Ethos is the best chair I’ve ever had. I love how it looks and that you can’t feel the effects of bumps on the sidewalk. ISO Tech makes it so much smoother than my last wheelchair. It’s a really innovative design.

Paul Moran
Five time Paralympian in sitting volleyball and wheelchair tennis

Discover Your Ethos at kimobility.com
16 Mental Shift
Following the postponement of the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics until 2021 because of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, some hopeful athletes have had to refocus.
by Shelly Anderson

22 Parafencing Prowess
Team USA Parafencers say there’s an art to the sport — which involves blades, instinct and timing. As they prepare for the Tokyo Paralympics, they want to get others involved, too.
by Jonathan Gold

28 Staying Strong
With the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic shutting sports events and gyms down across the country, some Paralympians found ways to adapt and still practice their training — albeit differently.
by John Groth

Digital Highlights on sportsnspokes.com
JUNIOR ATHLETE OF THE YEAR
SPORTS ’N SPOKES will announce its Junior Athlete of the Year award winner later this summer, so visit the website to find out who received the honor.

WHEELCHAIR SOFTBALL TOURNEY
The Kansas City Royals Wheelchair Softball Club is hosting a wheelchair softball tournament July 11 at Pleasant Valley Park in Kansas City, Mo., and SPORTS ’N SPOKES will be there. Interested players can sign up at softball.registerKC.com. Check out our Facebook page and the website for photo and video coverage.
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On the cover: Four-time Wheelchair World Championship team member Ellen Geddes, right, parafences for Team USA. Photo by Ginny Boydston.
My Opinion

Digital Change

Whether you’re reading this month’s column in the traditional printed version of SPORTS ’N SPOKES (S’NS) or taking it in through our digital platform, how we consume media has come a long way in a relatively short period of time.

Advances in technology mean you no longer need to be physically holding a newspaper, magazine or book to enjoy its contents. The growth of laptops, smartphones and tablets allows you to read what you want, when and where you want.

All that technical advancement and growth has changed how many people get their news and information. People are foregoing traditional printed newspaper or magazine subscriptions in favor of digital formats.

That has caused a change in the business model of countless publishers across the country, and S’NS is joining them. Beginning in January 2021, S’NS will be going to a totally digital format and ceasing the production of the actual printed magazine. S’NS isn’t going away — we’re just adapting to the times.

We’ve talked about this switch for some time, and many factors led to our decision, including financial. However, I believe the biggest influence is how many benefits the digital version provides that simply aren’t possible in a printed magazine.

One of the features I know many of our readers truly appreciate is being able to navigate through the magazine with voice recognition software, such as Dragon. Another advantage is being able to increase the font size of the words in a particular article to make reading easier without breaking out the reading glasses. Other features include embedded videos and live links to websites.

What I see as one of the big pluses of a digital S’NS is being able to access years’ worth of issues on your device. Issues can also be downloaded to your device for enjoyment when internet service may not be available, such as when you’re on an airline flight.

And all of the back issues become immediately available to you even if you’re a brand new magazine subscriber. Wow, instant S’NS library! Want another fun feature? Your new library is searchable. Want to read about the Boston Marathon? Enter it into the search bar, and every article with a mention of the famed race will instantly appear for your reading pleasure.

The first digital version of S’NS was issued in September 2014. I have that one, as well as every issue since, downloaded onto my iPad.

All current print subscriptions will automatically be converted to digital only starting with the January 2021 issue. If you’re a current subscriber and don’t already receive an email that looks like the photo below, contact us to provide your email for uninterrupted delivery of S’NS.

Accessing the magazine on your mobile device simply requires you to download the free S’NS application from either iTunes or Google Play. Then, enter your email address and password at the login screen. Your password is your customer number.

If you have any concerns or questions about your current subscription and its transition to digital, feel free to shoot an email to suzi@pvamag.com.

Now in its 45th year of publication, SPORTS ’N SPOKES is the nation’s premier magazine for wheelchair sports and recreation primarily for those with spinal-cord injury, spina bifida, amputation and some congenital defects. Not responsible for unsolicited material. SPORTS ’N SPOKES neither endorses nor guarantees any of the products or services advertised. © 2020 Paralyzed Veterans of America. All rights reserved. Reproduction of the whole or any part of the contents without permission is prohibited.
Beginning with the January 2021 issue, SPORTS 'N SPOKES is moving to a digital-only platform and ceasing the production of the printed magazine. SPORTS 'N SPOKES isn’t going away – we’re just adapting to the times.

All print subscriptions will be converted to digital. We will deliver the same great sports and recreation content, directly to your desktop or mobile device, along with many additional benefits that are just not possible with a print publication.

- Lower subscription rate
- Faster delivery
- Ability to change the size of type
- Ability to download an issue
- Navigate the pages with a click of the mouse or swipe of your finger
- Searchable issues
- Library of past issues included
- Easy to access additional information with live links to websites and emails
- Extra coverage using embedded video and audio
- Environmentally friendly

An email address is required to receive the digital issue. Email your name, mailing address and current email address to suzi@pvamag.com no later than Dec. 1 in order to receive the January 2021 issue.
ATHLETICS

VA Cancels Two Sports Events

In early June, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced two sporting events — the Sept. 13–18 National Disabled Veterans TEE (Training, Exposure and Experience) Tournament in Riverside, Iowa, and the Sept. 20–25 National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic in San Diego — have been canceled because of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The VA made this decision out of an abundance of caution for the health, safety and well-being of veterans and their families, employees and community partners, it says in a press release.

The VA plans to hold the 2021 National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic in San Diego, and the VA and Disabled American Veterans (DAV) plan to host the 2021 National Disabled Veterans TEE Tournament in Iowa.

World Championships Moved

The 2021 World Para Athletics Championships in Kobe, Japan, have been rescheduled because of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, moving to Aug. 26–Sept. 4, 2022. The Games were originally scheduled for Sept. 17–26, 2021, but were moved to 2022 to avoid a clash with the 2021 Tokyo Paralympic Games.

In 2022, it will mark the 10th year of the World Para Athletics Championships. More than 1,300 athletes from 100 countries are expected to compete.

The World Para Athletics Championships will be the first major para sport competition in Japan after the Paralympics.

FOOTBALL

USA Wheelchair Football League

Wheelchair football could be coming to a city near you this fall.

With the help of the National Football League-Bob Woodruff Foundation Healthy Lifestyles and Creating Community grant, Move United announced the launch of the USA Wheelchair Football League in May. It plans to start the league in four cities — Chicago (Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association), Kansas City (Midwest Adaptive Sports), Los Angeles (Angel City Sports) and Phoenix (Ability360 Adaptive Sports & Fitness Center) — this summer.

“We believe that sports has the unique power to bring people together and to push them beyond what is possible, redefining their ability,” says Move United Executive Director Glenn Merry in a press release.

Marine Corps Cpl. Bart Salgado helped build the Wheelchair Football League and will serve as Angel City’s coach in Los Angeles. Salgado helped organize the Blister Bowl wheelchair football tournament in the early 2000s and served on its rules committee. He helped structure the rules and guidelines for the Wheelchair Football League.

“It’s unbelievable to see how far I’ve come. I’m grateful to have a hand in starting this league,” Salgado says in a press release.

For more information, visit moveunitedsport.org.

BASKETBALL

NWBA Award Winners Announced

The National Wheelchair Basketball Association in March announced its 2019-2020 season intercollegiate and junior division award winners, in graphic on pages 9 and 10.
### Women (Intercollegiate Division)

#### Academic All-American Team

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weronika Maksimowicz</td>
<td>University of Alabama</td>
<td>Georgia Inglis</td>
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<td>Jordan Lee</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td>Marissa Bartels</td>
<td>University of Wisconsin-Whitewater</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abby Farrell</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
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#### Honorable Mention Academic All-American Team

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<td>Rosalie Lalonde</td>
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<td>Kate Lang</td>
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<tr>
<td>Élodie Tessier</td>
<td>University of Texas-Arlington</td>
<td>Lizzy Guerin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kady Dandeneau</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td>Catha Weiss</td>
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<td>Jordan Chilton</td>
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<td>Marissa Bartels</td>
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#### All-Rookie Team

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<tr>
<td>Darlene Hunter</td>
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<td>Arinn Young</td>
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<td>University of Texas-Arlington</td>
<td>Annabelle Lindsay</td>
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<td>Ali Ibanez</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
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<td>Josie DeHart</td>
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<td>Kady Dandeneau</td>
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**Player of the Year:** Kady Dandeneau, University of Illinois

