August 29, 2000

Paralympians go for the gold in Sydney

Record 161 athletes to represent Canada

Oleg Lokmic
The Ottawa Citizen

Kirby Kranabetter's goal is to end his career on the Canadian wheelchair rugby team with a gold at the 11th Summer Paralympic Games in Sydney, Australia Oct. 18.

"I would love to be able to bring home a gold medal to my two-year-old son, Matt," said 40-year-old Kranabetter, one of a record 161 athletes who will represent Canada at the largest Paralympics ever held.

Canada's team, formally announced yesterday at a news conference on Parliament Hill, will be part of a Games that will feature 4,000 athletes from 130 countries. Th Paralympics are expected to draw more than one million spectators and an estimated television audience of 50 million. The total budget is $110 million U.S.

Kranabetter, who has been on the national team since 1995, already knows what it takes to succeed in his sport. He was a member of the silver medal-winning team at the Atlanta Games four years ago, won silver at the first world championships, in Switzerland during 1995, and captured a bronze at the 1998 worlds in Toronto.

"I was injured in a diving accident in 1984," Kranabetter said. "I hit the sand, broke my spinal cord. His legs are paralysed, and he partly use hands and arms.

"I started to play wheelchair rugby as a part of my rehabilitation. And I sport.

"It's a lot like a hockey. It's pretty fast, it has a lot of hard hitting, a lot o just kept playing more and more competitively, and I made it to the nat Paralympics and world champion United States has to be considered the Games, but Kranabetter thinks Canada will also have a lot of other

"In Sydney, teams are all getting very, very close to being equal," he says first, second or third place. It just depends on how you perform at the C

"We have a very veteran team, so we have a lot of experience. We've Hickling, who is one of the top players in the world. Also, we've been p
we should do very well."

Canada ranked seventh overall at the Atlanta Games with 71 medals, Canada’s athletes are considered world leaders in sports such as swimming and basketball.

The Canadians, who will depart for Sydney on Oct. 9, will compete in 16 of the 18 sports that make up the Games.

Area athletes

The athletes participating in the 11th Paralympic Games from the Ottawa area:

Chantal Benoit, Orleans, basketball;

Jeff Christy, Ottawa, goalball;

Rob Christy, Ottawa, goalball;

Kirby Kranabetter, Ottawa, rugby;

Linda Kutrowski, Ottawa, basketball;

Jason Lachance, Gloucester, athletics;

Martin Larocque, Ottawa, rugby;

Joseph Radmore, Kemptville, athletics;

Caitlin Renneson, Gloucester, athletics;

Jacques Bouchard, Gatineau, athletics;

Alec Denys, Aylmer, archery;

Mirane Lanoix-Boyer, Hull, boccia;

Martin Pelletier, Gatineau, table tennis;

Dominique Tremblay, Hull, athletics.

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