



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 2, 2008

Canada Cup A Preview of Beijing Paralympics

Vancouver, BC -- Wheelchair rugby players from eight countries will compete at Bonsor Recreation Centre in Burnaby, BC June 27 - 29, 2008 in their last international competition before meeting at the Paralympic Games in Beijing in August.

The 2008 Canada Cup International Wheelchair Rugby Tournament, hosted by BC Wheelchair Sports Association (BCWSA) and the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association (CWSA), promises to be an exciting preview of the Paralympics with the 2004 Paralympic Gold medal winning team from New Zealand attending and the team from the United States looking to defend its 2006 Canada Cup gold medal. Canada is looking to improve on its Bronze medal. They will be challenged by teams from Japan, Australia, Great Britain, Germany and China.

Canada's team line-up includes Erika Schmütz, who will also be on the Canadian Team at this summer's Paralympic Games. New regulations for wheelchair rugby at the Paralympics stipulate that each team must have one female player on their roster if they bring the full complement of 12 players. Other teams bringing their female players to the Canada Cup are China, with Wenli Zhang and Great Britain with Josie Pearson.

BC players on Canada's roster include Ian Chan of Richmond, Say Luangkhamdeng from Surrey, Travis Murao of Vancouver and Trevor Hirschfield of Parksville, all of whom are vying for the nod to join Team Canada in Beijing. The team won the World Championships in 2002 and a Silver medal at the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens. Most recently they won the Silver Medal at the 2007 Oceania Wheelchair Rugby Championships in Australia.

Wheelchair rugby, originally called Murderball due to the aggressive nature of the game, is a sport with roots going back to wheelchair basketball and ice hockey. It was developed by five Canadians from Winnipeg, MB as a quadriplegic equivalent to wheelchair basketball. One of those Canadians is Duncan Campbell who sits on the 2008 Canada Cup committee. Earlier this year Wheelchair Rugby was declared a Heritage Sport by the Canadian Federal government, one of only six sports given that designation and the only sport for athletes with a disability to be honoured in this way.

Competition at Bonsor Recreation Centre (6550 Bonsor Ave.) in Burnaby begins Friday, June 27 with round robin games with Bronze and Gold medal finals on Sunday, June 29. Results and same day video coverage of the games can be seen at www.bcwheelchairsports.com.

BCWSA is a not-for-profit organization devoted to providing opportunities for athletes with physical disabilities. Since being founded in 1971, the association has worked to provide access to quality programs for athletes with disabilities. This has always been the focus and continues to be what drives the association. In partnership with other Provincial Wheelchair Sports Associations across Canada, BCWSA is dedicated to promoting wheelchair sport and community awareness.

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