**Frank M. Brasile Sportsmanship Award:** Lindsey Zurbrugg, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

### Men (Intercollegiate Division)

#### Academic All-American Team

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<tr>
<td>Phil Evans</td>
<td>University of Arizona</td>
<td>Will Speed</td>
<td>Edinboro University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eric Hamilton Jr.</td>
<td>University of Nebraska-Omaha</td>
<td>Alex Hummer</td>
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<td>Kyle Jankowski</td>
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<td>Antoine Gray</td>
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<td>Adryan Powell</td>
<td>University of Texas-Arlington</td>
<td>Brian Garber</td>
<td>University of Arizona</td>
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<tr>
<td>AJ Messmer</td>
<td>University of Wisconsin-Whitewater</td>
<td>Chazye Wolf</td>
<td>Edinboro University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ryan Kie</td>
<td>University of Arizona</td>
<td>Amen Alyaisty</td>
<td>University of Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke Robinson</td>
<td>Auburn University</td>
<td>Eric Hamilton</td>
<td>University of Nebraska-Omaha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Koda Inman-Ablistrom</td>
<td>University of Missouri</td>
<td>Karl Yares</td>
<td>University of Arizona</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grady Gordon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sidney Attingbe</td>
<td>University of Missouri</td>
<td>Antoine Gray</td>
<td>University of Texas-Arlington</td>
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<td>Jerome Meyer</td>
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<td>Fabian Romo</td>
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<td>Adryan Powell</td>
<td>University of Texas-Arlington</td>
<td>Jesus Villa</td>
<td>Southwest Minnesota State University</td>
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<td>Tyler Buysse</td>
<td>University of Missouri</td>
<td>Calin Higgins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chazye Wolf</td>
<td>Edinboro University</td>
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**Player of the Year:** Jesus Villa, Southwest Minnesota State University

**Frank M. Brasile Sportsmanship Award:** Chazye Wolf, Edinboro University

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National Wheelchair Basketball Association Awards (continued on page 10)
In The Game

**POWERLIFTING**

Muratova, Torres Win Online Titles

Russia’s Vera Muratova and Colombia’s Fabio Torres each earned individual early-May titles in the first Online World Cup Series, presented by BIGSER.

Muratova was named the best female powerlifter, and Torres was named the best male powerlifter among 25 athletes from 11 countries who submitted videos from home to World Para Powerlifting during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

A three-time Paralympic champion, Muratova scored 122.14 points, defeating fellow Russian teammate Anastasia Mamadamirova (108.10) and Kazakhstan’s Raushan Koishibayeva (103.92).

Torres finished with 194.76 points, defeating Italy’s Donato Telesca (176.52) and Colombia’s Jainer Cantillo (173.25).

The Online World Cup featured a team competition, too, with four captains selecting two female and two male powerlifters. Teams scored points for each athlete’s individual performance.

Team Blue, featuring three-time Paralympic gold medalist Amelia Perez from Mexico, Telesca and Kazakhstan’s Rakhmetzhan Khamayev, Aline Solodukhina and Koishibayeva, won the team title with 524.22 points. They defeated Team Yellow (397.73), led by Alessandro Boraschi (Italy), Team Red (348.07), led by Sherif Osman (Egypt), and Team Green (108.10), led by Pedro Meloni (Brazil).

For more information, visit paralympic.org.
Perez Wins In Online Debut

In her Online World Cup Series debut, three-time Paralympic champion Amalia Perez (Mexico) won the women’s category of the second online powerlifting tournament in early June. She scored 126.10 points, defeating Russia’s Vera Muratova (117.23), who won the inaugural tournament, while Brazil’s Mariana D’Andrea (115.23) placed third.

Forty athletes from 20 countries participated in the second edition, up 62% from the first one in May.

In the men’s division, Jordan’s Abdelkareem Khattab (195.56) squeaked out a victory over Colombia’s Fabio Torres (195.04), who won the opening tournament, and Colombia’s Jainer Cantillo (186.16) placed third.

In the team format, which was also open to the general public, Team Green took the title. Brazil’s Pedro Meloni, along with Peru’s Niel Garcia Trelles, Khattab, Muratova and D’Andrea, totaled 572.84 points, while Team Yellow, led by Italy’s Alessandro Boraschi, placed second with 569.72 points. Perez’s Team Blue was third (543.68).

Additionally, there was a fantasy league, where para powerlifting fans were invited to create their own team among the participating athletes, and they went against the team’s four captains.

Colombia’s Karmen Zuluaga was the winner among the fans’ fantasy league with 624.53 points by selecting Torres, Cantillo, Muratova and Perez to defeat Brazil’s Debora Bretas (622.62) and Mexico’s Oscar Carrillo (614.01).

For more information, visit paralympic.org.

SHOOTING

Lonato Championships Postponed

Because of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Sept. 22–27 Lonato 2020 World Shoot-
In The Game

ing Para Sport Para Trap Championships in Lonato, Italy, have been postponed to 2021. They’ll take place in the second half of 2021, with dates to be confirmed later. The Lonato Local Organizing Committee and World Shooting Para Sport made the decision to postpone the championships.

WHEELCHAIR RUGBY

USQRA Award Winners

Six wheelchair rugby players and one volunteer received honors, as the United States Quad Rugby Association (USQRA) announced its award winners for the 2019–20 season.

Denver Harlequins athlete Chuck Aoki (3.0 classification) was named the Division I High-Pointer Athlete of the Year. Smart, strong and a student of the game, he made his line and team better. He’s played for the past 10 years, also playing for Minnesota before joining Denver in 2019. Aoki continues to grow physically, mentally and have a better understanding of wheelchair rugby strategies, and his positive energy also has made him a force and a team leader.

Denver’s Adam Scaturro (1.5 classification) was selected as the Division I Mid-Pointer Athlete of the Year. He’s played wheelchair rugby for more than 20 years and has improved his playing shape, especially over the last five. He’s shown dedication, hard work and focus.

Lakeshore Foundation’s Lee Fredette (1.0 classification) earned Division I Low-Pointer Athlete of the Year honors. He shows up to practice and doesn’t take a second off. He shows up early and stays late — and hits the gym plenty, too. He’s constantly helping others on the team improve their games.

Shepherd Smash’s Talbot Kennedy was named the Division II Mid-Pointer Athlete of the Year. As a 1.5-classification player, he combines speed and skill to be a dual offensive and defensive threat. His play was critical to the team’s success this season and to its Division II championship two years ago.

The North Virginia Mutiny’s Kevin Crombie (1.0 classification) was named the Division II Low-Pointer Athlete of the Year. He’s a standout and tenacious player for a growing and developing team who played beyond his class.

Boise’s Kory Puderbaugh was selected as the Division II Player of the Year. His dynamic presence can’t be missed when he’s on the court. His combination of speed and power, combined with his intelligence, helped him receive the award. A relentless and physical force, he took Boise to a new level this year.

Texas Stampede volunteer Hez Rennerfeldt received the USQRA Spirit of Achievement Award.

Danmark Named 2022 Worlds Host

Denmark will host the 2022 Wheelchair Rugby World Championships, which will run from Oct. 8–17, in Vejle, Denmark. The announcement was made in early May.

Vejle previously held the 2019 European Championships and the 2015 European Para Table Tennis Championships.
Each issue, SPORTS 'N SPOKES recognizes three athletes who have recorded outstanding accomplishments in wheelchair sports.

Interested in nominating someone for Spokes Stars? Then email editorial coordinator John Groth at john@pvamag.com with a nomination and his or her accomplishment.

**ABBY DUNKIN** (New Braunfels, Texas)
A 2016 Paralympic gold medalist and U.S. women’s wheelchair basketball team member, the 24-year-old announced her retirement from the team and international play in mid-May before the Tokyo Summer Paralympic Games in Japan, which were moved to 2021 because of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Classified as a 3.5 player on the court, she helped the U.S. women’s wheelchair basketball team win gold at the 2015 Parapan American Games in Toronto, at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Paralympic Games and at the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation’s 2019 Women’s U25 Wheelchair Basketball World Championship in Thailand.

Dunkin has complex regional pain syndrome, a brain disorder that causes abnormal pain, and was diagnosed with neurocardiogenic syncope dysautonomia with small fiber neuropathy that requires her to use a wheelchair.

**BECCA MURRAY** (Germantown, Wis.)
A three-time Paralympian and two-time Paralympic gold medal winner, she announced her retirement from the U.S. women’s wheelchair basketball team in mid-May before the Tokyo Summer Paralympic Games in Japan, which were postponed until 2021 because of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Murray, 30, helped lead the U.S. to gold medals at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Paralympic Games — being the leading scorer in both the semifinal win over Great Britain (31 points) and final against Germany (33 points) — and 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games and was on the fourth-place 2012 London Paralympic Games team. A 2.5 classification on the court, she also helped lead the U.S. to a gold medal at the 2010 world championships. She was born with spina bifida.

