

Beijing 2022 Paralympic Winter Games

Warm Recollections on Accessibility by Sally Swanson, AIA



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Introduction

I hope you had a chance to glance at my earlier note about my first impressions of the Beijing 2022 Paralympics (Appendix A).

As I was preparing to embark on my trip to the Beijing 2022 Paralympic winter games, I had real concerns about how I would navigate through all the logistics in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As it turns out my concerns were for naught as the Beijing Paralympic organizers demonstrated themselves to be more than capable.

As a member of the media team, not only did I feel that my health and safety was always being considered, but at the same time I was able to successfully participate and engage the athletes and members of the support group.

Both the hotel and transportation accommodations were highly organized and dependable. Knowing that I could rely on these basics, I was then able to focus on telling the story of these incredible Paralympic athletes.

Having returned from the Beijing 2022 Paralympic Games a few months ago, the following reflects a deeper reflection upon my time in China.

I hope you'll be able to take a few minutes and turn the pages of my report on the Beijing 2022 Paralympics. Not only will you find the very powerful stories of some of these athletes, you'll also see some of the infrastructure that speaks to the core values of access and inclusiveness that have informed my life's work.

Close Relationships

I want to begin by praising Mr. Jack Shang, a member of the management team at the Beijing Continental Grand Hotel. His help and guidance in terms of managing logistics, transportation, food service, and COVID precautions, was invaluable.



Jack Shang

Once I settled into my hotel, and the exhilarating rhythm of these Winter Paralympic Games, I found it was really quite an adventure to get to the mountain venue via a multi-modal four-hour excursion involving trains, buses, and taxis. The accurate timing of all the transportation provided peace of mind.



While there were more rules than you can shake a stick at, some of which I inadvertently bumped up against, I can't say enough about the warmth and support of the Chinese people.

There were an estimated 10,000 student-volunteers engaged as ambassadors to assist athletes and visitors alike at these Paralympic Games. I depended on these joyful, intelligent individuals, more times than I will share, to navigate the mobile apps that were the linchpin of keeping the media informed as to all aspects of their attendance at the Games.

Before I go any further, I want to take a moment to introduce Ms. Yuli Zhang.

She was instrumental as my guide through the Games, to meet and interview various athletes, and helped me capture the essence of the Games I'm about to share.



Yuli Zhang

"I don't know yet what kind of position and life I'm going to have in the future, but I'm always looking forward to realizing my value. Thank you very much for your recognition and expectation..."

Governance

Having covered six Paralympic games, it is quite obvious that the Paralympics and the International Paralympic committee (IPC) operates in the shadow of the Olympics and the international Olympic committee IOC. I am left with the question as to whether the IPC's interests are being fully met operating essentially in the shadow of the IOC.

This matter came up again during the course of my interview with Thomas Grundolski, when I asked him to what degree should the international Paralympic committee, IPC, be independent from the international Olympic committee (IOC)? His answer was quite succinct; noting that "... if you want to drive the bus, you need to be able to drive the bus and just follow your own eyesight and not look in the rear-view mirror, which is where the IOC is."

Athlete Interviews

During the course of these Paralympic games, I had the opportunity to interview more than a few athletes. Several of these exchanges are outlined below. One of my own observations had to do with the weather. When I first arrived it was bone chilling like cold on the mountain. But as we move through the games the weather became quite variable, even warming to the 50s Fahrenheit. This of course results in the snow melting a bit during the day and then refreezing at night. You'll see the varying snow conditions as a recurring theme in some of my interviews, but my sense is that these athletes are quite professional and they deal with the snow conditions like anything else.

I like to think of myself as an athlete, and during the course of my adult life I've also been passionate about hiking and rock climbing, but I found nothing so demanding as cross-country skiing which has been a passion of mine for 20 years. So, when I see these athletes with a physical limitation excelling at this sport, I find it nothing less than astounding.

Ice Hockey

Gold Medal Winning USA Team



USA Supprt Team

I cannot begin to explain the level of enthusiasm and support that emerged for Team USA Paralympian Ice Hockey players.

The US Ice Hockey Team final game was thrilling. I have never experienced the teamwork and enthusiasm. When a goal was scored the team members hugged one another and the enthusiasm spread throughout the stadium. When winning the gold medal they shared the medals with each other. The team work and fellowship was the best I ever experienced.



The camaraderie among the players was most impressive. The team shared that they practiced hour hours a day and developed excellent ice hockey play skillsets perfecting their play in Sochi and PyeongChang Paralympics. It was also shared that young players were incorporated into the team developing their skill in future games.



Thoughts from Coach Hoff of Team USA and various members of the Paralympic Team

Coach Hoff noted the struggles that emerged and sought to successfully move the team through the COVID-19 pandemic and get them to these Paralympic games in Olympic level condition. Perhaps his success stems from creating an environment where a sense of family was able to emerge amongst the teammates.

I noticed the incredible teamwork how the whole team worked together beautifully and celebrated together beautifully and I asked how was all that created because everybody wants that. Josh Misiewicz made it quite simple and clear, “it’s loving the guy next to you.”

This point the Josh made became even clearer during the medal ceremony. He noted that, “we’re not putting these metals on ourselves, we’re putting it on the guy next to you”.

Jen Lee immigrated to this country from Taiwan when he was eight. “As a kid, ... I just always want to be two things: be an athlete or be a GI Joe. And I’m very happy to honor to serve my country and able to continue after losing my leg and be an athlete. And not only just an athlete, but also represent my country a different way.”



