

STATE OF THE GAMES

Vol. 14, No. 1

NATIONAL CONGRESS OF STATE GAMES NEWSLETTER

May 2008

A Letter from the President

Dear State Games Family,

Summer is just ahead. And that means Summer Games are just a few weeks away, or at most, a couple months ahead.



So right off the bat I want to wish everyone good luck with your upcoming events. Challenging times for all, but remember this is when we're all at our best - organizing, challenging, teaching, and servicing our athletes, families, volunteers and staff members.

In addition to 31 of our members offering summer games, NCSG members and their regions are hosting three regional games. The State Games of the West and the State Games of Mid-America make their inaugural appearances in Colorado Springs and Columbia, Mo. respectively. The Southeast Sports Festival will be held for the second time in Tallahassee, Fla.

But while we all look ahead, I also want to take one more look back at our most significant recent accomplishment -- the NCSG board vote that awarded the 2011 State Games of America to San Diego.

As I wrote in a letter to the membership at the time of the announcement, that entire process showed the NCSG at its best. I'm proud of the contributions of everyone - and trust me, there were many. To be specific, I'd like to thank four groups whose professionalism, creativity, dignity and commitment to fairness made this a proud moment for the NCSG.

Pete Lampman, chair, and his entire State Games of America committee - Stephen Rodriguez, Doug Martin, Mark Lord, Marc Riker, Sandy Hill, Dave Farrand and Stori Peterson. This committee spent countless hours last fall drafting the original bid documents. That we ultimately received four quality bids can be directly attributed to their upfront work.

The site visit team of Pete Lampman, Marc Riker and Jeff Scully, who donated two weeks of their valuable time to visit all four final bidding cities. Their first-hand evaluations and recommendations were invaluable to the board of directors, who were challenged with the ultimate decision.

Your board of directors, who carefully weighed their important decision, and at every step considered the long-term interests of the whole organization.

And finally, the four bidding cities - Colorado Springs, York and Hershey/Harrisburg, Penn., and of course, San Diego. The quality of the bids exceeded our expectations, which was flattering to be sure. It also made our ultimate decision significantly more challenging than we expected, a good problem to have.

One comment I've heard many times from the members who participated in this year's SGA bid competition was that the process was personally and professionally rewarding, that they learned a lot, and came away with an increased respect of our peers.

My thoughts exactly.

Cheers,



Barclay Kruse
Blaine, Minnesota



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Letter from the President.....	1
NCSG/WePlay Partnership.....	2
2011 SGA Site Visit Overview.....	2
State Games Regional Competition.....	3-5
State Games News.....	6-8
Stories of Interest.....	9
State Games Dates.....	10
All in the State Games Family....	11



Weplay and NCSG Partner Up

The Maine Games has become one of the first members of the NCSG to create its own profile on weplay.com. Jim Woodman, representing weplay.com at the mid-year meeting in Lexington, KY, met with those in attendance to showcase the new online community devoted entirely to sports, athletes, fans, coaches and parents. Woodman developed Active.com, and has joined forces with other notable online community and personal development Web sites developers from notable sites such as EHarmony, Eteamz, Yahoo, and others. Major League Baseball is the primary sponsor on weplay, and about a dozen professional athletes including Derek Jeter, LeBron James, Summer Sanders, Peyton Manning, Shaun Alexander, and others have also teamed up with weplay.com.

Weplay.com has become a three-year sponsor of the National Congress of State Games, and they are currently planning ways of helping members of the NCSG connect with their participants, coaches, supporters, and others. To learn more, or to create your own online profile, go to weplay.com. Jim Woodman can be contacted with questions at: jim@weplay.com.



2011 SGA Site Visit Overview

Maine Games executive director, Jeff Scully, joined Marc Riker (Alabama Sports Festival), and Pete Lampman (Virginia Commonwealth Games), to form the State Games of America Site Evaluation Team, in April. The trio traveled to Hershey/Harrisburg, and York, Pennsylvania, as well as San Diego and Colorado Springs to meet with bidding organizations to tour potential venues for the 2011 State Games of America. Each stop along the tour was unique, and all four communities provided potential opportunities for the SGA.

