Sean Johnson, Athlete, Veteran

Sean Johnson trains hard as a competitor. He swims three times a week at the YMCA as his training regimen. He chose swimming as his main workout since it gives him both physical and cardiovascular strength and stamina to compete.

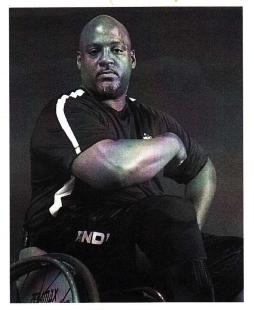
At his first competition in Tampa in 2013 he medaled in three sports: softball, basketball and shot put; truly an outstanding result for any athlete. He competes at national conferences for exposure and hopes to be scouted by national coaches. His ultimate goal is to represent the United States at the 2016 Paralympics.

After he was shot in the back at age 22 and paralyzed from the waist-down, Sean was told by doctors that he would never walk again. With hard work, he did eventually regain feeling in the left leg, but remained paralyzed in the right leg below the knee, which resulted in an amputation. Looking back now, Sean realizes it changed his life in ways he never could have imagined.

While recovering from his amputation, one of the VA's physical therapists suggested that he try adaptive sports and introduced him to the rowing program on the Schuylkill River. Sean found a world he never knew existed—tournaments, competitions and the camaraderie that exists in adaptive sports. Always a competitive person, Sean found a passion for sports that he hadn't experienced since high school.

Knowing that the Games are coming to Philly adds a thrilling dimension for Sean as he trains for his second competition. "When I found out that all this was going to be in my backyard, I was so happy that everyone who has supported me will be able to make it to the Games and see me compete. Bringing the Games to Philly is inspiring me to achieve and accomplish beyond what I thought I could do." He is especially excited that his three children will get to see him compete.

Sean's message to disabled Veterans is simple: "Get in the Games!" He says, "Whether you look at life as a battlefield or a competitive sport, it helps to be in these Games. Participating builds confidence, allows for accomplishment and inspiration. Everywhere you see people in worse shape than you and you see that they are brave enough to accomplish this and believe in themselves. People are giving their all, which is exactly what soldiers are trained to do."



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