Team USA takes Gold in Ice Hockey

USA Ice Hockey Team Leaders

See Appendix B for more information on each individual.

Joshua Misiewicz - USA



Josh was introduced to Para ice hockey in 2012 at the Walter Reed Military Hospital and debuted for the United States in 2015 at the World Championships in Buffalo, NY. Before his accident he played able-bodied ice hockey for Saint Mary's University of Minnesota.

Jack Wallace - USA



Jack began playing Para ice hockey in 2009 in Woodbridge, NJ and debuted for the United States in 2016 against the Republic of Korea in Charlottetown, Canada. After winning gold in Para ice hockey at the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang, he decided to take up Para canoe sprint with a view to competing at both the summer and winter editions of the Paralympic Games.

Declan Farmer - USA



Declan began playing Para ice hockey in 2006 in Clearwater, FL and debuted for the United States in 2012 against Norway in Calgary, Canada. He plays the forward position, and was named the United States of America's Player of the Game in the world championship final in both 2021 and 2019.

Jen Lee - USA



Jen took up Para ice hockey in 2009 at the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX after being introduced to the sport by Operation Comfort, an organisation dedicated to assisting injured US service personnel. He debuted for the team in 2010 and became the starting goaltender ahead of the 2022 Games in Beijing.

Josh Pauls - USA



Josh began playing Para ice hockey around age nine in Woodbridge, NJ and debuted for the United States in 2008 in Charlottetown, Canada. He captained the US national Para ice hockey team to gold at the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang as well as the 2021 World Championships in Ostrava, Czech Republic.

Canada Ice Hockey Team Leader

Billy Bridges - Canada



Billy took up Para ice hockey in 1996 at the Kitchener-Waterloo Sidewinders club in Ontario, Canada. He made his international debut in 1998 at age 14, which at the time made him the youngest Para ice hockey player to have represented Canada. Since then, he has played at six Paralympic Winter Games between 2002 and 2022.

Cross Country Skiing



Carina Edlinger - Austria

Carina is a cross country skier and biathlete the skating sprint events are her favorite, but she has struggled recently with her health. Carina was headed into the finals the day of this interview and I gave her my best wishes.

In Women's Sprint Free VI Final, she finished in 1st place.

She notes that the Chinese did a great job in creating the cross-country track but it was a bit different than was expected because it's fairly flat, but tough nonetheless, due to the altitude.



Cristian Westemaier Ribera - Brasil

Cristian is a cross country skier from Brazil. This is his second Paralympic games, having competed at the Pyeongyang games in 2018. He spoke very highly of the organization and the volunteers.

Cristian shared with me that given the climate in his native Brazil, much of his training is done on roller-skis on asphalt. Periodically his team will travel to Europe in search of snow.

In Men's Sprint Sitting Semi-Final, Cristian finished 5th in the first group. He was ranked 9th in the overall semi-final rankings. (There are two groups, and the top three athletes of each group advance to the final.)

Men's Sprinting



Jake Adicoff & Sam Wood - USA

Jake and Sam are from Sun Valley Idaho and they shared their incredible work ethic with me. They each train once or twice a day and have a training volume that ranges between 700 to 900 hours a year. They've each been skiing since they were quite young.

They too noted how slow the snow is as the weather warmed, but it didn't slow them down.

In the Men's Sprint Free VI Final, Jake finished in 2nd. On March 7, in Men's Long Distance Classic VI, Jake finished in 2nd.

They spoke very highly of the support they were getting through team USA, the sun valley ski education foundation, and adaptive spirit, as well as their family.

Zhongwu Mao - China

In Men's Sprint Sitting Final, he finished in 2nd.

On March 6, in Men's Long Distance Sitting Final, he finished in 2nd.



Tao Wang - China

In Men's Sprint Sitting Final, he finished in 5th.



Inkki Inola - Finland

In Men's Sprint Free VI (Qualification), he finished in 13th place.

(The top 8 athletes advance to the final.)

On March 7, in Men's Long Distance Classic VI, he finished in 4th place.



Aaron Pike - USA

In Men's Sprint Sitting Semi-Final, he finished 6th in the first group. He was ranked 12th in the overall semi-final rankings.

(There are two groups, and the top three athletes of each group advance to the final.)



Drew Shea - USA

In Men's Sprint Free Standing (Qualification), he finished in 21st place.
(The top 12 athletes advance to the final.)



Women's Sprinting

Sydney Peterson - USA

In Women's Sprint Free Standing Final, she finished in 3rd.
On March 7, in Women's Long Distance Classic Standing, she finished in 2nd.



Leonie Maria Walter - Germany

In Women's Sprint Free VI Final, she finished in 4th.

On March 7, in Women's Long Distance Classic VI, she finished in 3th.



Dani Aravich - USA

In Women's Sprint Free Standing Semi-Final, she finished 4th in the first group. She was ranked 8th in the overall semi-final rankings.

(There are two groups, and the top three athletes of each group advance to the final.)



Qianru Yang - China

In Women's Sprint Free VI Semi-Final, she finished 4th in the second group. She was ranked 7th in the overall semi-final rankings.

(There are two groups, and the top two athletes of each group advance to the final.)

In the biathlon competitions (Women's Sprint Vision Impaired and Women's Middle Distance Vision Impaired), she finished 5th.



Iweta Faron - Poland

In Women's Sprint Free Standing Semi-Final, she finished 5th in the first group. She was ranked 9th in the overall semi-final rankings.

(There are two groups, and the top three athletes of each group advance to the final.)