**SABINE ELLERBROCK** (Bielefeld, Germany)
After 26 singles titles in 11 years, the 44-year-old decided to retire from wheelchair tennis in mid-May. She won two major Grand Slam wheelchair singles titles — taking the 2013 French Open in three sets over the Netherlands’ Jiske Griffioen and the 2014 Australian Open in three sets over Japan’s Yui Kamiji — and finished runner-up in five others. She reached the world No. 1 ranking in 2013 and during her career, she recorded five wheelchair doubles runner-up Grand Slam major finishes, as well.

Ellerbrock developed a foot infection in 2007 after an operation and started playing wheelchair tennis in 2009.
Making A Major Move
by John Groth

Two major nonprofit adaptive sports organizations are joining forces to unite as one.
Adaptive Sports USA and Disabled Sports USA announced in May that they were merging to become Move United.
Instead of two organizations with similar goals of getting athletes involved with adaptive sports, they have united to make sure adaptive athletes stay physically active and fit on both the local and national stages.
Move United’s goal is to fully include people with disabilities in American society, using sport to challenge perceptions and redefine ability for youth and adults with disabilities.
Additionally, as a member of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, Move United hopes to have 90% of the U.S. population within a short drive of one of its local adaptive sports programs by 2028, when the Olympics and Paralympics return to the U.S. in Los Angeles.
“If we can unite the community behind us and create a social movement to drive forward around the ideas of sports and recreation and other fitness and health, it will become apparent to the American community that there is no such thing as limitations in what your goals can be. That’s really about this ability that you bring to the table and changing the perception within and outside of what those capabilities were,” says Glenn Merry, who will serve as Move United’s executive director, in a May 7 Facebook Live stream. “Move United brings together the sense of motion and movement but also a social movement. And it unites the entire community together as we go through this in the coming eight years.”
COMING TOGETHER
For Move United, which will be headquartered in Rockville, Md., Merry and Susan Rossi will lead the way. Merry previously served as Disabled Sports USA’s executive director in Rockville for two years and before that, he was CEO of the U.S. Rowing Association from 2005–2017. He will be joined by Rossi, who was the executive director at Adaptive Sports USA in Littleton, Colo., since 2015 and will now serve as Move United’s director of competition. Rossi has been involved in the adaptive sports movement for the last 20 years, and she’s supportive of pulling together both organizations’ history, expertise, combined chapter network, sponsors, partners and energy in order to help engage people even more.
They’ll be involved with military athletes, too. Both Adaptive Sports USA and Disabled Sports USA were originally formed by military veterans during the Korean and Vietnam wars, and now that they’re combining, Move United will be the largest nonprofit provider of adaptive sports to injured veterans, providing adaptive sports opportunities to 2,000 injured veterans and family members annually at no cost through its Move United Warfighters program, according to a press release.
“Even though there’s so much momentum, I still see locally and nationally a little bit of confusion in this space of how to start out, how to get engaged, who do I engage with, who does what and who should we be affiliated with,” Rossi says in the Facebook Live stream. “And I think coming together as a collective organization, we could alleviate some of that confusion and really have united goals and a united vision moving forward in this space.”
GETTING ATHLETES MORE INVOLVED
That united vision has to do with getting more athletes with disabilities involved in adaptive sports and having more events for them to showcase their talents.
In March, Move United started an #AdaptatHome program, encouraging adaptive athletes and local member organizations to work out at home with their free, live and on-demand online adaptive fitness classes. More than 300 classes have been offered so far.
Then, in late April, the organization announced the launch of the USA Wheelchair Football League, which it plans to start in four cities — Chicago (Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association), Kansas City (Midwest Adaptive Sports), Los Angeles (Angel City Sports)
and Phoenix (Ability360 Adaptive Sports & Fitness Center) — later this summer.

Additionally, Move United will continue to run the Junior Nationals, the oldest and largest continuously held competitive multisport event for youth athletes with physical disabilities ages 6 to 22 in North America. The event started in 1984 and gathers more than 300 athletes, coaches and family members from across the U.S. It’s served as the developmental training ground for many U.S. Paralympic athletes, including wheelchair racers Amanda McGrory and Raymond Martin, who also was the 2012 SPORTS ‘N SPOKES Junior Athlete of the Year.

Move United also plans to offer more than 50 competitive sports for 100,000 adaptive athletes in 200 communities across the United States before 2020 ends.

During the Facebook Live stream, wheelchair racer Daniel Romanchuk said he’s excited about the merger. Just 21 years old, the young phenom is coming off an impressive 2019 racing season. He won all four major wheelchair marathons — Boston, New York, London and Chicago — in 2019 to become the youngest athlete to accomplish such a feat. He’s also the 800- and 5,000-meter world record holder. The Mount Airy, Md., resident who trains at the University of Illinois is aiming to make the now-2021 U.S. Paralympic team (the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics were postponed a year because of the novel coronavirus pandemic). And he thinks by combining the two organizations, it will increase the amount of available programs and make them more visible and easier to find.

“I grew up doing multiple different sports through both organizations,” says Romanchuk, who was born with spina bifida. “I think, regardless, we will see an increase in people joining sports and may see people want to take sports to the best of their abilities and may see them in LA in 2028 or may see an increase in people wanting to do multiple sports and enjoy staying fit and active. Regardless, I think we’ll see an increase in movement and an increase in Paralympics in the U.S.”

For more information, visit moveunitedsport.org.

—— Susan Rossi

Move United plans to offer more than 50 competitive sports for 100,000 adaptive athletes in 200 communities across the U.S. before 2020 ends.

“Even though there’s so much momentum, I still see locally and nationally a little bit of confusion in this space of how to start out, how to get engaged, who do I engage with, who does what and who should we be affiliated with. And I think coming together as a collective organization, we could alleviate some of that confusion and really have united goals and a united vision moving forward in this space.”

— Susan Rossi

S'NS
Following the postponement of the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics until 2021 because of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, some hopeful athletes have had to refocus.

Impacts and reactions from this year’s Tokyo Summer Paralympic Games’ postponement to 2021 because of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic seemed to hit athletes in ever-widening concentric circles. For some, such as swimmer Mallory Weggemann, personal heartache hit hard.

“There’s a blessing and a curse to planning your life in four-year increments,” says Weggemann, a two-time, double-medal Paralympian (gold and bronze) and 17-time world championships medalist from Lawrence, Kan. She had planned not only for a big athletic comeback this summer in Japan, but also for a big emotional step afterward.

“My husband [Jeremy Snyder] and I got married after the 2016 Games. We very much planned our life in these four-year quads. I’m 31 and he’s 37, and we really wanted to start a family this fall. We had been wanting to do that for years and put it off so we could chase this dream of Tokyo for me. That was, for me, the kind of breaking point of realizing what weighed so heavily on my heart — my desire to be a mom and have a family with my husband will be postponed.”

Weggemann, who sustained a T10 complete spinal-cord injury after an epidural injection to treat post-shingles back pain in 2008, was drydocked after the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Paralympic Games.
Paralympic swimmer Mallory Weggemann was hoping to start a family with her husband, Jeremy Snyder, this fall after the Tokyo Summer Paralympics, but now that the Games have been pushed back to 2021, she’s had to mentally reset.
because of a left-arm injury, which required two surgeries in 2017. She returned to the water in earnest last fall and was just feeling back at the top of her game about the time the pandemic shut everything down and the March 20 announcement of the Tokyo Paralympics postponement came. Later, it was announced they’d be moved to Aug. 24–Sept. 5, 2021.

It was such a jolt on multiple levels that it took Weggemann a couple weeks to scale back the intense workouts she was doing in her garage with equipment loaned to her after all the pools closed — she even painted a black lane line to use with a swimming bench. Her body just wanted to keep going.

“We’re all pivoting,” Weggemann says.

Adapting With The Change

McKenna Geer would agree with that. The 24-year-old was born with amytrophic lateral sclerosis arthrogryposis in her left hand and both feet, causing her muscles not to form properly, and she uses a wheelchair. She was preparing for her second Paralympics in rifle after collecting a bronze medal at Rio in the R5 10-meter Air Rifle Prone SH2 division in 2016. She was the first U.S. woman to win a medal in shooting at the 2016 Summer Paralympics.

