



## **Athlete Profile (Local)**

### **Dave Nelson – When I Compete, There’s Nothing I Can’t Do!**

In July 2008, Dave Nelson, 45, of Omaha, will be competing in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games for the first time, since the annual event is taking place right in his home town. A veteran of the Navy, Nelson served from 1980-1985 in Norfolk, Va., and Jacksonville, Fla. He signed up, he says, “To see the world, travel, work with different things that a farm boy would not have experienced, and consider the service as a career.”

Prior to a serious car accident in 1983 that resulted in the amputation of his left leg and the use of a prosthetic device, Nelson was a Navy search and rescue swimmer. Now, he says, “Having such an accident makes you appreciate the things you do have.” After his military service, Nelson worked for the U.S. Post Office, retiring in 1999 after further surgery on his leg. A married father of three boys, he now volunteers with Meals on Wheels and coaches a high school bowling team.

Nelson has always been active in sports, having wrestled in high school and in the Navy, and participating in bowling and track as well. He enjoys softball and has played with the Omaha Barons, a local softball team for players with disabilities. He continues to bowl, using his prosthesis. For the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, Nelson will compete from a wheelchair and plans to enter the bowling, softball and handcycling events, as well as swimming. To prepare for his events, Nelson said, “I need to practice bowling using the wheelchair. Also, before it got cold out I was practicing handcycling. That really shows you how out of shape you are!”

Nelson found out about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games from his coach and literature he picked up at the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System in Omaha. “The Wheelchair Games level out the competition field,” he said. “There are different levels of competition. I want to do my best. I am still able to compete and I know it will make me feel better about myself. I also plan to make new friends from all over the country.”

Dave Nelson says, “The others competing will inspire me and I can help bring out the best in other people as well. The sky is the limit. When I compete, there is nothing I can’t do. When veterans compete, they can show others what they do have and not what they don’t.”

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