Snow Boarding

Snowboarders just rocketed down the mountain performing some incredible athletic feats. Here is one in a quieter moment.

Kaiyang Liu - China

In Men's Banked Slalom SB-LL1, he finished 6th.



I'm afraid I missed getting this fellow's name, but clearly, this cross-country skier from Canada was acclimated to cold-weather. He was wearing only a shirt and sunglasses, and noted, "...this weather is perfect for me. It's comfortable wearing a T-shirt out here. This is a nice, warm day in Canada, so it's no problem."

Alex Massie - Canada

In Men's Banked Slalom SB-LL2, he finished 6th.



Xiang Xu - China

In Men's Banked Slalom SB-LL2, he finished 10th.



Jehyuk Lee - Korea

In Men's Banked Slalom SB-LL2, he finished 16th.



Closing Ceremony



These are always very moving moments for me.

Concluding Thoughts

Even after having reported on six previous Paralympic games, I found once again at the conclusion of these games being incredibly moved by the dedication and spirit these athletes demonstrated to the world. It has made me very proud to be a part of this movement and having dedicated my professional life to creating environments that are inclusive and accessible to all individuals.

A couple of perspectives of the Birds Nest; one of the most incredible stadia I've ever experienced.



The IPC staff deserves accolades and respect for their hard work.

I look forward to sharing my observations and experiences at the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris.

Sally Swanson, AIA, is the Founder, CEO and Principal-in-Charge of her firm Sally Swanson Architects, Inc. (SSA). The firm has thrived for 42 years under Ms. Swanson's direction. She is known internationally as a pioneer in accessibility and for the creation of inclusive environments in the public and private sector.



Commitment

Integration

**Paralympic
Athletes**

Accessibility

Beijing 2022 Paralympic Winter Games

By Sally Swanson, AIA

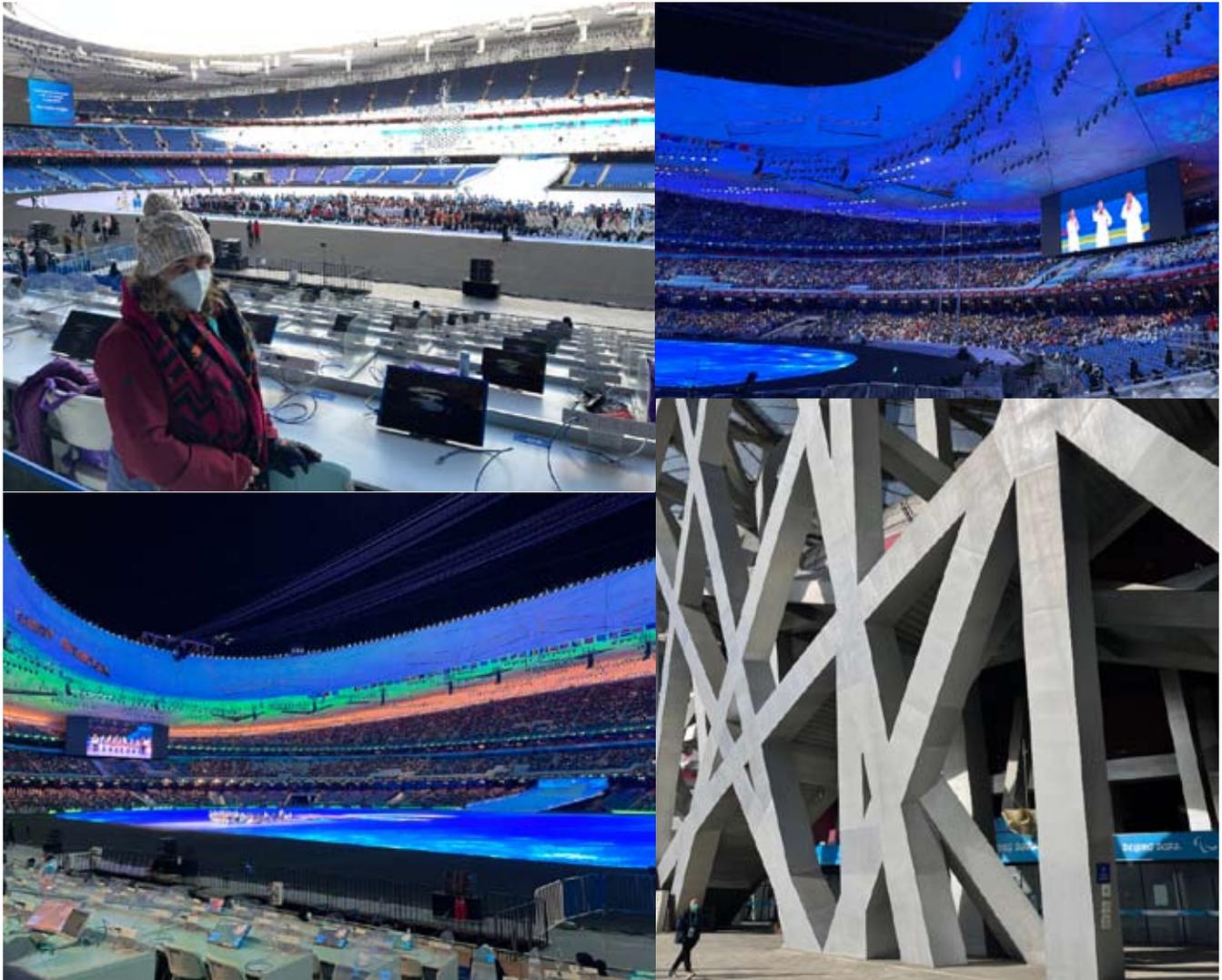


Welcome to the 2022 Beijing Paralympics

I first experienced the beauty of the Bird's Nest Stadium when reporting on the 2008 Summer Paralympic Games in Beijing. It is a timeless architectural marvel, just as inspiring today as it was more than a decade ago. It is hard to believe that this cutting edge facility was allowed to deteriorate after the 2008 Summer Games. I was very pleased upon my arrival this March, however, to see it restored to its previous grandeur.

