



We Mentor. We Lead. We Impact.



EST. 1982 HOME OF THE

ALABAMA STATE GAMES

HEALTH ACADEMICS ATHLETICS



History of the Games



- The ASF Foundation was founded in 1982 at the request of the U.S. Olympic Committee as a non-profit 501 (c) (3). *Focused on providing positive mentorship programs statewide.*
- Games move to different locations of the state every few years
- Largest Olympic style, multi-sport event in Alabama; open to all ages & abilities

Including Athletes with Disabilities

- Entered 2019 Games with the goal to increase accessibility for athletes with disabilities
- Became aware that very few State Games around the country provided opportunities
- We previously incorporated a few noncompetitive options for athletes with intellectual or physical disabilities; no previous Paralympic-style Sports
 - Miracle League Baseball
 - Adapted category in bowling
- Wanted to add more sports, but lacked the proper information and channels to start
- We visited many organizations for advice on where to start, who to recruit to help, how to market, etc.

Our Allies

- We started our work with the following organizations
- Dream Court
- The Lakeshore Foundation
- Ability Sport Network



Dream Court

- Nonprofit organization in Montgomery that provides adaptive tennis programs for individuals with special needs; founded by Jessica Weyreuter
- Hosted a Wheelchair Tennis Coaching event with USTA (United States Tennis Association)
- Learned about USTA's Wheelchair Tennis and Quad Tennis leagues; the differences between the two leagues, spinal cord injuries, etc.
- There are few rule changes between Tennis & Wheelchair Tennis: two bounce rule
- USTA is ahead of other organizations on integration: rules clearly state that athletes with disabilities are welcome to enter a standard sanctioned tournament
 - this policy is great for educating other tennis players
 - creates more opportunities for athletes with disabilities to play, because there are not as many Wheelchair or Quad tournaments
- Determined Wheelchair Tennis was the best place to start with expansion due to the low number of Quad players in our state
- It was here that we met some Tennis coaches from The Lakeshore Foundation

The Lakeshore Foundation

- Lakeshore's mission statement: "To enable people with physical disabilities and chronic health conditions to lead healthy, active, & independent lifestyles through physical activity, sport, recreation, advocacy, policy, and research."
- located in Birmingham
- Facilities serve as a training site for US Olympic & Paralympic teams
- Went with the intention to ask about Wheelchair Tennis & got the opportunity to discuss other possibilities
- Looked at our sport listing and helped us pick good sports to start expanding
- Lakeshore connected us with David Kyle (Ability Sport Network UAH) and Evan Enquist (UA Wheelchair Tennis)
- Later entered two teams for our inaugural Wheelchair Basketball event in the 2019 Games

Ability Sport Network

- “ASN is an adapted youth sport league focusing on Paralympic sports and intended for middle and high school students with functional limitations based on physical disabilities.”
- Two locations: home office in Montgomery at Huntingdon College, satellite office in Huntsville at UAH
- David Kyle with ASN UAH spoke to us on including Wheelchair Basketball; the idea was to have more than one sport option for athletes who use chairs; connected us with Tia Clayton with Huntsville Parks & Rec
- Lisa Dorman with ASN Huntingdon met with us & offered an opportunity to attend the Adapted Physical Education Activity Workshop
- introduced us to Bocce Ball, which we are working to incorporate in 2020
- UAH office provided all of the sport chairs for Wheelchair Basketball athletes & suggested a 3v3 unified tournament format

Wheelchair Sport Directors

- Evan Enquist, head coach of UA Wheelchair Tennis Team served as Tournament Director of our inaugural Wheelchair Tennis tournament
 - experienced coach, athlete, and event director
 - educated us on USTA policies that protect athletes with disabilities from discrimination
- Tia Clayton, Special Populations Supervisor at Huntsville Parks & Rec served as Tournament Director of our inaugural Wheelchair Basketball tournament
 - got many local players involved in the tournament
 - had previously worked closely with ASN, had connections in the community



Challenges We Faced

- Faced three main obstacles during this process
 1. Establishing we were serious about adding opportunities for athletes with disabilities.
 2. Spreading the word about our new opportunities to those athletes
 3. Educating our staff, volunteer event directors, sport committees, city sports officials, etc. about athletes with disabilities

Incident with Tennis

- Experienced a serious conflict with the Tournament Director of Tennis
- There were two separate tournaments: Tennis and Wheelchair Tennis
- USTA bylaws state if an athlete with a disability chooses to play in a “standard” tournament, that is their choice and they must be granted entry
- A wheelchair tennis athlete and her partner registered for the standard tournament, and our volunteer director did not understand the USTA rules that protected this athlete’s right to play
- Was concerned that a wheelchair would damage the facility’s clay courts & would only allow the athlete to play on hard courts
- Our organization consulted officials with USTA and individuals with knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act & communicated our findings with the volunteer director

Our Suggestions

- If interested in offering sport opportunities for athletes with disabilities,
 - Do your research
 - Reach out to organizations near you for help
 - Be openminded
 - Get out of your comfort zone



Next Steps

This year, we added Wheelchair Basketball & Tennis as separate events. We incorporated adapted categories into swimming and track & field.

Next?

- Expanding into more of our sports
- Move toward inclusion vs. separation
- Adding more Paralympic style events
- Start researching for Special Olympic style events

SAVE THE DATE!



**ALABAMA
STATE GAMES
XXXVIII**

JUNE

19-21, 2020

BIRMINGHAM, AL

WWW.ALAGAMES.COM



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