aren’t doing too well, and I didn’t win a medal as a result, I would feel very successful.”

At the age of 80, Field practices about three times a week, but admits the quadruple bypass surgery he had in 2005 seriously reduced his time in the water. Last year at the Games in Minneapolis, he was forced to dry land because of a leg infection. This year though, it is back in the pool and some serious swimming for Field. He competes in the Class V, masters division for athletes age 40 and up.

Field is a combat-wounded veteran of World War II. He was a runner while he was in the Army and was good at it. While serving overseas in Belgium, he was injured by shrapnel and was “pinned down and it froze the legs,” he says. Later, he had another incident in Germany. After his military service, he returned to the States, went home to the farm, graduated from Syracuse University with a bachelor’s degree in management, married Pat (who will be with him in Anchorage), raised six children and eventually retired as a computer whiz. The couple now has seven grandchildren and love to travel.

Because of neurological damage and severe arthritis, Field has used a wheelchair for the past 20 years. Before that, he was able to get around using canes and crutches.

Although the time he’s able to spend training might be a little less than it was in the past, his enthusiasm is not. “I love participating in the Games,” Field says. “The competition has improved my body and mind, and I look forward to continuing.”

Whether he wins the gold this year or not, Wayne Field will surely be smiling at his opponents because he is truly a winner in any sport. Even if he does get beat.