

## **2008 PARALYMPIC GAMES: U.S. Wheelchair Rugby Team Finds Redemption in Beijing; Wins Gold Medal with 53-44 Defeat of Australia**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 16, 2008

BEIJING, China –The U.S. Wheelchair Rugby Team had to wait four long years for another shot at the gold medal that eluded the team in Athens. On Tuesday night in Beijing, the U.S. seized its opportunity by defeating Australia, 53-44, to be crowned Paralympic champions.

"It's just an awesome feeling to be up on that medal stand and hearing the national anthem. I've been playing on the U.S. team for 10 years and this is hands down the best team I've played on," said U.S. co-captain **Norm Lydych** (Austin, Texas). "We never backed down and always played together as a team."

Australia, led by 19 year old wonder-kid Ryley Batt, pushed the U.S. for nearly three quarters as both teams traded goals and turnovers. Back-to-back turnovers by Australia with five minutes to go in the third helped Team USA open a three goal lead, and from then on the U.S. took complete control.

By the end of the third quarter, the Americans had a five goal advantage, 36-31, and in the final eight minutes hammered their point home for the nine goal win.

"It's emotional. We've been waiting on this for four years. Our team was on a mission. We set a game plan and stuck to it and now we're gold medalists," said team co-captain **Bryan Kirkland** (Leeds, Ala.).

Team USA was led by **Will Groulx** (Portland, Ore.) with 15 goals, Kirkland with 13 goals and **Andy Cohn** (Tempe, Ariz.) with 10 goals. Batt scored an unbelievable 23 goals for Australia, accounting for more than half his team's points.

“I’m so proud of everyone – the staff, the coaches, my teammates,” said Cohn. “We have trained and prepared for this since the day we left Athens four years ago. Every time Australia got close, we turned it up and just crushed it. It’s an amazing feeling to win a gold medal.”

***For more information, or to arrange an athlete interview, please contact Susan Katz at [susan.katz@usoc.org](mailto:susan.katz@usoc.org) or 139-1075-4845 (Dial 011-86 plus the local number if calling from the U.S.).***

Additional resources available in the U.S. Paralympics Media Room,  
<http://paralympics.teamusa.org/content/index/2257>