

T.J. Hawker Nominated to Compete at Paralympic Games in Beijing, China

Holland, Ohio Resident to vie for the Gold in Boccia

T.J. Hawker has been selected to represent the United States in the sport of Boccia at the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing, China Sept. 6-17. The 27-year-old Holland, Ohio native is ranked #1 nationally in the BC1 division of Boccia and will be the only U.S. athlete to compete in the division at the Games.

“I am honored to be selected to compete at the Paralympic Games and I look forward to bringing home a medal for my country in September,” said Hawker.

Boccia is a game of skill and precision. Athletes throw, kick or use an assistive device to propel leather balls as close as possible to a white target ball. Each player throws six balls. After each individual match, four ends are played, with the top two players from each pool advancing. Boccia is played indoors on a flat, smooth surface by either individuals or teams. Paralympic boccia competition is open to male and female athletes with cerebral palsy a brain injury or stroke.

Hawker, who has cerebral palsy, began playing Boccia at the age of 10 and is a member of the BlazeSports National Disability Sport Alliance (BNDSA), which is a division of BlazeSports America that serves as the National Coordinating Body for competitive sports for individuals with cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and survivors of stroke. Throughout his Boccia career, Hawker has been on numerous international teams and competed in the Pan Am Championships, the World Cup and World Championships.

“T.J. is dedicated to the sport of Boccia and has worked very hard for the past four years honing his skills,” said Jerry McCole director of the BlazeSports National Disability Sport Alliance. “We are very proud of him and know that he will represent the United States well in Beijing.”

BlazeSports National Disability Sport Alliance formulates the rules, implements policies and procedures, conducts national championships in ten sports, disseminates safety and sports medicine information and selects the athletes to represent the United States in international competition. BNDSA is the member organization from the United States to the Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association (CPISRA).