

# Deaf athletes from RIT anchor U.S. hopes for gold at Copenhagen World Games

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A mother load of gold on Scandinavian athletic fields this summer awaits American deaf athletes. Several deaf athletes from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), a college of Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), will join more than 150 other deaf athletes from across the country to represent the United States at the 18th Summer World Games for the Deaf (WGD), July 13-26, 1997, in Copenhagen, Denmark. The Summer and Winter World Games for the Deaf are international sporting and cultural events of, by, and for deaf people held every four years.

NTID Center on Employment advisor John Macko ('90) will travel to Denmark with the U.S. deaf men's volleyball team for his third world games. In 1993, the men's volleyball team brought home a silver medal, and outside hitter Macko and his teammates have their eyes on Copenhagen gold.

"Our first goal as a team is to bring home the gold medal in men's volleyball," said Macko. "Our second goal as a team is to educate others about deaf culture and the WGD."

Reed Gershwind, assistant professor in NTID's Business Occupations program and five-time WGD participant, is a member of the U.S. deaf men's water polo team and a retired member of the U.S. deaf men's swimming team.

"The Copenhagen games will mark my retirement from competitive sports," said Gershwind. "The four previous games broadened my experiences and knowledge of the world, its people, and cultures. It led me through school, career, and leadership opportunities."

Joining Gershwind on the water polo team is RIT business/science student Mark Sullivan, who is participating in his second World Games for the Deaf. At the 1993 games in Sofia, Bulgaria, the water polo team struck gold, and Sullivan, then age 16, was the youngest member of the team.

"WGD brings together deaf people from around the world," said Sullivan. "I am looking forward to joining my teammates on the stand with the gold medal."

NTID applied art and computer graphics graduate Kris Gray ('93) will participate on the U.S. deaf women's volleyball team. Gray was a strong outside hitter for the RIT women's volleyball team and also played softball for RIT. In 1993, the U.S. deaf women's volleyball team captured the gold medal, and Gray is hoping for a repeat this year.

"I think that the '97 U.S. deaf women's volleyball team is much stronger than the team that took the gold in Bulgaria," said Gray, who already is looking ahead to the world games in 2001.

Matt Hamill, RIT electrical engineering student and 1997 NCAA Division III wrestling champion in the 160 lb. weight class, and his teammate, industrial drafting student Jay Jakubowski, are members of the U.S. deaf men's wrestling team. The world games in Copenhagen mark their first taste of international competition.

RIT running stand-outs, science major Kristen Rice, and electrical engineering student Jim Barnum, head to Denmark for their first world games competition as part of the deaf men's and women's track and field team. Rice was honored last year as one of a select group of deaf individuals to carry the Olympic flame as the torch relay passed through Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

"I have known about the WGD since I was five years old," said Rice, who hopes to compete in the WGD women's track 100 meter hurdles as well as sprinting and jumping events. "I decided at that young age that I wanted to participate in the WGD, so this opportunity is like a dream come true for me."

Like Rice, Barnum, who will compete in the men's 800 meter and 4x400 meter relay, has his sights set on international competition as well. "If I medal, great!" said Barnum. "The WGD is important to me and other deaf people around the world because it shows that

every deaf person in the world has two things in common--humanity and deafness."

RIT Social Work student Chris Majeri joins the U.S. deaf men's soccer team for his second WGD. Although the team placed 8th at the '93 games, Majeri, like his teammates, keeps the WGD experience in proper perspective.

"WGD enables me to compete on the soccer field with other deaf soccer players, which is something I truly enjoy," said Majeri. "Striving for the gold builds my self-esteem, and I am proud to represent my country."

Off the field, John Reid ('79), coordinator of recruitment in NTID's recruitment and admissions department, himself a three-time WGD wrestling medalist and former member of the RIT wrestling team, is responsible for the U.S. team's database, transportation, and lodging logistics during the 1997 Summer World Games for the Deaf.

The World Games for the Deaf was founded in France in 1924 by the Comite International des Sports des Sourds, the oldest international organization sponsoring sporting activities for deaf people around the world. The United States contingent of deaf athletes heading to Denmark are organized and sponsored by the American Athletic Association of the Deaf, representing nearly 20 affiliated deaf national sports organizations. World Games for the Deaf are recognized by the International Olympic Committee, which provides partial financial support to teams from the United States and approximately 66 other member nations.

NTID, one of the seven colleges of Rochester Institute of Technology, is the world's first and largest technological college for deaf students. NTID represents the first concerted effort to educate large numbers of deaf students within a college campus planned principally for hearing students. Among RIT's 12,000 full- and part-time students are nearly 1,100 deaf students from the United States and other countries.

In addition to the academic programs based within NTID, students also benefit from nearly 200 technical and professional courses of study offered through RIT's colleges of Applied Science and Technology, Business, Engineering, Imaging Arts and Sciences, Liberal Arts, and Science.