



Mobility Cup 2007 Case Report

Sail Able Association of NS

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Benefits of physical activity

The benefits of physical activity and participation in leisure activities are currently gaining attention in the popular media as being a critical element of a person's development and overall physical, mental and emotional well-being. These leisure benefits extend to able-bodied people as well as to persons with disabilities. Competitions such as the Olympics bring massive media coverage and international attention to the benefits of sport on the participants and on society as a whole. The same benefits can be gained from hosting a high-caliber disabled sporting event. The Mobility Cup is an internationally recognized disabled sailing regatta in Canada and the 2007 site for this prestigious event is to be in Halifax. This report will outline the benefits of disabled sailing, some information about the boats, some possible corporate sponsors and a sponsorship budget.

Physical activity is an important aspect of physical, mental and emotional health. For people with a disability, sports and leisure activities can increase quality of life, reduce depression, stress and anxiety, increase feelings of confidence and integrate individuals into a community of like-minded people (Staley, date unknown, Wilson, 2002). Furthermore, physical activity can promote strength and coordination, consequently increasing the independence of people living with a physical disability (Wilson, 2002).

Wilson (2002) states that despite the obvious benefits of physical activity for people with disabilities, "individuals who have disabilities are known to have lower levels of fitness than the able-bodied population and are less likely to be active" (907). Rimmer et al. (2004) further support this with statistics showing that 56% of people with disabilities do not have physically active lifestyles, whereas only 36% of able bodied people do not engage in physical activity. According to Washburn et al. (2002), low levels of physical activity in people with disabilities can lead to decreased cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, endurance and flexibility. These problems not only decrease an individual's independence, but are also risk factors for chronic disease and complications to existing physical symptoms (Washburn et al., 2002).



There are a number of factors that may contribute to lowered levels of physical activity among individuals with disabilities. One of these factors is the lack of education among health professionals with regards to the sports and leisure activities that are available to people with disabilities (Rimmer et al., 2004). In a study by Staley et al. (date unknown), it was stated that “only 46% of responding physical medicine and rehabilitation resident physicians had received a lecture on sport and leisure activities for the disabled.” In focus groups established in a study by Rimmer et al. (2004), it was commonly cited that the staff at many fitness facilities were not knowledgeable of the needs of people with physical disabilities.

Barriers to disabled persons

An emotional and psychological barrier also exists for people with physical disabilities who wish to be physically active. Many individuals feel self-conscious when visiting a fitness facility (Rimmer et al. 2004). Coupled with the fact that many of these facilities are not fully accessible and have staff that are unaware of their needs, it is no wonder that individuals with disabilities find it difficult to participate in physical activity and recreation.

One of the primary barriers to regular physical activity experienced by individuals with disabilities is a lack of accessible, barrier-free environments through which they can maneuver (Rimmer et al., 2004). Despite the fact that it is within their constitutional rights to have access to all goods and services that able-bodied people have access to, individuals with disabilities are constantly thwarted in their attempts to access resources for physical activity and leisure.

Organizations and disabled sailing clubs

Presently, an increasing number of organizations are being established that promote physical activity among disabled individuals. These organizations offer accessible activities coordinated by individuals who are knowledgeable of the needs of people with disabilities, and who foster an inviting community of people invested in improving opportunities for physical activity and leisure among this population. By creating a welcoming environment for participating in physical activity, these organizations inspire individuals living with disabilities to



partake in physical exercise and the benefits of increased independence, emotional, physical and mental well-being that follow.

The International Federation for Disabled Sailing (IFDS) is one example of an organization that promotes physical activity for disabled persons. The IFDS recognizes the 1980's as the beginning of growth and interest in sailing for everyone. It is within the 1980's that exposure to the sport was established by the first international regatta for sailors with a disability; it was held in Switzerland. In 1988, the International Handicap Sailing Committee (later renamed the IFDS in 1991) was formed to promote sailing for persons with disabilities and to organize competitions. Two years following in 1990, sailing appeared in the World Games for the Disabled as an exhibition sport. The sport was then showcased as a demonstration sport in the 1996 Atlanta Paralympics and achieved medal awarding status in the 2000 Paralympics Games, (IFDS, 2004).

Disabled sailing clubs operates throughout the globe. Areas within Canada, United States, Australia, Japan, and Europe have higher concentrations of recognized clubs; however, clubs exist in Brazil, Bermuda, China, and South Africa, as well, (Mobility Cup, 2006). As of 2004, Australia had the highest participation in disabled sailing per capita, with over 50 clubs within each state, (Kay, 2004).

History of Disabled Sailing

The concept of Disabled Sailing in Canada emerged in 1986 when Margaret Thatcher, a former British Prime Minister, presented a Sunbird (a British made boat for persons with mobility impairments) to Rick Hansen in recognition for his "Man in Motion" tour. Three years later in 1989, Hansen gave the Sunbird to Sam Sullivan a Vancouver City Council alderman. Sullivan was influential to the sport as he initiated the Disabled Sailing Association of British Columbia, the first association for disabled sailing in Canada, (Goan, 1997). DSA-BC aims to expose that although someone may have impairments, it is not a disabling condition that prevents them from sailing.