"I think that the SGA has come a long way in a short time," said Scully. "For us to be able to attract four quality communities from coast to coast that are very interested in hosting our signature event, shows that not only is the event one that athletes and spectators are taking seriously, but entire communities, convention and visitors bureaus, and even our own members are very interested in hosting the event."

The Site Evaluation Team spent approximately a day and a half in each community, touring venues and meeting with potential Local Organizing Committees.

"It was an extremely rewarding and educational opportunity," said Scully. "I think all three of us on the committee are extremely proud of the National Congress of State Games and we're thankful for the opportunity to represent the organization in this process."

The three executive directors made their recommendations to the NCSG Board of Directors on May 6, awarding San Diego with the 2011 SGA Bid.



I N S I D E S T A T E G A M E S

Regional State Games Competitions

**Show-Me STATE GAMES
To Host Regional Competition in 2008!**

**13 Other States to Send Their Athletes to
Compete In the STATE GAMES of Mid-America!**

The Show-Me STATE GAMES (SMSG), the biggest State Games in the Nation, will get a whole lot bigger in 2008! Thirteen other member states of the National Congress of State Games; Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wisconsin have all agreed to send their athletes to compete in the 3rd weekend of the Show-Me STATE GAMES.

The annual SMSG finals has 26,000-28,000 Missouri amateur athletes of all ages and ability levels who compete in the Olympic-style sports festival every year during the last 2 weekends of July and the first weekend of August. Since the SMSG expanded to a three weekend in 2001, the last weekend of the GAMES has drawn about 3,000-4,000 of those athletes. In an effort to increase participation in the last weekend of the SMSG and to provide Midwest member states athletes an opportunity to compete in a multi-sports festival, the Show-Me STATE GAMES will now hold the STATE GAMES of Mid-America (SGMA).

States from the Midwest Region of the National Congress of STATE GAMES will now be able to send the athletes who participated in their State Games to Missouri where they all can compete for a chance to qualify for the State Games of America in Colorado, Springs in 2009. Dave Mlnarik, Executive Director of the Cornhusker State Games, says, "The Nebraska Sports Council is excited to promote the State Games of Mid-America among our athletes. We feel confident in the SMSG ability to run a 1st class event and we feel it will strengthen the overall reputation of the State Games as a whole." The SGMA event will be held on the even years, since the State Games of America is held on odd years, with the first two festivals being held in 2008 and 2010. On these years, the SMSG could see 6,000-8,000 athletes come to Columbia for the 3rd weekend of the GAMES. Ken Ash, Executive Director of the Show-Me STATE GAMES, says, "Missouri residents will still be competing against athletes from other states for an opportunity to go to the State Games of America and this is a great opportunity to showcase Columbia, the University of Missouri, and the competitive spirit of Missourians to many people from throughout the Midwest."

The STATE GAMES of Mid-America will truly be one of the finest regional Olympic-style events in the Nation! Sports competitions will include; Target Archery, Baseball, Basketball, Pee Wee Basketball, Croquet, Cross Country, Dodgeball, Figure Skating, 7 on 7 Football, Par 3 Golf, Gymnastics, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse, Soccer, Swimming, Tae-kwon-Do, Track and Field and Volleyball.

The 24th Annual Show-Me STATE GAMES will be held July 18-20, 25-27 and the STATE GAMES of Mid-America will be held August 1-3, 2008 in and around Columbia, MO. Washers, Billiards and Croquet have been added to the over 40 sports that the SMSG offers for 2008. Opening Ceremonies will be held at the Hearnes Center on July 18th at 7pm. For more information on the Show-Me STATE GAMES, or SGMA, visit www.smsg.org, or call 573-882-2101, today. The Show-Me STATE GAMES is a non-profit program of the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health.



