

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Athlete Profile (Local)

Alan Lewis – My Favorite Highlight, Kids Day

Milwaukee resident Alan Lewis, 25, a combat wounded veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, will be competing in his fourth National Veterans Wheelchair Games this June, taking place in his home town. He joined the U.S. Army in July 2001 and was stationed at Ft. Stewart in Hinesville, Ga., before his 2003 deployment to Kuwait.

The day the U.S. Forces first attacked, March 20, 2003, Lewis crossed into southern Iraq from Kuwait. Later, on July 16, Lewis' company was on patrol on Highway 8 in Baghdad when his life changed forever. It was mid-afternoon during an hourly check when Lewis and his lieutenant drove over a land mine and their vehicle exploded. "I was tossed from the vehicle. I remember everything that happened at that moment, but it's too difficult to put into words," he said.

Airlifted immediately to Baghdad, Lewis remained sedated. He woke up two weeks later in Landstuhl, Germany, with bandages wrapped around one arm, his eyes and both legs. Doctors there had managed to save his arm and eyes, but both legs had been amputated below the knee. "Initially, I felt as though I'd let my company down," Lewis said. "I needed to be out there fighting with them. Now, I realize that things like this happen for a reason and I have more time to spend at home with my kids."

Lewis is the father of two girls and is excited about them seeing him compete at the Games this year. "I'm so glad the Games are being held in Milwaukee," he said. "My family, friends and I have been waiting for this for two years. They get to watch me compete; plus, they are going to volunteer at the Games."

When asked if he has a favorite highlight from past Games, Lewis clearly stated that it was Kids Day, an important part of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games since 2001. Kids Day provides local disabled youth a wonderful introduction to the world of adaptive sports and recreation, along with the opportunity to interact with veteran athletes competing at the Games. Lewis was selected as a mentor to the children participating the past two years. "I love kids," he said. "To have the opportunity to make a difference in these kids' life is wonderful. You can see it in their faces."

In Milwaukee, Lewis will compete in basketball, handcycling, airguns, weightlifting and the javelin field event. He has also attended several National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinics, snowboarding the Rocky Mountains by using no adapted equipment. "When you come home from Iraq, you feel a loss because you lack the camaraderie you once felt with your company," he said. "When I'm at [these events], even though these men and women aren't necessarily the ones I fought with, I still feel that sense of camaraderie among veterans who can relate to my situation. I love to hang out with them."