As of 1997, DSA-BC was the largest disabled sailing organization in Canada. Its fleet consisted of sixteen boats between the model of Martins and Sunbirds. These boats were spread over its chapters in Vancouver, Victoria and Kelowna. The Vancouver chapter runs from May to September and utilizes Canadian Yachting Association certified instructors and volunteers. Bookings are made in advance over the telephone and their lessons last about three hours including the rigging, sailing, and de-rigging. Sailing here is offered as recreation or as part of a full-scale racing program. Select days are open for children from various hospitals and rehabilitation centers to enjoy sailing. At some clubs such as that in the second largest club based out of Glenmore Sailing Club in Calgary persons achieve the solo status once they have completed White Sail II from a certified instructor, (Goan, 1997)

Sail Able Nova Scotia

Sail Able Nova Scotia is currently operated out of the Shearwater Yacht Club, just outside of Dartmouth. Its mission is to advocate for the integration of persons with disabilities into sailing for sport or pleasure. Currently the organizations operate Free Spirit a 20.6 foot, Freedom Independent make, boat that has pivoting seats that move from port to starboard in a tack and has extra ballast to keep it vertical as well as floatation material in the hull and mast to keep the boat afloat in the event of capsizing. Free Spirit is fully accessible; including its marina, dock and cockpit. However, Free Spirit seldom provides the opportunity for solo sailing as it is a larger boat. Solo sailing will be achieved through the 2007 Mobility Cup in which 1 or 2 Martin 16's will be purchased for the event through fundraising and donated to Sail Able Nova Scotia.

The Martin 16 sailboat

Produced by Martin Yachts Ltd. Of Vancouver, the Martin 16 is a fully accessible and safe boat. It measures 16 feet in length, with a beam (width) of 4ft, a mast height of 20 feet and a sail area of 100 sq. feet. These dimensions allow for it to be sailed by one or two people, who sit in line. The boat can be adapted to meet any abilities. Instead of a tiller it is steered by a joystick, and the mainsail and jib are controlled by a single self cleating sheet. It features a self



tacking boom and is self-righted by a 150 kg ballast. The boat can be sailed by anyone regardless of abilities, skills or size. It can not capsize or sink due to the heavy ballast and floatation in the mast and hull. Reefing is not required in rough wind and sea condition. All of the control lines (main sheet, jib sheet, vang, outhaul, cunningham, and main and jib halyards) led to the helms station within the cockpit so one does not have to move up the gunnels to reach them, (Martin 16, 2007).

Sip & Puff

To enable persons of all abilities the opportunity for independent sailing power assisted mechanism has been developed, these work with many accessible boats. The power-assist joystick can be used to steer the boat, it is weather proof and can be made to control three different motors with two way directions to control the lines. The *Sip & Puff* system for sail boats was envisioned by Sam Sullivan who seeing it used with wheelchairs believed that it could be used in sail boats. A team of dedicated individuals made it happen. It allows high level quadriplegic to control the helm through their breath. The Sip & Puff Module can also be connected to a portable Windlass that is a powered control winch that controls the main and jib sheets. Unlike the joystick and Sip & Puff Technology a specialized Windlass has to be used for a specific design of boat.

The Mobility Cup

The Mobility Cup is a sailing regatta where competitors with disabilities race the adapted sailboats. The Mobility Cup is Canada's International sailing regatta which was first established in 1991 in Vancouver by the current mayor, Sam Sullivan. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness of people with disabilities and their capabilities and to promote their participation in a world class event (Canadian Yachting Association, 2006). The event has enabled awareness to grow to the point that now there are greater than 30 programs Canada wide (Sail Able Nova Scotia, 2007).



As a result of this event and the growth of disabled sailing, Canada has become a leader in developing technology adapted to facilitate disabled sailing, technologies such as “Sip ‘n’ Puff” controls which are manipulated by a mouth piece. Additionally boats have been developed specifically to suit disabled sailors (Mobility Cup, 2006b).

Since its inaugural year in 1991, The Mobility Cup has become an annual event which was founded as Canada’s “regatta of possibility”, (Able Sail Network, 2006). The annual event has since run at various Canadian locations, spawning programs that have introduced hundreds to adaptive sailing (Canadian Yachting Association, 2006). The Mobility Cup has been predominately held in British Columbia and Ontario with events occasionally held in Manitoba, Quebec and Alberta. Thus, Mobility Cup 2007 will be the first year that the event will be hosted in Atlantic Canada (Mobility Cup, 2006b). This year’s event will be held August 28th to September 1, 2007 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The event will be run by Sail Able Nova Scotia and will be hosted by the Dartmouth Yacht Club (Sail Able Nova Scotia, 2007).

The Mobility Cup 2007 will be especially relevant for the people of Nova Scotia, as it has the highest rates of disabled persons in the country. The Mobility Cup will allow a recreational activity which is not dependent on their disability. The organizers of the event hope to purchase adaptive sailboats in order to attract more disabled persons who are interested in sailing in order to give them another recreational activity to participate in (Sail Able Nova Scotia, 2007).



Conclusion

All of this literature clearly demonstrates the need for a viable leisure option for persons with disabilities across Canada, and particularly in Nova Scotia. Sailing is a safe, fun and empowering sport for anyone, disabled or not. The Mobility Cup plays a significant role in raising awareness and gaining much needed exposure to the sport so that there can be more community and corporate support to enable more boats to be purchased and more people to be able to access all of the benefits of participating in sailing.

The goal of Sail Able is to raise \$60,000. \$30,000 of this money will go towards running the Mobility Cup and the other \$30,000 will be used to buy 1 or 2 accessible boat's that will stay in Dartmouth. The legacies created by both of these investments will be well worth it. It is important that Halifax is the host site for the 2007 Mobility Cup because the event will raise attention around Atlantic Canada about disabled sailing and its positive impacts. Any sponsors who support this event will be at the forefront and will be seen as an innovative leader and supporter of this world-class event, and of disabled sport in general.



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