I am writing to you from the Beijing 2022 Paralympic Winter Games. Let me first say how helpful and accommodating the Chinese people have been as I traveled to this distant land in the midst of a global health pandemic. Yet the COVID-19 health protocols they've put in place have left me feeling safe and secure.

I found the opening speech by International Paralympic Committee (IPC) President, Andrew Parsons, truly moving. His emphasis on the core values of the IPC including diversity and inclusion and a desire to embrace and celebrate differences and not let those divide us was nothing less than extraordinary especially in the context of the outbreak of war in Europe.



Bird's Nest Stadium

It is the Paralympic games and these core values that can remind society of its collective better self. And it is moments such as these where Society must rally together, driven by the knowledge that we can aspire to live together in harmony.

The beauty of the Paralympic movement is that it builds a broader understanding about how everyone experiences and navigates through the natural and built environment. With that broader understanding, we can begin to develop a stronger sense of empathy and togetherness.

This will be the first in a series of articles highlighting my experiences at the 2022 Beijing Paralympics. I hope to impart not just a sense of the Paralympics spirit, but also build a broader understanding of the diverse individuals that make up our society.



Opening Ceremony

Sally Swanson, AIA, is the Founder, CEO and Principal-in-Charge of her firm Sally Swanson Architects, Inc. (SSA). The firm has thrived for 42 years under Ms. Swanson's direction. She is known internationally as a pioneer in accessibility and for the creation of inclusive environments in the public and private sector.





Commitment

Integration

**Paralympic
Athletes**

Accessibility

Appendix B

USA Ice Hockey Team Leaders Information

Joshua Misiewicz - USA

| Rank | Event | Year | Location |
|----------------------------|----------------------|------|------------------|
| Paralympic Games | | | |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2018 | Pyeongchang, KOR |
| World Championships | | | |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2021 | Ostrava, CZE |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2015 | Buffalo, NY, USA |

Date of Birth: 25 Jun 1988

Age: 33

Sport Class: IH

Place of birth: Berwyn, IL

Birth Country: United States of America

Residence: Nashville, TN

Residence Country: United States of America

Hobbies: Going to the shooting range. (Athlete, 02 Mar 2022)

Occupation: Athlete, Veteran

Education: Liberal Studies - College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, IL, USA

Club name: USA Warriors [USA] / Nashville Sled Preds [USA]

Coach: David Hoff [national], USA

Position style: Forward (usahockey.com, 21 Jul 2017)

Other sports:

He played able-bodied ice hockey for Saint Mary's University of Minnesota in the United States of America. (teamusa.org, 05 Mar 2022)

Debut:

2015 for United States, World Championships in Buffalo, NY, United States (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Start:

He was introduced to Para ice hockey in 2012 at the Walter Reed Military Hospital in Washington DC, United States of America. (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Reason:

He had played able-bodied ice hockey before his accident. “My first thought [after the accident] was, ‘I’ll never play hockey again’. Then I found out about sled hockey. Ever since, it’s been awesome to be back on the ice playing the sport I love.” (usahockey.com, 06 Feb 2015; teamusa.org, 20 Oct 2014)

Training: He trains for 20 hours a week. (Athlete, 02 Mar 2022)

Memorable:

Winning gold at the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang. (Athlete, 02 Mar 2022)

Hero: Canadian ice hockey player Bob Probert. (Athlete, 02 Mar 2022)

Influence: His father. (Athlete, 02 Mar 2022)

Ritual: He always puts his pads on in the same way. (Athlete, 02 Mar 2022)

Type of Impairment: Limb deficiency (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Origin of Impairment: Acquired (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Impairment Details:

In 2011 he was serving with the US Marine Corps in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, when he stepped on an improvised explosive device [IED] while on patrol. He lost both of his legs as a result of his injuries. (teamusa.org, 20 Oct 2014; chicagotribune.com, 17 Dec 2011)

Further Education:

He has also studied at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota in Winona, MN, United States of America. (saintmarysports.com, 27 Apr 2012)

Jack Wallace - USA

| Rank | Event | Year | Location |
|----------------------------|----------------------|------|------------------|
| Paralympic Games | | | |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2018 | Pyeongchang, KOR |
| World Championships | | | |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2021 | Ostrava, CZE |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2019 | Ostrava, CZE |
| 2 | Open Team Tournament | 2017 | Gangneung, KOR |

Date of Birth: 24 Jun 1998

Age: 23

Sport Class: IH

Place of birth: FRANKLIN LAKES, NJ

Birth Country: United States of America

Residence: NASHVILLE, TN

Residence Country: United States of America

Hobbies: Playing video games, travelling, cooking, playing guitar. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Education: Biomedical Science - College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ, USA

Club name: New Jersey Freeze [USA] / Woodbridge Warriors [USA]

Coach: David Hoff [national], USA

Position style: Defence (teamusa.usahockey.com, 20 Sep 2019)

Other sports:

He has represented the United States of America in Para canoe sprint, and competed at the 2019 World Championships in Szeged, Hungary. He won a gold medal with the US team in Para ice hockey at the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang. (SportsDeskOnline, 15 Dec 2021; olympics.nbcsports.com, 22 Aug 2019; teamusa.usahockey.com, 20 Sep 2019)

Debut: 2016 for United States Against Republic of Korea, in Charlottetown, Canada (usahockey.com, 04 Dec 2016)

Start: He began playing Para ice hockey in 2009 in Woodbridge, NJ, United States of America. (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Reason:

He liked ice hockey before his accident and wanted to return to the sport following his amputation. He first heard about Para ice hockey while at a Camp No Limits event in Maine, United States of America. When he got home from the camp he joined a local team in New Jersey, United States of America. "They kind of taught me that I'm not the only one with a prosthetic; I'm not the only amputee in the world. One of the volunteers asked me, 'What are your favourite sports?' I said, 'Hockey', and he said, 'Oh, did you ever hear of sled hockey?' My parents found a local programme in Woodbridge." (njmonthly.com, 28 Feb 2022; sikids.com, 03 Apr 2018; nolimitsfoundation.org, 2014)

Ambition: To win a gold medal at the 2022 Paralympic Winter Games in Beijing. (njmonthly.com, 28 Feb 2022)

Training: He trains for between 16 and 20 hours a week. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Memorable: Winning gold at the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Hero: Canadian ice hockey players Martin Brodeur and Scott Stevens. (njmonthly.com, 28 Feb 2022; Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Influence: US Para ice hockey player Declan Farmer. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Ritual: "I still have the same dry-fit shirt I did when I was 12." (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Philosophy: "You get out of life what you put in." (sikids.com, 03 Apr 2018)

Type of Impairment: Limb deficiency (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Origin of Impairment: Acquired (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Impairment Details:

In July 2008 he was involved in a boating accident while on holiday with his family on Lake George, NY, United States of America. His injuries led to the amputation of his right leg above the knee. He was in a coma for three days and spent two months in hospital. (njmonthly.com, 28 Feb 2022)

Taking up Canoe:

After winning gold in Para ice hockey at the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang, he decided to take up Para canoe sprint with a view to competing at both the summer and winter editions of the Paralympic Games. "Right after [the 2018 Paralympics], me and Brody [US Para ice hockey player Brody Roybal] were hanging out talking and we were discussing what it would be like if we started doing summer and winter [Games]. And he was more joking around, but I internalised that, and said, 'Well, what if I did that?' And I started looking around at different sports, tried out a couple, and then I found kayaking, and I really liked it. You're outside, it's great cross-training in the summer. I'm still part of the national team for hockey and I'm definitely still committed to that. My only stipulation for picking up a summer sport was that it wouldn't take anything away from hockey, so I think kayak is the best route for that, because it's similar muscle groups, it has kind of off-set training seasons, and stuff like that." (teamusa.usahockey.com, 20 Sep 2019)

Declan Farmer - USA

| Rank | Event | Year | Location |
|----------------------------|----------------------|------|------------------|
| Paralympic Games | | | |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2018 | Pyeongchang, KOR |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2014 | Sochi, RUS |
| World Championships | | | |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2021 | Ostrava, CZE |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2019 | Ostrava, CZE |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2015 | Buffalo, NY, USA |
| 2 | Open Team Tournament | 2017 | Gangneung, KOR |
| 2 | Open Team Tournament | 2013 | Goyang, KOR |

Date of Birth: 5 Nov 1997

Age: 24

Sport Class: IH

Place of birth: Tampa, FL

Birth Country: United States of America

Residence: Nashville, TN

Residence Country: United States of America

Hobbies: Reading, cycling, fantasy football, spending time outdoors. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Education: Economics - Princeton University, United States

Coach: David Hoff [national], USA

Position style: Forward (usahockey.com, 21 Jul 2017)

Sporting relatives: His uncle played professional baseball, and his aunt competed in distance running at university level in the United States of America. (lightning.nhl.com, 03 Aug 2012)

Debut: 2012 for United States Against Norway, in Calgary, Canada (Athlete, 06 Mar 2014)

Start: He began playing Para ice hockey in 2006 in Clearwater, FL, United States of America. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Reason: "I was just looking around for adaptive sports in the Tampa Bay area. The Tampa Bay Lightning had a sledge hockey programme and I started from there." (Athlete, 06 Mar 2014)

Ambition: To win gold at the 2022 Paralympic Winter Games in Beijing. (paralympic.org, 18 Mar 2019)

Training: He trains for 40 hours a week. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Memorable: Winning gold at the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Hero: US Para ice hockey players Josh Pauls and Steve Cash. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022, 29 Mar 2018)

Influence: US Para ice hockey players Ron Richardson and Brody Roybal. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022, 29 Mar 2018)

Ritual: “I am strict to my stretching and warm-up routine.” (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Philosophy: “If you ain’t first, you’re last.” (cooperstrength.com, 21 Jul 2014)

Award: He was named the United States of America’s Player of the Game in the world championship final in both 2021 and 2019. (teamusa.org, 05 Mar 2022; paralympic.org, 26 Jun 2021)

In 2017 and 2019 he was named Best Forward at the world championships. (paralympic.org, 04 May 2019, 30 Jan 2018)

He was named Best Forward at the 2016 Pan Pacific Championships in Buffalo, NY, United States of America. (hockeygods.com, 02 Apr 2016)

He was named Best Male Athlete with an Impairment at the 2014 Excellence in Sports Performance Yearly [ESPY] Awards in the United States of America. (paralympic.org, 13 Mar 2015)