“It was really hard to have everything I’ve been working for the last four years, since the last Games, postponed,” says Geer, a Colorado Springs, Colo., resident. “I absolutely understand why it needed to happen, and I think it was the best decision that they could have made. On top of that, honestly it was really good to just have an answer. There was so much uncertainty around the Games and training. ... Postponing was a better alternative to canceling.”

Geer retreated to in-home workouts, mental training and Zoom video chats with fellow team members.
“I know that all of us are trying to work through the same thing,” she says. “We’re just trying to work through the same feelings of a little disappointment, maybe a little bit of relief that we don’t have to try to train through a pandemic.”

Geer says she felt confident about medaling in Tokyo, where she was in line to compete in three events, but now she’ll have to wait.

Wheelchair racer Daniel Romanchuk had every reason to believe he would do well in Tokyo. Since competing in several track events at Rio, he has stormed onto the wheelchair marathon scene, winning the Chicago, London, New York and Boston men’s division races. He had already qualified for Tokyo by winning the 2019 Chicago Marathon men's wheelchair division.

Romanchuk, 21, of Baltimore and out of the prestigious training program at the University of Illinois, seemed to be as even-keeled as anyone when he heard about the Games’ postponement.

“At that point, from my perspective, I had already had to rearrange my schedule with races earlier in the year, and so it wasn’t the first thing that I was changing the plan with,” says Romanchuk, who was born with spina bifida. “One thing that racing has taught me is that I can make a plan as detailed as I want, but halfway through the race, that plan could entirely fall apart, and I have to adapt. So it’s about taking it one race at a time, being ready to adapt to whatever happens.”
Athletes Show Resilience

That kind of resilience is what Julie Dussliere, United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee chief of Paralympic sport, has come to expect from the community of disabled athletes, and it’s what she found in the postponement’s wake.

“It’s a wide range of emotions. I’ve had contact with athletes, coaches and national governing bodies here domestically, as well as a lot of my colleagues internationally, whether they’re my counterparts in other countries around the world or staff at the International Paralympic Committee or Tokyo 2020. I think it’s a mix of disappointment and apprehension and a little bit of nervousness around a lot of the uncertainties that happened,” Dussliere says. “But I can tell you that when the Games did get rescheduled, there was a lot of relief. By and large, the athletes I’ve spoken to are really just turning their focus back into being prepared. They’re looking forward. They’re looking ahead. They’re planning. They’re being thoughtful about things — and generally with a very positive outlook on having the opportunity to … be prepared for Tokyo next summer.”

Colleen Young, a swimmer who competed in the past two Paralympics and won a bronze medal in the SB13 women’s 100-meter breaststroke at the Rio Paralympic Games to go with nine world championships medals, shared that sense of relief, “because I thought, ‘OK, I can find time to myself now. I can kind of relax, regroup, see how going forward I’m going to train.’”

Young, 22, of St. Louis, also was relieved because athletes and everyone else involved with the Games would not have to deal with the stress involving the pandemic.

“It’s important to focus on our health,” says Young, who is legally blind.

One thing athletes and others apparently won’t have to stress over is major financial repercussions incurred by the postponement.

Although Geer noted that Paralympic years are more lucrative because of increased sponsorship
and medal incentives, Dussliere says many of the athletes had not yet bought airline tickets to Tokyo or invested in new equipment for the Games, as some sports had not officially determined their rosters.

“Up to this point, I have not heard of too many challenges that individuals have had in that space,” Dussliere says. “Most of the airlines have been really accommodating with refunding the tickets that have been booked.”

It’s the emotional rebooking that remains at the forefront.

“I think it’s just the magnitude that athletes — Paralympians and Olympians all over the world — sacrifice so much for our careers,” Weggemann says. “Many of us say we would do it again tomorrow or the next day … but sometimes situations like this highlight that sacrifice. Our hearts are healing. There are days when (my husband and I) realize still that we’re not coming up on the Games, which also means we’re not coming up on that exciting time of trying to build a family. But what’s going on in our world really puts it in perspective.”
Terry Hayes is drawn by the competitiveness of parafencing.

Ellen Geddes is in love with solving the puzzle that is her opponent.

Mickey Zeljkovic was hooked the first time he heard a blade slashing through the air, and Ginny Boydston is enthralled every time she sees a new fencer find a brighter tomorrow.

For those involved at the highest levels of parafencing — both those familiar with it and those for whom a foil is something you wrap around cold pizza — there are any number of reasons they got into the sport.

Now, their goal is to help others get involved.

Feeling Powerful

Geddes, 32, is unsure at which point her bullheadedness became a virtue, but it probably coincided with the first time she picked up a sword.

“Before I broke my back, people found it a fault,” Geddes says about her legendary stubbornness.
“After I broke my back, people praised me about it. I don’t think my attitude about the world changed at all; the world’s attitude about me changed quite a bit. Bullheaded somehow turned into tenacious.”

When you’re as quick as Geddes is with a blade, you can understand not wanting to get in her way.

In 2011, Geddes was still in rehabilitation at Shepherd Center in Atlanta for her T12 spinal-cord injury — she sustained a broken back after being involved in a car accident at age 22 — when she ran into a pair of people dressed for parafencing practice. She asked about their regalia and was directed to Dennis Aspy, a former Team USA parafencer who runs Shepherd Fencing Club.

“He asked me if I wanted to stab people, and I told him, ‘Yes,’” Geddes says.

Even she was a bit surprised. She grew up riding and caring for horses, which she still does for a living as a breeder for Magnolia Sport Horses in Aiken, S.C.

But it wasn’t only the immense feeling of infinite power in her grasp that drew Geddes to fencing.
Geddes loves the chess match, the imposition of her will and her game plan on an outwitted mind. “Your opponents are a puzzle you’re trying to figure out,” she says. “Fencing is faster than our brains work. If you look at the science of sight, we’re living in the past. You have to build in — and this is true in baseball, as well — the instinct and timing. You can’t wait until the timing is right. By then, it’s too late.”

This, of course, took Geddes some time. But once she did — whoosh — she took off faster than one of her parries.

After narrowly missing the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Summer Paralympic Games, Geddes is a favorite to lead Team USA to the Tokyo Paralympics, which will be held Aug. 24–Sept. 5, 2021, after being postponed a year because of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. And she’s ready.

“The way to frame your life well is to just keep moving forward,” she says. “You can either sit on the couch or go do things, and I can tell you doing things is a lot more fun.”

Especially when they involve a sword.

Making The Most Of Life

If she’s smiling at you, you’re on Terry Hayes’ good side.

Once she gets in the frame with another young parafencer, she’ll give a little salute and say, “Let’s have fun.” She’ll flash her pearly whites and try to act the part of wise sage, even if she’s only been fencing for a few years.

But in international competition, Hayes’ smiles are doled out like nuggets of gold. She holds onto those grins as tight as she grips her saber.

“I smile at them and they give me a death stare, but once I drop that mask, I ain’t smiling anymore,” says the 61-year old Team USA parafencer.

Years ago, while serving in the Army, Hayes began to have trouble walking every so often. Gradually, her condition worsened. In 2011, she was diagnosed with primary cerebellar degeneration, a progressive brain disease that affects motor function and has no cure and no treatment. Hayes had trouble walking, then she began to stumble, then she’d fall on her face. She asked me if I wanted to stab people, and I told him, ‘Yes.’” — Ellen Geddes
broke her left hip and left femur. Eventually, she couldn’t walk by herself, then went from using a scooter to being a full-time wheelchair user.

She is, as she says, “making the most of whatever I have left, as long as I have left.”

It took her a little while, but Hayes adjusted to her new world. Her community club-house offered dances and parties — Hayes added a disco ball to her chair.

“I love to laugh. I love to smile. I love to have a good time. I love to be around people happy and joyful; I don’t know how you can sit at home and have that,” she says. “Although, right now, I guess we’re all figuring that out.”

Now confined to her Florida home by COVID-19, Hayes is without fencing for the first time in three years, and she’s sorely missing her favorite sport.

After attending a women-in-wheelchairs sports camp a few years back — where she was encouraged to participate in rock climbing, handcycling, shooting, aerial yoga and horseback riding — her juices were pumping again.

Hayes, who played varsity lacrosse at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va., and played softball and participated in competitive racewalking for years after college, returned to her home in Florida, began searching online for local adaptive sports and found a YouTube video of 2016 Paralympic parafencer Lauryn DeLuca. Hayes was interested, even if she knew next to nothing about fencing rules. She reached out to Boydston, team manager for Team USA Parafencing, who suggested Hayes find a local fencing club to learn the ins and outs.

“At first, it was very awkward,” Hayes says. “The whole thing was just awkward. This was so not what I’ve ever done — stabbing things. You have this big glove on, and this mask on your head, and you’re holding this big, long weapon. At first, it’s a little freaky.”