I N S I D E S T A T E G A M E S

Regional State Games Competitions Cont'd...

Colorado Springs Will Stage Inaugural State Games of the West, July 24-27, with 8,000 Athletes From 13 Western States Set To Compete

Colorado Springs' already-golden reputation for hosting major Olympic-style multi-sport events for amateur athletes will gain a big boost again this summer when the city hosts the inaugural 2008 State Games of the West, July 24-27, for some 8,000 athletes from 13 Western states.

Athlete registration is now open at: www.stategamesofthewest.org

The Games will offer 31 sports for amateur athletes from Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming who first compete in their respective 2008 State Games to be eligible. The event will serve as a qualifier for the 2009 State Games of America in Colorado Springs.

"The Colorado Springs Sports Corporation is excited to bring this new major sports event involving the American West." said Sports Corp Chairman Dave Palenchar. "This means that thousands of athletes of all ages and skill levels will enjoy the sights and hospitality of our city and region with their families over the next three summers while competing for state pride and medals."

Colorado Springs played host to the 2007 State Games of America, with a record 10,803 athletes from 47 states on hand and an economic impact of almost \$11 million. The 2006 Rocky Mountain State Games attracted a record 6,164 athletes from 112 Colorado cities and towns.

"We are proud to be able to launch this new concept in the West and to enhance our city's strong role as a destination for major amateur sports events that benefit athletes and grassroots sports participation," said Sports Corp President and CEO Tom Osborne.

The State Games concept has grown and prospered dramatically since the concept was launched in New York with the 1978 Empire State Games. 37 state now hold summer games, and 14 conduct winter games for their resident amateur athletes. All told, some 500,000 athletes compete annually in their state games across the nation.

The games are held under the banner of the National Congress of State Games, which is a member organization of the United States Olympic Committee. The city is the national headquarters of more than 50 national, regional and international sports governing bodies.

The city has hosted scores of USOC-related events since 1978, including the National Sports Festival in 1978, 1979 and 1983 and a large menu of National Governing Body and collegiate events like Skate America and the ISU Four Continents figure skating championships.



Regional State Games Competitions Cont'd..

Tallahassee to host Southeast Sports Festival in August

Besides the normal heat and humidity that descends on Tallahassee in August, Florida's Capital City will be the host of the Second Southeast Sports Festival, August 1-3, when an estimated 2,000 amateur athletes will compete in nine sports.

It is Florida's turn to host the Southeast Sports Festival in 2008! While Youth Basketball, Fencing, Taekwondo and Track & Field remain from the 2006 Festival, Youth Baseball, Adult Flag Football, Lacrosse, Youth Soccer and Tennis – Youth & Adult, have been added to the sport roster.

Amateur Athletes from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina and Virginia are eligible to compete in the 2008 Southeast Sports Festival, but first must compete in their 2008 State Games in order to qualify. Athletes residing in Arkansas, Louisiana, South Carolina or Tennessee, are invited to participate, but are encouraged to compete in one of the seven State Games in the southeast.

To accommodate the sports and athletes of the Southeast Sports Festival, Tallahassee area venues will be provided by the City of Tallahassee Parks and Recreation Department, various local high school facilities, Tallahassee Community College and Florida State University. The Tallahassee-Leon County Civic Center will host the fencing and taekwondo competition and an Opening Ceremony will be held in Downtown Tallahassee in the shadows of Florida's Capitol.

The inaugural Southeast Sports Festival was held in Shelby County, Alabama in July 2006. This event featured eight sports and over 1,200 athletes from eight states.

In 2004, states of National Congress of State Games Southeast Region agreed their athletes needed a regional level of competition to test their skills. From this agreement, the concept of a multi-sport regional event called the Southeast Sports Festival was born. Since then, other regions of the National Congress of State Games have followed suit and are providing regional competitions.



