

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Athlete Profile (National)

Tracy Jones – Going Full Throttle

Once a racecar driver reaches the finish line, the speed of the car slows, the goal has been met and the race is over. U.S. military veteran Tracy Jones, however, reaches the finish line, passes it and then continues on. The race is never over.



Jones, 43, of Palmetto, Georgia, was serving as a convoy commander during Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2003 when a sudden vehicular accident left him a quadriplegic. "I was injured on base by a freak accident," Jones said. "I was run over by a truck that sprays water to keep dust levels down. He just didn't see me."

Despite his injury, Jones hardly ever stays in one place for too long. His high level of activity matches his new found interest – NASCAR racing at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

His attraction to racing was born out of a Memorial Day visit to a race near Augusta, Georgia. Jones, who served in the Army and another veteran, who served in the Marine Corps, were both attending the ceremony. They both received standing ovations. "It was really exciting," Jones said. "I got to meet Jeff Gordon, Tony Stewart and Jimmie Johnson."

Jones seems to have "traded paint" with a few drivers at the race, leaving the exposure to fast cars and the excitement of racing coursing in his veins. It makes sense then, why his favorite event at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games is the "Powerchair 200" race, a track event for athletes using motorized wheelchairs. "It's the rush of going fast in your chair," he says. "Oh yeah, I like to go fast!"

To Jones, being in the fast lane means more than just participating in events at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. As he explains, "I go on cruises, to family reunions, shopping, to the movies. I do everything. I never let the grass grow under my feet." Because one person doesn't make a race, Jones encourages other veterans to participate in the Games and in life. "I tell them to go outside the box and experience new things," he said. "Once you go one time, you'll find yourself going every year and wanting to do new things."

Like the recreation therapist at the VA medical facility in Augusta who encouraged him, Jones has inspiration of his own to pass along. "Even though you're injured, you have to learn to do things differently," he said. "There's a whole world for you to enjoy and have fun in. Nobody is stopping you but you."