Now, three years in and competing against fencers who could be her grandkids, Hayes says the sport has become her biggest motivator and thrill. And it’s taken her all over the world.

In her years in the Army, from 1977 to 1979, Hayes remained stateside. But parafencing has taken her to South Korea, Poland, Hungary, the United Arab Emirates, Brazil and the Netherlands.

She packs her smiles with her, even if she only breaks them out after competition.

**Increasing The Footprint**

Neither Hayes nor Geddes, two of the six female members of the 2019 Team USA Wheelchair World Championship squad, knew a lick about fencing before they picked up a blade for the first time.

Neither did Brandon Dyett, Team USA Parafencing’s sports performance manager, who was hired by USA Fencing in December 2017 after working with USA Boxing, USA Volleyball and USA Weightlifting and tenures that included three Olympic trials and many national championship events.
Dyett is charged with helping fencing increase its footprint in the United States, particularly on the parafencing side.

His goal is helping balance two missions — a top-to-bottom approach, which would see the national teams improve their international standings and compete for international medals, potentially increasing visibility; or a bottom-up, grassroots approach, which would see an increased focus on local clubs in the hope that enhanced development could bolster the ranks and heighten awareness of the sport nationally.

“To me, it’s a chicken and an egg issue,” he says. “That’s a constant battle on both fronts.”

Dyett says the program has had increasing success on the ground floor of the sport, as local clubs are sprouting up and offering parafencing options, which Boydston echoes. She has been involved in therapeutic sports for four decades and has seen a marked rise in parafencing interest.

“Whether it’s a certain amount of liberty and freedom or entitlement, now someone has a sword in their hand and they win points by literally stabbing someone,” Boydston says. “One guy I know was into boxing, and he was into the aggressiveness. It was his way to sit in a chair and get it all out. Then, I’ve had some people tell me it’s their relaxation time, and I’m thinking, how do you relax when you’ve got a sword in your hand and you have an opponent who has a sword in their hand? You have to have a physical game and to learn the sport and the tactics. But once you learn it, you have to put it all into play, and you have to have your emotions and focus in check and your mental game, too. When you bring all that together, game on.”

For that, Team USA Parafencing turns to Zeljkovic, the team’s Serbian-born head coach, who treasures his role in helping people redefine their circumstances.

“I never look at any parafencer or any of my students as they have a disability,” he says. “You try to find a way to move their limits and to help them to be better. Every coach needs to find what a specific fencer can do and try to break their limits.”

SHS
Sports Associations

AMPUTEE SPORTS
Move United
451 Hungerford Drive, Ste. 608
Rockville, MD 20850
moveunitedsport.org

ARCHERY
Disabled Archery, USA
c/o Coach Glen Harris
P.O. Box 698
Langley, WA 98260
(360) 321-5979
bowcoach@whidbeyisland.com
disabledsportusa.org/archery

BASKETBALL
Wheelchair Basketball Canada
6 Antares Drive, Phase 1, Unit 8
Ottawa, Ontario K2E 8A9
324 Charles Street, Apt. 25
Rockville, MD 20850
awba.org
(713) 444-7588
moveunitedsport.org

BASKETBALL
Universal Wheelchair Basketball Federation
Ouchi, Japan 901-2186
F-102, 8-1-7
Ouchi, Osaka, Japan 543-8510
(06) 673-2604
ufbf.org

BASKETBALL
Colorado Wheelchair Basketball
1 Olympic Plaza
Rockville, MD 20850
moveunitedsport.org

BILLIARDS
National Wheelchair Poolplayers Association
9797 Mount Lompeec Court
Las Vegas, NV 89178
jdolezal@verizon.net

BOWLING
American Wheelchair Bowling Association
c/o Gary Ryan, AWBA Secretary
16006 Congo Lane
Houston, TX 77040
(713) 444-7588
gryan210@sbcglobal.net
awba.org

BOY SCOUTS
Disabled Scouting
P.O. Box 1368
Mission Viejo, CA 92691
(949) 496-6324
info@disabilitysactivities.org

BOY SCOUTS
Disabled Boy Scout Unit 299
The Boy Scouts of America
722 North Crescent Street
San Antonio, TX 78202
(210) 276-6000
info@boy-scouts.org

BOWLING
National Wheelchair Bowling Association
1130 Elkon Drive, Ste. C
Colorado Springs, CO 80907
(719) 266-4082
moveunitedsport.org

CROSS COUNTRY
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451 Hungerford Drive, Ste. 608
Rockville, MD 20850
moveunitedsport.org

CROSS COUNTRY
World T.E.A.M. Sports
4250 Veterans Memorial Highway, Ste. 420E
Holbrook, NY 11741
(855) 987-8126 / 288-3377 (fax)
worldteamsports.org

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Rockville, MD 20850
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FOOTBALL
Universal Wheelchair Football Association
U.C. Raymond Walters College
3955 Plainfield Road
Cincinnati, OH 45236-1096
(513) 792-8625
john.kraimer@uc.edu

FOOTBALL
Colorado State University Wheelchair Football
1631 Mesa Avenue
Colorado Springs, CO 80906
(719) 471-4816, ext. 15
usga.org

FOOTBALL
National Amputee Football Association
11 Walnut Hill Road
North Andover, MA 01845
(978) 441-1200
nafa.org

FOOTBALL
United States Quad Rugby Association
4000 Ridgeway Drive
Homewood, AL 35209
(205) 999-3092
usqra.org

FOOTBALL
American Flag Football League
1130 Elkon Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80907
(719) 266-4082
moveunitedsport.org

FOOTBALL
International Wheelchair Aviators
82 Corral Drive
Keller, TX 76244
(817) 229-4634
wheelchairaviators@yahoo.com
wheelchairaviators.org

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451 Hungerford Drive, Ste. 608
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Holbrook, NY 11741
(855) 987-8126 / 288-3377 (fax)
worldteamsports.org

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Holbrook, NY 11741
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worldteamsports.org

QUAD SPORTS
Bay Area Outreach & Recreation Program (BORP)
3075 Adeline St., Ste. 155
Berkeley, CA 94703
(510) 849-4663 / 849-4616 (fax)
info@borp.org

QUAD SPORTS
United States Quad Rugby Association
4000 Ridgeway Drive
Homewood, AL 35209
(205) 999-3092
usqra.org

RACQUET SPORTS
International Tennis Federation (Wheelchair Tennis Department)
Bank Lane, Roehampton
London SW15 5XZ, England
(011) 0044-0208-878-6464
0044-(0)208-392-4744 (fax)
wheelchairtennis@ifttennis.com

RACQUET SPORTS
United States Tennis Association
70 W. Red Oak Lane
White Plains, NY 10604
(914) 696-7000 / 696-7029 (fax)
usta.com

RECREATION
Turning POINT (Paraplegics On Independent Nature Trips)
403 Pacific Avenue
Terrell, TX 75160
(972) 324-4231
point@turningpointnation.org
turningpointnation.org

RECREATION
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451 Hungerford Drive, Ste. 608
Rockville, MD 20850
moveunitedsport.org

RECREATION
National Wheelchair Shooting Federation*
102 Park Avenue
Rockledge, PA 19046
(215) 379-2359 / 663-0102 (fax)
movesportsorg

SHOOTING
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451 Hungerford Drive, Ste. 608
Rockville, MD 20850
moveunitedsport.org

SHOOTING
Ski for Light, Inc.
1455 West Lake Street
Minneapolis, MN 55408
(612) 827-3232
info@sfli.org
sfli.org

SOFTBALL
National Wheelchair Softball Association
15414 Paul Street
Omaha, NE 68154
(402) 305-5020
wheelchairsoftball.org

TABLE TENNS
American Wheelchair Table Tennis Association
23 Parker Street
Port Chester, NY 10573
(914) 937-3932
johnsonjenifer@yahoo.com

WATER SPORTS
Adaptive Track & Field USA
https://www.atusa.org

WATER SPORTS
American Canoe Association
4422 Albian Station Boulevard
Ste. B-232
Springfield, VA 22150
(703) 451-0141 / 451-2245 (fax)
americancanoe.org

WATER SPORTS
Handicapped Scuba Association
1104 El Prado
San Clemente, CA 92672
(949) 498-4540 / 498-6128 (fax)
hsa@hhascuba.com
hsascuba.com

WATER SPORTS
Water Skiers With Disabilities Association
1251 Holy Cow Road
Rockledge, PA 19046
(949) 498-4540 / 498-6128 (fax)
hsa@hhascuba.com
hsascuba.com

S'NS

Sports 'n Spokes
During the start of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in early spring, Lia Coryell ended up in an Onalaska, Wis., hospital emergency room.

