

STRONG PARALYMPIC TEAM EMERGES FROM '08 U.S. PARALYMPIC TEAM TRIALS

TRACK & FIELD

The road to Beijing came through Tempe, Ariz., where the 2008 U.S. Paralympic Team Trials - Track & Field took place. The competition ran from June 12-15 at Arizona State University (ASU) and served as the sole qualifying event in track and field for the 2008 Paralympic Games. Competing were 167 athletes, coaches, and guide runners from 33 states as well as Canada, Ireland and Venezuela.

The track at ASU was the perfect training ground for the athletes, as it is the only track in the United States that is built of the exact materials used to build the track that athletes will be racing on in Beijing.

RECORD-BREAKING PERFORMANCES

The event made history as more than 20 Americas' records and one world record were broken throughout the weekend. Former Marine Sgt. Carlos Leon, Birmingham, Ala., a Wounded Warrior, shattered the world record in the men's F52 discus with a new world record throw of 22.04m (previous 19.52m).

In the men's F54 discus, Matthew Brown, Idalou, Texas, broke the Americas' record by throwing 44.77m.

High jump world record holder Jeff Skiba, Samammish, Wash./Chula Vista, Calif., finished first in the men's F44 high jump with a height of 2.00m. He also broke the Americas' record in the men's F44 javelin with a distance of 53.54m.

Wounded Warrior Scott Winkler, Grovetown, Ga., set a new Americas' standard in the men's F55 shot put with a throw of 10.97m. The previous record was 8.99m.

Julie Crisp, Panama City, Fla./Portland, Ore., set a new Americas' record in the women's F37 javelin with a distance of 18.81m. The previous record, which had stood since 2003, was 18.22m.

Thrower Robyn Stawski, Tampa, Fla., set new Americas' records in the women's F33 shot put, with a throw of 5.67m and the women's F33 discus with 12.93m.

Other Highlights

Joshua George, Champaign, Ill., finished first in the men's T54 wheelchair division, with a time of 10:58.64. In second was Tyler Byers, Washington, D.C./Spokane, Wash., with 10:59.42. Adam Bleakney, Champaign, Ill., was in third with 11:00.26.

George also placed first in the men's T53 800m in 1:40.07. Bleakney was third in 1:40.30.

Jordan Bird, Wichita, Kan., placed first in the men's T54 800m.

Elexis Gillette, Chula Vista, Calif., the only participant in the men's F11 long jump, had a best jump of 5.56m.

In the women's competition:

Jill Kennedy, Charlottesville, Va., placed first in the F40 discus with a throw of 19.89m.

Wheelchair racer Amanda McGrory, Kennett Square, Pa./Champaign, Ill., finished the 5,000m in 12:04.56 for a first-place finish. In second was Cheri Blauwet, Menlo Park, Calif., with 12:04.71. McGrory also won the T53 800m with a final time of 1:52.49.



Carlos Leon

Tatyana McFadden, Clarksville, Md., won the women's T54 800m final in 1:50.93.

From the very competitive field, 44 athletes were selected to become the U.S.A. Paralympic Track & Field Team headed to Beijing. Of those, 24 are returning Paralympians. They are: Danny Andrews, Adam Bleakney, Tyler Byers, Edwin Cockrell, Scott Danberg, Brian Frasure, Joshua George, Elexis Gillette, Peter Gottwald, Tony Iniguez, Royal Mitchell, Nelacey Porter, Marlon Shirley, Jeff Skiba, Casey Tibbs, Cheri Blauwet, Julie Crisp, Jessica Galli, Jennifer Goeckel, April Holmes, Jill Kennedy, Cheryl Leitner, Tatyana McFadden, and Shirley Reilly.

The events included only the track and field events that will be contested at the 2008 Paralympic Games. Eligibility was based on IPC Athletics Classification System and event qualification standards issued by U.S.

Paralympics. U.S. and International athletes with physical disabilities and visual impairments who met the event qualification standards were eligible to enter the competition. Athletes that did not meet the qualifying standards were able to enter the All-Comers Division in the 100m, 200m and 400m track events. The majority of field competitors were classified in the amputee division and the majority of the track competitors were classified in the wheelchair division. The event included athletes from the age of 13 to 59. The median age of all the

competitors was 24 years old.

The event was sanctioned by International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Athletics. The IPC Athletics and IAAF rules governed the competition. Approximately 35 Local Organizing Committee (LOC) members served over 950 total hours for the event, 34 officials served over 475 total hours during the competition and 271 volunteers served over 3,500 hours to make this event run smoothly.

Arizona Disabled Sports and the City of Mesa Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities were the Local Organizing Committee.

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