State Games News

2008 STATE GAMES OF MISSISSIPPI OPENING CEREMONIES PROMISES BIG CELEBRATION



The State Games of Mississippi annual sports festival has a new venue site for the 2008 Olympic-style Opening Ceremonies sponsored by AT&T Mississippi. Nearly 10,000 spectators and athletes are expected to fill Downtown Meridian's Dumont Plaza for this year's event scheduled for Friday, June 20th.

The State Games of Mississippi has joined with the The Alliance for Downtown Meridian and The Downtown Association to offer a "Downtown Get Down" from 5-7 p.m. on June 20, 2008. The event will include a band from the Gulf Coast and area winners from the Jimmie Rogers, Meridian/Lauderdale Junior Miss Program and Peavey Afterschool (Not) Idle. Food Vendors, space walks and other children's activities including face painting will be available for attendees.

"We would like to invite the general public to come downtown and experience all of the festivities that downtown Meridian has to offer," says April Luke, Executive Director of the State Games of Mississippi. We hope everyone will enjoy the activities from 5-7 p.m. and stay and help us celebrate with the 17th annual Opening Ceremonies spectacular."

The ceremonies will be broadcasted by Comcast Cable's network Comcast Sports South (CSS). It will air on a tape delay basis tentatively scheduled for Saturday, July 5, 2008 (time to be announced) in cable markets across the southeast. "This broadcast gives us the opportunity to showcase the amateur event to those who cannot attend and those who may not know about the State Games," says Luke. It also gives us a chance to promote the athletes and sponsors who are participating in the 2008 festivities."

The Opening Ceremonies begins as athletes---representing their communities---walk 22nd avenue in a Parade of Athletes. The parade will feature past United States Olympians, Mildrette Netter Graves and George Wilson of Mississippi. The excitement continues with a flyover provided by the Meridian Naval Air Station and the lighting of the torch by AT&T Sportsman of the Year Andrea Fairchild of Vicksburg and Brandon King of Florence. The torchbearers will be

raised to light a rocket sparking the torch of the 2008 State Games of Mississippi. The event is capped off by a giant firework display engineered and supervised by a professional pyrotechnics crew. This entire show is produced by Mark Cheplowitz of the Wizard of Ah's from Cleveland, Ohio.

"The Alliance for Downtown Meridian is extremely pleased to showcase our beautiful downtown with the Opening Ceremonies for the State Games," says Barbaree Heaster, Chairman of the Alliance for Downtown Meridian. "We are thrilled that the Wizard of Ah's, a national event company, appreciates this beautiful downtown. The economic and social implication of having over 5,000 people in our downtown area is tremendous."

2008 MAINE GAMES



Portland Native to Perform National Anthem

This spring, the Maine Games held it's second National Anthem Auditions at Colby College, in Waterville. Jeremy Porter, of Portland, took top honors and will perform the Star Spangled Banner at the Opening Ceremonies on June 20. As part of his "prize package," Jeremy was invited to perform at a Portland Seadogs baseball game on April 24.

Travis Roy Courage Award Winner Named

The second annual Travis Roy Courage Award recipient has been announced. Michael Golek, of Harpswell, Maine, was named this year's winner for his demonstration of uncommon courage, determination, and for overcoming tremendous odds in his pursuit of sports and competition. When he was 7 years old, Michael was run over by a school bus, crushing his pelvis, and causing life-threatening internal bleeding. His life hung in the balance for two weeks. Shortly after leaving the hospital, he developed a love for wrestling. In the years subsequent to his accident, he has turned into a model citizen, a fine young man, and a gold medal-winning Maine Games athlete, having claimed two golds in the 2007 wrestling championship.

The award is named after Maine native, Travis Roy, who just 11 seconds into his first shift as Boston University Terrier,

Division I hockey player, he crashed headfirst into the boards, breaking his neck. Now living in Boston as a quadriplegic, Travis oversees his own foundation which raises money for spinal cord research, and helping people deal with their own spinal cord injuries.