The 55-year-old Paralympic archer had all kinds of troubling and scary symptoms — shortness of breath, heart palpitations and fatigue — but no fever.

Coryell told her teammates about how she felt on a WhatsApp call, and they all suggested one thing — go see a doctor. Is she ever glad she listened. This was way more than just her multiple sclerosis (MS).

Instead of it being an issue with her lungs, or even COVID-19, it was a problem with her heart.

First, she was diagnosed with pericarditis, an inflammation of the two thin layers of sac-like membrane surrounding the heart. Her doctor said it was from her MS overreacting to a virus different from COVID-19.

Later, after an echocardiogram, Coryell’s doctor found another serious issue — diastolic heart failure, meaning her left ventricle heart muscle had become stiff or thickened.

“Thank goodness the Paralympics aren’t this year. They had no idea that it was even in there. If I hadn’t had it checked, I could’ve went down. In the grand scheme of things, this went very well in my favor. I will take a year to wait,” says Coryell, who was diagnosed with MS in 1984 and has been in a wheelchair the last five years. “I had no idea until...
the last year that the heart was so involved in MS. And it is … But yeah, I was really scared. But I’m better today. Put everything in perspective. You can’t control it.”

Changing Perspectives

As the COVID-19 pandemic stretches into its fifth month, it’s affected everyone — including U.S. Paralympians and wheelchair athletes like Coryell, Scot Severn and Josh Wheeler. In March, they dealt with the news of the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics being postponed — a first for the Games — and then moved to Aug. 24–Sept. 5, 2021.

Staying Inside

For weeks, Coryell didn’t leave her 950-square-foot Wisconsin apartment. But she found some unique and creative ways to stay atop her game — and have some fun, too.

Thanks to teammate Jason Tabansky’s idea, Coryell made her own archery target. She uses it to practice blank baling, which involves shooting at a bale or blank target face without any type of bullseye, from 3 meters, or just over 9 feet, away. It’s way more compact than when she usually practices from 15–20 meters away outside and even moreso than her usual 50-meter compound bow distance. But it helps with muscle memory.

“It’s not the same as when I shoot outside at 50 meters, because you know, wind and shadow and the
elements. And it’s not the same shooting 3 meters here. But you know what? My release game, my shot cycle is going to be stellar because I practice it over and over and over again,” Coryell says. “… I shoot 3 meters away. Practice timing, breathing, rhythm. It’s just like shooting a weapon when you’re in the military. You take that breath, you release it.”

The hardest part for Coryell was trying to work in some cardio. All the local pools and gyms shut down around her, and her apartment doesn’t have a gym, either. That’s where the creativity comes in.

When Coryell needs exercise, she’s practiced adaptive yoga while watching YouTube videos, works out with stretch bands or plays Nintendo Wii bowling and tennis games with her 23-year-old son, Joe. She’s worked with a sports psychologist, Nicole Detling, on different mental imagery techniques and stays in daily touch via Zoom video meetings or phone calls with her personal coach and Paralympic assistant coach MJ Rogers and Paralympic head coach George Ryals. And when she needs something different, she’s picked up hobbies like playing the harmonica, doing watercolor painting and learning Japanese.

Now, if she just had an electric fence around her kitchen and could see her teammates more.

“I miss my teammates. They are my family. I’ve spent more time in the summer with them the last five years than I have with my own family. I’m very lonely. I live alone,” says Coryell, who would’ve competed with teammates in Paralympic qualifications in Mexico, and then for their first Paralympic trials in Arizona in May.

“But I decided to look at this as an opportunity. I have so much time alone, so much time to think, ‘What am I going to do to stay healthy and strong?’”

Weighty Workouts

Strength training is what Severn has done during most of his stay-at-home time.

A three-time Paralympic thrower and Michigan resident, the 51-year-old says while he’s adjusted to working out at home, there’s still a challenge with equipment.

He has plenty of weights, but that’s it. He misses working out with the cable pull, strapping Active

“Thank goodness the Paralympics aren’t this year. They had no idea that it was even in there. If I hadn’t had it checked, I could’ve went down. In the grand scheme of things, this went very well in my favor. I will take a year to wait.”

— Lia Coryell
Hands to his wrists and hooking a cable up to them to use those and Cybex machines.

Besides those weights, Severn has a huge 11-acre yard that’ll be an advantage this summer when he can go out and throw shot put, discus or javelin with plenty of room to maneuver. Severn’s two sons, 19-year-old Kyle and 18-year-old Colton, usually go out and help him.

“My coach [Bill Godina] lives in Phoenix. Last we talked, we decided that we’re going to go through this season and keep the lifting schedule the same and workout schedule as much as I can without going to the gym and doing simulations around the time that we would’ve had those meets, just to kind of see where things are at,” says Severn, an Army veteran who sustained an incomplete quadriplegic spinal-cord injury (SCI) from lightning striking him in 1989. “So, this will be a trial year for next year. Our schedules are usually pretty similar. The events are usually around the same time.”

Admittedly, Severn’s throwing wasn’t sharp to start the year. Last year, he was ranked No. 1 in the world in the men’s F53 shot put, and his standard was a personal-best 8.52 meters. This year, though, he’s struggled, and his standard is down to 7.93 meters. Severn acknowledges some of it is because he’s struggled to adjust to some of the new International Paralympic Committee throwing rules.

At the November 2019 Para Athletics World Championships in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Severn was originally awarded a gold medal in the men’s F53 shot put with a 7.69-meter throw over Iran’s Alireza Mokhtari Hemami (7.64). But officials later acknowledged a discrepancy with the new throwing rules, and the Czech Republic’s Ales Kisy was awarded gold with a 7.93-meter throw, while Severn (7.77) was dropped to silver and Hemami (7.64) took bronze.

“What other countries have kind of interpreted as and what the officials interpreted as is the back of knees sliding forward away from the seat cushion for a second as you throw constitutes what’s called a lift and negates that throw. It’s like a red flag on that...
throw,” Severn says. “They were throwing red flags left and right over there. It was kind of ridiculous.”

Severn and a host of other wheelchair athletes would’ve already competed at the Desert Challenge Games this past April in Arizona, but those were also postponed because of COVID-19, so now he’s waiting to see if events will happen at the end of the year. He’ll be 53 by the time the Paralympics come around next year. Although he’s not worried about his age too much, he knows training will be a big factor.

“I can still do all the strength stuff. I’m probably stronger than I was when I was younger. But I’m not fast,” Severn says. “Speed comes into play. You can’t just muscle the shot put out there. You’ve got to have technique and speed also.”

New Wheels

For the first time in more than 10 years, Wheeler has some downtime. The 40-year-old Paralympic wheelchair rugby player spent so much time traveling, playing and training for games and tournaments, he’s finally taking a small break and been spending more time with his wife, Stephanie. And, OK, doing some training, too.

Wheeler broke out his old sports wheelchair to train outdoors and wheels on a hill that’s near his house in Tucson, Ariz. Going north, it’s 10 miles from his house and back and, going south, he says it travels for miles.

Besides racing hills, Wheeler has also started some home workouts. He uses Crossover Symmetry bands to help with shoulder strength and some various weights and dumbbells for weight training. He and his teammates also get workouts from Team USA strength and conditioning coach Sharon Moskowitz.

Wheeler received a birthday present in April — new wheelchair rugby wheels — from the University of Arizona and his sponsor, Vesco Metal Craft. But he hasn’t used them since all his wheelchair rugby events were canceled this spring, including March’s United States Quad Rugby Association National Championships in Illinois, where he would’ve played for the University of Arizona, a Team USA training camp in April and a handful of other tournaments in which the U.S. Paralympic wheelchair rugby team planned to compete.

“I’m saving them until I’m actually playing for a tournament,” Wheeler says. “I don’t need to use them until then. Initially, I got them and planned on using them at nationals, then Tokyo,” says Wheeler, who sustained C2 incomplete and T9-10 complete SCIs in a 2006 motorcycle accident in Utah.

This will likely be the longest Wheeler hasn’t played wheelchair rugby since being injured. He took some time off from the sport early on in his career, but he still practiced with his club team. No matter, though. Wheeler remains confident that with all the game film, mental training with their coaches and sports psychologist and teammate Zoom meetings, it’ll work out whenever they can practice again.