In April 2014 he took part in the ceremonial puck drop prior to the Tampa Bay Lightning’s home NHL match against the Montreal Canadiens. (paralympic.org, 13 Mar 2015)

He was named Best Male Athlete at the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi by the International Paralympic Committee [IPC]. (paralympic.org, 13 Mar 2015)

Type of Impairment: Limb deficiency (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Origin of Impairment: Congenital (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Impairment Details: He was born with a bilateral amputation, one above the knee and one below the knee. He learned to walk on prosthetic legs at age one. (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018, 06 Mar 2014; tampabay.com, 09 Apr 2010)

Leader: He was an alternate captain of the US national team at the 2022 Paralympic Winter Games in Beijing. “I think back to Sochi [the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games] and the older guys on that team, and they were my age now [2022]. In Sochi, Brody [Roybal] and I were the young guys by quite a few years, and now that I’ve been a part of this group for a long time, I’ve picked up more of a leadership role. I was in Nashville [TN, United States of America] the last couple of years with many of these guys training and took charge of a lot of the training there without any coaches, which gave me more confidence in being a leader of this team. I’ve built close relationships with everyone on the team, having been here for so long. Just having those relationships is leadership in itself because you know guys well, they believe in you and you believe in them. Establishing that trust between teammates is big.” (teamusa.org, 05 Mar 2022, 13 Oct 2021)

Jen Lee - USA

| Rank | Event | Year | Location |
|----------------------------|----------------------|------|------------------|
| Paralympic Games | | | |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2018 | Pyeongchang, KOR |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2014 | Sochi, RUS |
| World Championships | | | |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2021 | Ostrava, CZE |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2019 | Ostrava, CZE |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2012 | Hamar, NOR |
| 2 | Open Team Tournament | 2013 | Goyang, KOR |

Date of Birth: 26 Jul 1986

Age: 35

Sport Class: IH

Birth Country: Chinese Taipei

Residence: SAN ANTONIO, TX

Residence Country: United States of America

Hobbies: CrossFit, hiking, cycling, watching movies, wheelchair basketball, travelling. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022; teamusa.org, 07 Mar 2018)

Occupation: Veteran

Education: Sport Management - University of Texas at Austin, United States

Family: Partner Vanessa

Languages spoken: English, Mandarin

Club name: San Antonio Rampage [United States]

Coach: David Hoff [national], USA

Position style: Goaltender (teamusa.sportngin.com, 01 Aug 2018)

Other sports: Prior to his accident he played basketball for Chaminade University of Honolulu in Hawaii, United States of America. (usahockey.com, 03 Apr 2012)

Debut: 2010 for United States (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Start: He took up the sport in 2009 at the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX, United States of America. (Athlete, 06 Mar 2014)

Reason: He was introduced to the sport by Operation Comfort, an organisation dedicated to assisting injured US service personnel. He was drawn to Para ice hockey as he had competed in inline skating during high school. (Athlete, 06 Mar 2014; teamusa.org, 11 Nov 2013; usahockey.com, 03 Apr 2012)

Ambition: To compete at the 2022 Paralympic Winter Games in Beijing. (teamusa.org, 04 Mar 2021)

Memorable: Winning gold at the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi. (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Hero: US basketball player Michael Jordan, US Para ice hockey player Steve Cash. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022, 29 Mar 2018)

Influence: His family, and his partner. (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Ritual: “I don’t eat [prior to matches], I like to play hungry.” (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Philosophy: “In the end it is up to you.” (Instagram profile, 01 Jan 2019)

Type of Impairment: Limb deficiency (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Origin of Impairment: Acquired (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Impairment Details: In March 2009 his left leg was amputated above the knee after he was injured in a motorcycle accident in Nassau County, FL, United States of America. (Athlete, 06 Mar 2014)

Taking the Reins: He was a reserve goaltender for the US national team at the 2014 and 2018 Paralympic Winter Games. After Steve Cash retired in 2021, Lee became the starting goaltender ahead of the 2022 Games in Beijing. “I think the biggest thing for me is understanding the amount of that locked-in focus that [Steve] had. He’s a very competitive guy. He was able to make those big saves. For me, it’s big shoes to fill, for sure. He raised the bar from day one. He left this game better than it was. For me, having the backup role and becoming the starter there’s definitely a different preparation. I learned a lot from Steve on how he had to prepare himself physically and mentally.” (teamusa.usahockey.com, 03 Mar 2022, 01 Nov 2021)

Motivation: He took a two-year break from the sport following the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi after his mother passed away due to a brain tumour. “I took two years off right after the Paralympic Games to clear my head, finished my undergraduate studies and tried to reset myself mentally. I knew it wasn’t going to be easy to get back into the sport, as sled hockey has become extremely competitive over the last few years, with younger talents on the rise. But my mother gave me the motivation to keep going regardless how hard it may seem. She’s the main reason I was able to beat the odds and made the 2018 Paralympic team.” (teamusa.org, 03 Mar 2022; news.utexas.edu, 26 Feb 2018)

Military Service: He has served in the US Army. He initially worked as an aircraft mechanic before being deployed to Iraq, and served as a sergeant until January 2015. He believes his military service has helped him develop his discipline and mental toughness. “The discipline really comes in handy. Every time I want to say that I don’t like this sport, or it’s too hard, or, ‘Who can really skate like this?’, I have plenty of reasons to give up, but the military teaches us, and me especially, not to quit.” (teamusa.org, 03 Mar 2022, 11 Nov 2013)