Maine Beauty and Muscle Event Added

The success of the Maine Games State Powerlifting Championships has spawned a second powerlifting event scheduled for November of 2008. This female only meet is being called BAM (Beauty and Muscle), and more than three dozen Maine women and teens are expected to compete for Maine Games gold, silver, and bronze medals, and to qualify for the 2009 State Games of America.

Maine Maine Games Step Up Technology

The Maine Games has joined forces with Ursus Media Group, of Waterville, Maine, to create a media package that includes a new, state-of-the-art Web site for 2009, and other marketing tools including a tradeshow booth, primary sponsorship of a weekly sports show which will be broadcast statewide in 2009, and other print and electronic media formats. The entire package is valued at \$126,000. Ursus has commissioned a grant writer to secure the funding needed to pay for the entire package.

Maine Games Medal Alternative

This year the Maine Games has stepped a little outside the box, and has changed from using medals as awards to presenting commemorative coins instead. "It's a bit of a risk, I suppose," said executive director, Jeff Scully. "But Ashworth Awards has created a really nice coin in gold, silver, and bronze, for us, that incorporates our logo, as well as our medal sponsor's logo on the backside. I think the athletes will like these new awards." In addition, Scully commissioned 200 pewter coins to be used as a sort of business card. "These leave-behind coins will make a big impression with potential sponsors, as well as for anyone interested in helping the Maine Games grow.



State Games News Cont'd...

2008 BADGER STATE GAMES



The Wisconsin Sports Development Corporation (WSDC) is excited to announce that the American Family Insurance Badger State Summer Games will move to the Fox Cities for the 2009, 2010, and 2011 Games. The Games have been held in Madison since their inception in 1985.

“The Badger State Games are a Wisconsin institution and we are very proud to be selected as the new host site,” said John Burgland, chair of the Bureau’s Board of Directors. “It’s a testament to the strength of sporting facilities in the Fox Cities.”

“Moving the American Family Insurance Badger State Summer Games to the Fox Cities helps us accomplish our mission, which is statewide in terms of geographic scope,” said Ron Vincent, Chief Executive Officer of the Wisconsin Sports Development Corporation, the owner of the American Family Insurance Badger State Games.

“We currently hold several events in the Greater Madison, Central Wisconsin/Wausau and Milwaukee areas. Moving the American Family Insurance Badger State Summer Games to the Fox Cities Area gives us an opportunity to call another part of Wisconsin home. Diversifying the geographic location of our events allows us to better promote sports tourism and fulfill our mission by fostering participation, competition and memorable experiences through events and programs that support good health, active lifestyles and a sense of community.”

There are 10,000 participants in American Family Insurance Badger State Summer Games in events from archery to gymnastics to rowing and swimming. The 2009 Games are tentatively scheduled for June 19-21 and June 26-28.

2008 SOONER STATE GAMES



The Sooner State Games has signed Dr. Pepper on as a headline corporate partner for this year. This year, we have found ourselves doing a lot of grassroots marketing, in addition to our larger scale marketing. It has shown to be successful, and it’s great for the Sooner State Games to get a face or two out there. We have a few new sports that will hold competitions for the Sooner State Games. For the summer, that includes Disc Golf, BMX Racing, Miniature Golf, and Horseshoes. We will also be adding Fencing to our winter games.

2008 IOWA GAMES



The 2008 Summer Iowa Games will be held July 11-13, 17-20, & 25-27, over 17,000 athletes in 57 sports are expected at this year’s Games. New to the 2008 Iowa Games is a Par 3 Golf Tournament and Handball.

The Iowa Sports Foundation gained two new sponsors this year: John Deere Des Moines Operations and MidAmerican Energy both came on as Bronze Sponsors. Toyota of Des Moines is now the Iowa Sports Foundation’s Adventure Race title sponsor.

