

# National Veterans Wheelchair Games



## Athlete Profile (National)

### Jimmy May – Consistent Competitor Still Upping His Game!



In the 27<sup>th</sup> year of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, U.S. Army veteran Jimmy May, a 57-year-old athlete from Midlothian, Va., is competing in his 27<sup>th</sup> annual event. “It’s a record that can never be broken,” he says with pride. May was recognized during the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Games in 2005 for his perfect attendance. He is one of only two veterans still competing in the national rehabilitation program, presented each year by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), able to claim such a record.

For May, competing in the Games was just the beginning of a life enhanced by regular sports competition. Today, he is active in an area basketball team that competed nationally; a winter bowling league in which he is the secretary of nine teams; and competition in a PVA billiards tournament in which he recently came in third place. In addition, he is President of the Independent Wheelchair Athletic Association. “The National Veterans Wheelchair Games have been a big part of my life since my injury,” he said. “It has catapulted me into a very busy sports life that I hope is encouraging to the other veterans.”

A combat-wounded veteran of Vietnam, May was injured when he was struck in the back by a homemade mortar shell. A paraplegic, he currently receives care at the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia, the facility that hosted the very first Wheelchair Games in 1981. May was 30 years old at the time. “Now, I just try to keep up (with the younger athletes) as best as I can,” he said.

“The devotion of and support from my wife of 38 years, Sue, two grown sons and precious granddaughter, Savannah, who is two years old, have made all of these years of competition so much sweeter,” May said. “All life’s challenges are easier when you have the kind of support that I have been blessed to receive, and it makes it so much better each time I come back to compete in the Games.”

Each year, May does his best to pass along to the newcomers what he’s learned over the years, encouraging the first-timers to get involved. “Just roll over and introduce yourself,” he tells them. “Enjoy the friendship, the camaraderie and being able to be around other people just like you.”

This year, Jimmy May will be back again, when the 27<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games are held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 19-23, 2007. As always, he looks forward to the opportunity, saying, “Here’s to another year – to meet the new athletes and let the competition begin anew!”