From Chinese Taipei to the United States: Born in Chinese Taipei, he moved to the United States of America with his parents and two sisters at age eight. (teamusa.org, 03 Mar 2022; Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Further Education: He has studied physical education at the University of the Incarnate Word [UIW] in San Antonio, TX, United States of America. He has also studied at Chaminade University of Honolulu in Hawaii, United States of America. (Athlete, 06 Mar 2014)

Josh Pauls - USA

| Rank | Event | Year | Location |
|----------------------------|----------------------|------|--------------------|
| Paralympic Games | | | |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2018 | Pyeongchang, KOR |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2014 | Sochi, RUS |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2010 | Vancouver, BC, CAN |
| World Championships | | | |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2021 | Ostrava, CZE |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2019 | Ostrava, CZE |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2015 | Buffalo, NY, USA |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2012 | Hamar, NOR |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2009 | Ostrava, CZE |
| 2 | Open Team Tournament | 2017 | Gangneung, KOR |
| 2 | Open Team Tournament | 2013 | Goyang, KOR |

Date of Birth: 31 Dec 1992

Age: 29

Sport Class: IH

Place of birth: New Brunswick, NJ

Birth Country: United States of America

Residence: St. Louis, MO

Residence Country: United States of America

Nickname: Spudsy [his teammates believe he has a resemblance to the Mr. Potato Head toy]. (teamusa.org, 14 Mar 2013)

Hobbies: Playing video games, gardening. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Occupation: Motivational Speaker

Education: Sports Management - Lindenwood University , Saint Charles, MO, USA

Family: Wife Katie

Club name: DASA St. Louis Blues [United States] since 2011

Coach: David Hoff [national], USA; Jeff LoVecchio [personal], USA

Position style: Defence (stltoday.com, 01 Mar 2022)

Debut: 2008 for United States, in Charlottetown, Canada (Athlete, 06 Mar 2014)

Start: He began playing Para ice hockey around age nine in Woodbridge, NJ, United States of America. (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018; Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Reason: “My dream was to represent my country or play in the NHL. I realised I couldn’t really do this, but then I found sled hockey. It’s just another way to represent my country. I think it’s the coolest thing.” (Athlete, 06 Mar 2014; usahockey.com, 20 Nov 2013)

Ambition: To coach an NHL ice hockey team. (teamusa.org, 06 Mar 2018)

Training: He trains for 14 hours a week. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Memorable: Winning gold at the Paralympic Winter Games in 2010, 2014 and 2018. (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018; Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Hero: US Para ice hockey player Steve Cash, Canadian ice hockey player Scott Niedermayer. (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018, 03 Mar 2022)

Influence: Coach Jeff Sauer. (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Ritual: “I juggle before games.” (Athlete, 03 Mar 2022)

Philosophy: “I don’t just play hockey, I live it.” (Twitter profile, 06 Mar 2014)

Award: He captained the US national Para ice hockey team to gold at the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang. (teamusa.usahockey.com, 01 Aug 2018, 30 Nov 2018)

He was named Best Defenceman at the 2015 World Championships A-Pool and the 2016 Pan Pacific Championships, which both took place in Buffalo, NY, United States of America. (usahockey.com, 28 Oct 2016, 24 Jun 2015)

Type of Impairment: Limb deficiency (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Origin of Impairment: Congenital (Athlete, 29 Mar 2018)

Impairment Details: He was born without tibia bones in both legs. The limbs were amputated at the knee when he was age 10 months. (Athlete, 06 Mar 2014; teamusa.org, 14 Mar 2013)

Busy Week: In 2021 he captained the US team to gold at the 2021 World Championships in Ostrava, Czech Republic, and got married to his partner Katie in the same week. “It was a pretty wild week going from a gold-medal game win one Saturday to getting married the next. It was definitely the highlight week of my life for sure. It was a lot of work and planning, but I don’t think I could have planned it out better.” (paralympic.org, 07 Oct 2021)

Position: He started as a goalie and defenceman during his early years in Para ice hockey. He became a forward when he first played for the US national team, including at the Paralympic Winter Games in 2010, and again in 2014. He switched back to defence in 2015. “I learned to play forward by playing the NHL video games to be honest, because they had the little blue arrow that told me where to go and I realised that’s why my defencemen are always yelling at me to get on the wall. I was able to make the transition back and defence is something I really enjoy. I just have a better feel for the game. I can read plays, I can jump into the offence when I see the opportunity but also know I can be responsible defensively. For me, I tend to be an offensive driven player but my time as a third-line forward [in 2010] has really taught me I can contribute if I’m not scoring and that’s something I really take pride in.” (stltoday.com, 01 Mar 2022)

Further Education: In 2020 he completed a master’s degree in business administration at the Keller Graduate School of Management at DeVry University in the United States of America. (LinkedIn profile, 01 Jan 2021)

Other Activities: In 2019 he released his autobiography titled ‘Lessons Learned: My Journey to the Podium’. He was named an ambassador for the NHL’s ‘Hockey is for Everyone’ campaign in February 2018. “I just want to leave the game a little bit better than it was before I came. It’s a really exciting initiative to be a part of because hockey’s such a great game, and anytime you can push inclusion, whether it’s with disability, gender identity or anything like that, it’s definitely exciting to be able to do that.” (teamusa.usahockey.com, 15 Feb 2018; friesenpress.com, 01 Jan 2019)