The ISF continues to market through emails with Constant Contact, along with marketing through message boards, event calendars, and print media.

2008 CORNHUSKER STATE GAMES



What do Orienteering/Land Navigation, Bocce, Kids Triathlon and Beach Wrestling have in common? Very little, with the exception that all are new events in the Cornhusker State Games.

Organizers met with sponsors, key volunteers and members of the news media in Lincoln Monday, April 21st, to announce the opening of registrations for the July 18-27 sports festival for Nebraskans of all ages and abilities. More than 12,000 are expected to participate at 70 venues in and around Lincoln.

Athletes now have 60 sports from which to choose, along with a statewide torch run and Olympic-style Opening Ceremonies to set the mood. Their reasons to participate are as numerous as the sports themselves, according to Executive Director Dave Mlnarik.

The NSC has also unveiled the lineup of entertainment for SportFest and the Opening Ceremonies. Highlights include appearances by Astronaut Clayton Anderson, MotoX former World Trials Champion Tommi Ahvala, Omaha Recording Artist Heidi Joy and the nationally known “Kid Fiddlers.” Annual favorites include fireworks, skydivers, mascot races, the parade of athletes and the mystery torchlighter.

The 22-day, 1,100-mile Cornhusker State Games Torch Run begins June 5 north of Chadron, marking the first South Dakota border launch since 2005. More than 800 runners are expected to carry the torch, relay-style, in 1-2 mile segments.

State Games News Cont'd...

COMMISSIONER FARMER AND MAYOR NEWBERRY ANNOUNCE NEW PLANS FOR THE GET HEALTHY KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS STATE GAMES



Mayor Jim Newberry and Agriculture Commissioner Richie Farmer today announced a new sponsorship by Kentucky Proud, the new location for the opening ceremonies, and new sports added to this year's Get Healthy Kentucky Bluegrass State Games presented by Subway.

"The Games are already established as a great opportunity for amateur athletes to compete, have fun and practice healthier lifestyles, and it's expected to bring an estimated economic impact of \$6 million to Central Kentucky," said Newberry. "Now, with exciting new sponsors, sports and even a new mascot joining the team - the Games will be better than ever before, which is just another reason for citizens of the Commonwealth to get excited and participate this year."

The Get Healthy Kentucky Bluegrass State Games will take place in Central Kentucky July 18-20, July 26-27 and Aug. 1-3. The "Celebration of Athletes" opening ceremonies will take place at Applebee's Park on July 18.

They hope to fuel excitement and increase awareness of the state's largest amateur sporting event as an opportunity for all citizens of the Commonwealth to train, condition and begin living healthy lifestyles.

"I have a passion for the Bluegrass State Games and for a Healthy Kentucky," said Farmer. "I also know how passionate Kentuckians are about their sports. On behalf of Kentucky Proud, I challenge the citizens of the Commonwealth to get out and participate in the Games, and start living a healthy lifestyle. Let's get out, get active and get healthy. Let's make Kentucky Proud."

New sponsors for the 2008 Games include Subway, Kentucky Proud, UK Healthcare and Pepsi. As spokesperson for Kentucky Proud, Commissioner Farmer announced that each participant in this year's Games would receive a free Kentucky Proud t-shirt.

New sports added to the Games' line-up are lacrosse, Miracle League Baseball and the increasingly popular corn hole. The new mascot (to be named in an upcoming "name the mascot" contest) and Legends mascot "Big L" played a game of corn hole on the dugouts after the announcements.

Other speakers included Lexington Legends President/COO Alan Stein, and representatives for Pepsi, UK Healthcare, Miracle League Baseball and lacrosse.

This year Get Healthy Kentucky is the title sponsor of the Bluegrass State Games, and Subway is the presenting sponsor. Other sponsors include: Commonwealth of Kentucky, Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government, University of Kentucky, Kentucky Utilities, Lexington Convention and Visitors Bureau, McDonald's of Central Kentucky, Best Western of Kentucky, Central Bank and Smucker's, among others.