“I don’t feel like it’ll be too hard for me and a lot of the other guys on the team, I don’t think so. The guys, we’ve been playing so long, the veterans, we’ve been playing for a while, and so when the time comes back in, we’ll jump back in pretty easily,” Wheeler says. “For the newer guys, I think it might affect them a little bit more because they’ll have a little bit more of a drop-off because they’re just learning things and just getting the hang of things.”
Adam Gorlitsky was just an athlete in high school. Having obliterated the world record for the fastest marathon by a man in an exoskeleton suit, Gorlitsky can call himself an elite athlete today. “I grew up playing basketball. I ran track and cross-country in high school, as well,” Gorlitsky says. “It’s almost like that athletic side of me was pushed to the side after high school. When I was 19, I had to find out who I was again all of a sudden. In high school, I was so obsessed with basketball. Basketball, track and cross-country season were pretty much my entire life. The exoskeleton reminded me that I am still this athlete. I identify myself as an athlete. It’s given me a platform to rediscover my athleticism.”

At his hometown Charleston Marathon in mid-January in Charleston, S.C., Gorlitsky and his 55-pound ReWalk Robotic Exoskeleton completed the 26.2-mile course in 33 hours, 16 minutes, 28 seconds to set a Guinness World Record. That beat the previous record held by Britain’s Simon Kindleysides — his “friendly arch-nemesis” — by three-and-a-half hours. He submitted official results and witness statements, and his time officially was approved as a Guinness World Record in March.

While he’s proud of the record, Gorlitsky’s main goal — helping others with similar physical challenges — remains his passion.

Adam Gorlitsky set a Guinness World Record for the fastest marathon by a man in an exoskeleton suit at January’s Charleston (S.C.) Marathon.

I GOT LEGS
On Dec. 30, 2005, at age 19, Gorlitsky was in a car accident that left him paralyzed below the waist. He spent 10 years in a wheelchair. In August 2015, he stood for the first time in an exoskeleton. It was a life-changing moment that he’s hoping to share with others. A few weeks later, he launched a GoFundMe to raise money so he could buy one of the $80,000 exoskeletons.

“I didn’t want to put all my eggs in the GoFundMe basket, so I put this ‘I Got Legs’ slogan on a T-shirt and sold the T-shirts,” Gorlitsky says.

In April 2016, I Got Legs (igotlegs.org) became a 501c3 nonprofit organization.

“Our mission is to re-enable athletes with physical challenges,” Gorlitsky says.

“What we do is provide opportunities, programs and grants to help other athletes like myself get access to an im-

Adam Gorlitsky, standing with ReWalk Robotic Exoskeleton and hat, finished the Charleston (S.C.) Marathon in 33 hours, 16 minutes and 28 seconds.
proved, healthier lifestyle. Whether that’s helping them fundraise for something like this exoskeleton or getting access to a new handcycle, it’s all about unlocking an improved quality of life for athletes with challenges."

Through a related program called I Need Legs, Gorlitsky’s foundation provides tools and mentorship for campaigns to raise money utilizing social media and other strategies.

“It’s a great feeling to know that people are inspired and take control over their life,” he says. “Now, it’s channeling that feeling into a real, tangible program. Hopefully, we can get more people using these exoskeletons and especially using them in road races.”

ONE MILLION STEPS TOUR

To spread his message, Gorlitsky launched his 1 Million Steps Tour, with the goal of taking 1 million steps in road races. He was at 433,122 steps through Memorial Day.

With the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic wiping out his race schedule, he launched a series of virtual races. His first took place on April 18 and included racers from 18 states and three other countries. He’s also starting a podcast in which he will interview exoskeleton/adaptive athletes, people involved with disability research projects and anyone involved with I Got Legs.

Gorlitsky says about 80% of his day revolves around training and I Got Legs.

“"The exoskeleton reminded me that I am still this athlete. I identify myself as an athlete. It’s given me a platform to rediscover my athleticism.”

— Adam Gorlitsky

“I’m constantly trying to get better physically,” he says. “I spend most of the day doing things for I Got Legs and training. I try to go on the occasional date with a girl every now and then.”

Ultimately, Gorlitsky hopes exoskeleton walking can become a Paralympic sport. That would require more people using them in road races, which is part of what I Got Legs is trying to accomplish.

“It would be great to have people having their own step tours in road races in their hometowns," he says. "And then, ultimately, challenge them to one-on-one matchups. That would be fun.”

WHAT HE’S LEARNED

Gorlitsky wants others with similar injuries to know they can overcome their own challenges.

After the accident, Gorlitsky spent about eight weeks in Atlanta at the Shepherd Center, a hospital specializing in medical treatment, research and rehabilitation for people with spinal-cord injury, brain injury, multiple sclerosis and other neuromuscular conditions. It was there he realized, yes, he had a life-altering injury, but the outcome could have been worse.

“One, I have a great family and friends. Everyone’s stuck with me. Nobody treated me any differently because I was in a wheelchair,” he says. "I remember there being two or three other 19-year-old kids there who were also paralyzed. There was this one kid who was fully paralyzed from his neck down. I remember that was a really big moment. ‘Man, I got pretty lucky. I can pretty much live inde-
pendently. But this guy who’s the same age as me can’t do that.’ Interacting with him, I felt pretty fortunate that it wasn’t worse. I felt lucky to still be alive, to still live my life independently.

“Saying that, every now and then there are some tough moments. I call it my laugh-to-cry ratio,” Gorlitsky adds. “When you first become permanently disabled, it’s like one laugh for every one cry. As time goes on, it starts to become 10 laughs for one cry. Fourteen years later, I’m probably at 10,000 laughs for every one cry. That one cry is going to pop up every now and then. What helps me is accepting that one cry. I meet a lot of people who pretend everything’s great all the time. That’s usually not the best thing.”

Adam Gorlitsky, wearing hat, hopes exoskeleton walking eventually becomes a Paralympic sport.

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Working Outside The Box
by Shelly Anderson

During the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic shutdown, Team USA sled hockey defenseman Josh Pauls pulled out his medals, a haul that includes three Paralympic golds and five world championships discs. It wasn’t that he was feeling nostalgic, however.

The 27-year-old Pauls, who was born without tibia bones and had both legs amputated at 10 months old, put the medals to good use, stuffing them into a duffel bag for added weight and using the bag as part of his training while he was self-isolating in his apartment in St. Louis.

“They get pretty heavy after a while,” Pauls says of the medals. “Just because everything in the world stopped doesn’t mean training should.”

Athletes in the disability community around the country found innovative ways to continue to work out as the pandemic prompted governments to shut down gyms, ice rinks, pools and other facilities in an effort to encourage people to stay home.

Besides his medals, Pauls used weighted blankets. One was 15 pounds, and he found that using it in the handled bag it came in made a decent dumbbell.

“I’ve stuffed that with cans of soda and anything I can get that’s going to be a little bit heavy,” says Pauls, who took suggestions from his trainer, Jeff LoVecchio, to find ways to train and stay sharp that included teaching himself to juggle; dribbling a racquetball with one hand while tossing another ball underhand against a wall and catching it with the other hand; and getting in core and back work via workouts from a plank position.

He didn’t work on shooting pucks, though.

“Oh no, no, no,” Pauls says. “I’d love my security deposit back.”

INNOVATIVE OUTDOOR WORKOUTS

Other athletes were equally opportunistic.

Tatyana McFadden, a 17-time U.S. Paralympic medalist wheelchair racer, posted videos of herself on social media using a box to support her legs while she did pushups and using a band woven through a chain-link fence to demonstrate resistance training.

In Colorado, swimmer Sophia Herzog braved the Arkansas River, chilly and swollen from the spring runoff.

Herzog, 23, a silver medalist in the 100-meter breaststroke at her first Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, wore a wetsuit and didn’t put her head in the water so she could see to dodge occasional rafters and debris such as sticks. Really.

“My boyfriend [Nick], who is a fly fisherman, found this good, safe spot for me where the current could rip me down, and then there was an eddy that I could...
swim back up,” says Herzog, who was diagnosed at birth with achondroplasia, a disorder that prevents the conversion of cartilage to bone and is a form of dwarfism. “I was definitely out of my comfort zone. I never did it for a workout aspect. I did it just to have the feel of the water.”

She did that through mid-May, then hit the other end of the spectrum by moving to the 100-degree water at the Mount Princeton Hot Springs Resort in Nathrop, Colo., when it reopened.

“I have to get out after every set,” she says. “My coach dumps an ice-cold water bottle on me. I sit outside for a little bit and cool down, and I get back in.”

Fellow swimmer Colleen Young, 22, a two-time Paralympian from St. Louis who is legally blind, wasn’t about to jump into the mighty Mississippi River, preferring to jog and use weights she has at home, but she admires Herzog.