Billy Bridges - Canada

| Rank | Event | Year | Location |
|----------------------------|----------------------|------|-------------------------|
| Paralympic Games | | | |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2006 | Turin, ITA |
| 2 | Open Team Tournament | 2018 | Pyeongchang, KOR |
| 3 | Open Team Tournament | 2014 | Sochi, RUS |
| 4 | Open Team Tournament | 2010 | Vancouver, BC, CAN |
| 4 | Open Team Tournament | 2002 | Salt Lake City, UT, USA |
| World Championships | | | |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2017 | Gangneung, KOR |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2013 | Goyang, KOR |
| 1 | Open Team Tournament | 2008 | Marlborough, MA, USA |
| 2 | Open Team Tournament | 2021 | Ostrava, CZE |
| 2 | Open Team Tournament | 2019 | Ostrava, CZE |
| 2 | Open Team Tournament | 2015 | Buffalo, NY, USA |
| 3 | Open Team Tournament | 2012 | Hamar, NOR |
| 3 | Open Team Tournament | 2009 | Ostrava, CZE |
| 4 | Open Team Tournament | 2004 | Ornskoldsvik, SWE |

Date of Birth: 22 Mar 1984

Age: 37

Sport Class: IH

Place of birth: SUMMERSIDE, PEI

Birth Country: Canada

Residence: MISSISSAUGA, ON

Residence Country: Canada

Education: English Literature - University of Toronto, Canada

Family: Wife Sami Jo Small, daughter Kenzie

Coach: Ken Babey [national], CAN

Position style: Forward (paralympic.org, 17 Jun 2021)

Sporting relatives: His wife Sami Jo Small was part of the Canadian ice hockey team that won gold at the 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City. (livewiresport.com, 06 Dec 2021; SportsDeskOnline, 30 Mar 2017)

Other sports: He won three medals [two gold, one bronze] in Para athletics at the 2015 Canadian Senior Championships in Edmonton, Alberta. He has also competed in professional wheelchair basketball in Spain, and played wheelchair tennis at international level. (bramptonguardian.com, 07 Jul 2015; paralympic.ca, 19 Jan 2014)

Debut: 1998 for Canada (Athlete, 07 Mar 2014)

Start: He took up the sport in 1996 at the Kitchener-Waterloo Sidewinders club in Ontario, Canada. (Athlete, 07 Mar 2014)

Reason: He was introduced to Para ice hockey by Brad Bowden, who would become his international teammate, and Bowden's grandmother Colleen. "I think I was skateboarding at the time and they wanted to introduce me to some disabled sports. I remember the first time sitting in a sledge I just fell in love with it because I wanted to play hockey from such a young age." (sportsnet.ca, 22 Oct 2017)

Ambition: To compete at the 2022 Paralympic Winter Games in Beijing. (bvmsports.com, 10 Oct 2021)

Memorable: Winning gold at the 2006 Paralympic Winter Games in Turin, and playing Para ice hockey at the highest level for Canada. (scotiabank.com, 03 Dec 2021)

Hero: Russian ice hockey player Alexander Ovechkin, Canadian ice hockey player Guy Lafleur. (Athlete, 07 Mar 2014; hockeycanada.ca, 2010)

Influence: His father. (Athlete, 07 Mar 2014)

Philosophy: "Don't be afraid to be uncomfortable and challenge your own boundaries." (bvmsports.com, 12 Oct 2021)

Awards: In 2018 a park in Summerside, PEI, Canada, was built and named after him. (cbc.ca, 25 Sep 2018); In 2011 and 2012 he was named Athlete with an Impairment of the Year in Mississauga, ON, Canada. (billybridges.com, 15 Sep 2013); He was named in the All-Star Team at the world championships in 2000, 2008 and 2012. (billybridges.com, 15 Sep 2013); He was named in the All-Star Team at the 2002 and 2006 Paralympic Winter Games. (billybridges.com, 15 Sep 2013); In 2002 he received the Queen's Jubilee Medal. (paralympic.ca, 19 Jan 2014)

Origin of Impairment: Congenital (Athlete, 07 Mar 2014)

Impairment Details: He was born with spina bifida. (Athlete, 07 Mar 2014)

Experienced Competitor: He made his international debut in 1998 and has played at six Paralympic Winter Games between 2002 and 2022. “My linemates [on the Canadian team in 2022] are Liam Hickey and James Dunn. I think I made the team before both of them were even born. I’m 37 now and I’m fighting hard just to be able to play with these guys and see what they can do. The sport has changed drastically. When I began, my sledges used to weigh 45 pounds [20 kilograms] and we had able-bodied hockey sticks. Obviously I’m ageing myself here but when I watch games now on TV it looks like I’m watching it on fast-forward. It’s so incredible to see how fast every single player in the world moves and how good this game has become. If there’s anything competition against USA has done [for] us, it has made us way better than we would have been without them.” (OIS, 08 Mar 2022; SportsDeskOnline, 08 Mar 2022)

Sporting Wife: His wife Sami Jo Small played ice hockey at international level as a goaltender, and it took Bridges a while to get used to watching her play. “I wouldn’t wish that upon anyone. I was new to having a partner that played sports and I knew how p***ed off she’d be if she had a goal scored on her. Every time the puck crossed the line I’d always be so rattled.” (slapshotdiaries.com, 30 Jul 2015)

Young Talent: He made his international debut in 1998 at age 14, which at the time made him the youngest Para ice hockey player to have represented Canada. “The average age when I joined the team was 45. So joining as a young kid then was pretty tough.” (cbc.ca, 20 Oct 2016; bleacherreport.com, 16 Feb 2013)