About Get Healthy Kentucky Bluegrass State Games

The Bluegrass State Games operate in conjunction with the Lexington Area Sports Authority, the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government, and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The State Games is a member of the National Conference of State Games, and is recognized by the United States Olympic Committee as an Official State Games Program participant. For more information about the Bluegrass State Games, Kentuckians can visit the new Web site, www.bgsg.org.

About Get Healthy Kentucky

Get Healthy Kentucky (GHK) is a statewide wellness initiative that incorporates physical activity, nutrition and tobacco cessation and prevention components. GHK has created an opportunity for individuals and groups to have a one-stop, central location for information and resources that will improve the quality of life for Kentuckians and help prevent chronic illnesses like diabetes and heart disease.

To help spread their preventive health message, GHK looks for community partners, such as the Bluegrass State Games, that share their mission to promote health and wellness.

GHK is designed for residents of all ages and includes access to reliable, unbiased information on the GHK Web site, www.gethealthy.ky.gov. The site provides information about the Governor's Challenge program, an incentive-based fitness program designed to help participants set personal fitness goals and track progress online.

State Games Stories of Interest...

TAKING IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

By Scott Barboza

Though nobody on the outside world would ever be able to tell, she feels nervous every time she approaches the starting line. Erica Belanger admits that she still gets the feeling that there's something fluttering around in her stomach when she steps to the blocks. "I never feel really confident when I'm running," Belanger said. "I just get really nervous."

However, the reigning Bay State Games champion in the 800 meters should feel a little more at ease when she returns to competition at the 27th annual Bay State Summer Games. Belanger, a junior at Deerfield Academy, didn't just claim the top honors in the 800 event in 2007. She was a double-winner with gold to match in the high jump.

"I always feel a little nervous when I'm running, but when I step onto the apron I'm ready and I just let it happen," Belanger said about her Bay State Games experience from a year ago. "It's always a good atmosphere though. It's fun to be a part of."

For those reasons Belanger will be back for 2008 - her third entry in the Summer Games - with the chance to defend her titles.

It's not just about the hardware though. Like any competition, Belanger sees the Bay State Games as an opportunity to improve. In 2007, Belanger's two-minute, 24.69-second performance earned her top billing in the 800 and her leap of five feet, four inches was the best mark in the high jump.

But that was last year.

"My goal is to clear 5-7 by the end of the summer," added Belanger, who resides in Westhampton, Massachusetts. "I'd like to take a couple of seconds off my 800 time, too. I'd like to improve on everything."

In the world of track and field, that's what it's all about. A personal best is just as important as a first-place finish and the Bay State Games provide an opportunity for its more than 7,000 athletes, whether it is in track and field or any other of the 25 sports represented at the Summer Games, to work toward those goals in a spirited, yet fun environment.

That's why Belanger keeps coming back.

"I enjoy the level of competition at the meets," Belanger said. "I heard about the Bay State Games through a couple of my friends. They had ran in it and said that I should do it and I've done it ever since."

During the school year, Belanger runs on Deerfield's cross country team in the fall and is part of the school's winter track intramural club. A dancer since childhood, Belanger also practices ballet. Yet, track and field has remained an integral part of life since she was introduced to the sport with a local youth track team. Erica's younger sister, Alaina, has also gotten the bug and followed in her older sister's footsteps. Alaina competes in the Bay State Games Junior division.

While Erica has earned her fair share of acclaim, it still doesn't prevent her from experiencing those pre-race jitters. But she's learned how to put aside her fears leading up to the starting gun. "I like to read," she explained. "I'll go off to a quiet place and read a running book that I like and that calms me down."

With a renewed focus, she settles into the blocks and sets out on meeting her next challenge. Like so many others striving to get that much better one step, one race at a time.