“Sophia, good for her for doing that. That’s crazy,” Young says. “There’s a couple lakes in St. Louis. I’ve thought that maybe I should go and get a wetsuit.”

Pauls’ sled hockey national team teammate, forward Rico Roman, was outfitted pretty well at home in Portland, Ore., but still found ways to be innovative.

“I have a rowing machine, medicine balls, all kinds of tools to keep training and keep it interesting. I have a full-size net, and thank God I have it so I can still shoot pucks in my garage,” says Roman, 39, who had his left leg amputated above the knee after being injured by an improvised explosive device in Iraq in 2007.

**INSPIRED BY “THE TERMINATOR”**

A two-time Paralympic gold medalist and former Army staff sergeant and Purple Heart recipient, Roman also delved into the unconventional. He pushed aside the swings on his kids’ backyard playset and performed pullups. To make things more interesting while shooting at the net in his garage, he used an old pallet as a goaltender.

He also got inspiration from social media, not from other Paralympians but from actor, former politician and bodybuilder Arnold Schwarzenegger.

“He was showing some of his old workouts. One was putting two chairs together and putting a broom or something across them that can hold your weight — for me it was a shovel [and garden chairs] — and I did that in my backyard and did some pullups on that,” says Roman, who did those lying down facing up with his core tightened. “Those are the muscle groups I use in my sport.”

Roman also went for bike rides and walks with his wife, Ela, and has also done yard and garden work to stay active.

“If this [pandemic] clears up sooner rather than later and we have tryouts and I’m not ready to go, I can’t expect to be on this [national] team,” Roman says. “It is what it is. They pick the best, top players in the world, and I want to be a part of that. I have to do [these things] if I want to continue to be on this team. I am the oldest guy on our team. I always joke with our guys that I really have to work dang near 10 times as hard because I’m not 18.”

And if that means using garden chairs, a shovel and a swing set, well, that just puts him in the same situation as other athletes with disabilities who have been training as best they can during unprecedented times.
EVENTS

No Calendar

The country is starting to reopen from the numerous shutdowns and stay-at-home orders caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, but sports and recreational events are still in various stages of restarting.

Because of the unknown status of so many events across the country at SPORTS ‘N SPOKES (S’NS) press time in June, it’s simply too difficult to know what will and won’t be taking place. So, S’NS has decided not to include a calendar of events in this month’s issue.

Visit sportspokes.com/calendar for a regularly updated list of events that will take place, have been postponed or called off because of the pandemic.

BASKETBALL

IWBF Gets More Time

The International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF) is getting more time to change its classification codes to comply with International Paralympic Committee (IPC) rules.

The IPC announced in late May that it was extending the IWBF’s original deadline until Aug. 1 because of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The IWBF had been given until May 29 to verify the eligibility of all 4.0 and 4.5 classified players set to compete at the Tokyo 2020 Summer Paralympic Games, which have been rescheduled for Aug 24 – Sept. 5, 2021.

“Since January, the IWBF has made good progress in meeting its requirements to assess and verify the eligibility of all 4.0 and 4.5 class players set to compete at Tokyo 2020,” says IPC Acting Director of Classification Genevieve Duff. “However, restrictions put in place around the world due to the pandemic have slowed access to medical information, which is needed as part of the athlete assessments.”

In January, the IPC announced the IWBF was noncompliant with the IPC Athlete Classification Code and that immediate measures needed to be taken. As part of an approved action plan towards code-compliance, the IPC requested the IWBF conduct an eligibility assessment of all 4.0 and 4.5 sport class players set to compete at Tokyo 2020.

Such assessments are required of all international federations to determine whether athletes have one of the eligible impairments permitted under the IPC Athlete Classification Code. Players found without an eligible impairment are not permitted to compete in the Paralympic Movement and will not be allowed to compete at the Games.
To date, the IWBF has satisfactorily completed the assessment of approximately 75% of the players whose eligibility needed to be verified ahead of the Tokyo Paralympic Games.

The IPC has also requested that the IWBF ensure its own classification rules and operations align and are fully compliant with the IPC Athlete Classification Code by no later than Aug. 31, 2021.

The IWBF is currently excluded from the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games program. Failure to meet the 2021 deadline will mean that wheelchair basketball will not be readmitted into the Paris 2024 Games.

**PARALYMPICS**

**Weekly COVID-19 Updates**

Trying to give para athletes and others the latest information on issues related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) began publishing a weekly online newsletter in June.

Published each Thursday until further notice, the IPC update is intended to keep people informed about the latest developments with the pandemic and how they relate to the Paralympics and para sport.

The first issue on June 4 included a short article by George Wyndham from Sierra Leone, who took part in table tennis at the 2016 Summer Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. His article, *I’m Not Training, I’m Just Trying To Survive*, details how he hasn’t been able to practice since February because of COVID-19 and has had to deal with no income.

The newsletter also includes IPC information on three sports updating their qualification regulations, news from the World Health Organization and the latest media statements from the IPC.

For more information, visit paralympic.org.

**New Logos**

A trio of U.S. Paralympic winter sports organizations have a new look.

The United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee unveiled new brand marks and identities for U.S. Paralympics Alpine Skiing, U.S. Paralympics Nordic Skiing and U.S. Paralympics Snowboarding in May.

The organization says the refreshed visual looks will create unique identities for each sport and raise awareness of Paralympic sports across the nation.

Created by Axio Design in Colorado Springs, Colo., each mark has a visual representation of the sport, a unique accent color and a specific font identity.

The United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee says the three logos capture the unique characteristics of each sport, while also sharing cohesive elements through the use of color, shield and stars.

**Beijing Sustainability**

Focused on the idea of being “green, inclusive, open and clean,” the Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2022 Paralympic and Olympic Winter Games in China released its sustainability plan for the Games in May.

Developed jointly with local, regional and national authorities, the plan will guide the sustainability work of the Beijing 2022 Paralympics and Olympics and is being implemented throughout the entire process of the Games.

The plan features three key themes of Positive Environmental Impact, New Development for the Region and Better Life for the People.

Those three themes are supported by 12 actions, under which there are 37 key tasks and 119 specific measures that cover the environment of the competition zones, regional development and improvement of well-being for host communities in Beijing and Zhangjiakou.
On The Sidelines

The Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2022 Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games released its sustainability plan for the Games in May.

The plan puts forward objectives such as:

• Maximizing use of existing venues and facilities and building sustainable venues
• Strengthening regional cooperation to improve the environment and coordinated development in the Beijing-Zhangjiakou region
• Tackling climate change to deliver a low-carbon and carbon-neutral Games
• Implementing sustainable sourcing and promoting the development of a low-carbon circular economy
• Improving public infrastructure, including transportation construction and further development of urban management and accessibility services
• Developing winter sports and tourism industries in the Beijing-Zhangjiakou region cultural tourism belt
• Promoting the commercialization and implementation of technological achievements in order to foster new areas of economic growth and development
• Improving the living conditions and increasing employment for residents around the competition zones throughout the Games preparations
• Carrying the Paralympic and Olympic spirit forward and promoting winter sports and Chinese culture to foster a positive and healthy society

For more information, visit olympic.org/beijing-2022.

SOFTBALL

World Series Canceled

The 45th annual Wheelchair Softball World Series is the last in a long list of sports events to be canceled because of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The National Wheelchair Softball Association (NWSA) announced in May that the event planned for Aug. 6–8, in Biloxi, Miss., was called off after the local organizing committee consulted with local, regional and state health officials.

The committee believes it’s not in the best interest of the local community, participants or volunteers to host an event that would bring participants from around the country to Biloxi.

The NWSA doesn’t anticipate scheduling any tournament to replace the cancellation of the event this year. The date and location of the 2021 World Series will be announced at a later time.

Meanwhile, the NWSA says it’s up to the discretion of each team to make decisions regarding practices or hosting a weekend wheelchair softball tournament this summer.

Teams that had previously announced a tournament for the summer are asked to email NWSA Commissioner Bruce Froendt if a tournament is canceled, so the organization website and Facebook page can be updated.

For more information, visit wheelchairsoftball.org.
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The MedStar NRH Punishers’ Trevon Jenifer, in gray, and the New York Rollin’ Knicks’ Steve Serio, in blue, collide during a March 7 game at the City University of New York (CUNY) Wheelchair Basketball Clinic and Exhibition at Queens College in New York City. The event was hosted by the Wheelchair Sports Federation and cosponsored by CUNY and the New York Rollin’ Knicks. Photo by Danny Chris/Wheelchair Sports Federation.
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Los Angeles
Feb. 26-28, 2021

New York Metro
April 30-May 2, 2021

Chicago
June 25-27, 2021

Miami
Nov. 5-7, 2021