COACHES FIND SUMMER HOME

By Scott Barboza

Jack Sordillo and Bruce Walberg both stumbled across the Bay State Games and became involved through the backdoor.

Decades later, they've become fixtures in Bay State soccer circles for their life's worth of contributions.

"You don't think that it's something that you're going to do forever," said Sordillo, who's now Bay States Games soccer commissioner. "But you really do get hooked."

Both Sordillo and Walberg more or less fell into volunteering for the Bay State Games.

Walberg, who is the Bay State Games Central Girls Soccer head coach, had his first exposure a little more than 10 years ago when his oldest son tried out for the Central squad. He's been hooked ever since.

"I jumped in feet first," said Walberg, who also holds down the head coaching duties of the women's soccer program at Fitchburg State College. "It's more for enjoyment more than anything once you get past the administrative duties, which really aren't bad. You have an opportunity to really sit back and enjoy the athleticism that's out there. It's really amazing what these kids can do."

Sordillo entered into the Bay State realm through more unconventional means.

He'd noticed a posting on the bulletin board at work calling for volunteers to work at the Games, which were being hosted by Sordillo's employer NYNEX, now Bay State Games partner Verizon. With referee's experience, Sordillo signed up to lend his talents to a match.

However, when the group of referees that were supposed to work the following matches were lured away by the World Cup match going on a stone's throw away at Foxboro Stadium, Sordillo was the man on the scene - the lone man on the scene that is.

After calling the action over the next 11 straight hours, Sordillo knew he was part of something truly special.

"The best part is when it's over and you feel like you really contributed to something that's bigger than you, to something that people feel good about," Sordillo added. "The kids are great and it's great to see the coaches that come back every year, too. It's just a great feeling to be a part of."

"A lot of the time, it's an opportunity for kids at schools who play against each other to play together. It's a good level of play and you see a lot of friendships develop out of that time together. It's a unique experience."

For all of those same reasons, the Bay State Games have remained reserved time on the Walberg family's summer calendar.

"It's part of our family vacation time now," Walberg said. "We'll go into Boston for the weekend and I find it to be really therapeutic and we all look forward to it. It's competitive, but it's a relaxed atmosphere and everybody really enjoys themselves."

As for getting involved initially, Sordillo thought it was simple. There's no need for a pinned up letter. It just takes a little bit of commitment-to looking forward to coming back year after year.

"You just go for it and you'll want to come back."

STATE GAMES EVENT DATES



2008 NCSG SYMPOSIUM

September 23-26

Rochester, NY

The Monroe County Sports Commission is working very hard on making this symposium FUN and educational! They have been meeting with the Staff from the Empire State Games to ensure the topics will be beneficial to all.

Delegation Registration is \$200 and for additional delegates it is \$175, Spouses and/or Students are \$100. Hotel Rates are \$119 for Standard King and Standard 2 Queens. Delegates must use the National Congress of State Games to receive this special rate!

2008 SUMMER DATES

Alabama Sports Festival - June 20-22

Grand Canyon State Games - June 20-22

California State Games - July 11-13

Rocky Mountain State Games - July 24-27

Nutmeg State Games - July 26-August 3

Sunshine State Games - June 13-15

Georgia Games - July 11-20

Aloha State Games - June & July

Iowa Games - July 17-20 & 25-27

Sunflower State Games - July 11-27

Bluegrass State Games - July 18-20 & 26-27

Maine Games - March 28-29, April 12, May 10, June 6, June 12, June 21-22 & 28-29

Bay State Games - July 7-10

Star of the North State Games - June 20-22 & 27-29

State Games of Mississippi - June 20-22 & 25-29

Show-Me State Games Finals - July 18-20 & 25-27 & August 1-3

Big Sky State Games - July 18-20

Cornhusker State Games - July 18-27

Garden State Games - July 5-20

New Mexico State Games - May 4-5 & 23-26

Empire State Games - July 23-27

Prairie Rose State Games - July 11-13

Sooner State Games - June 21-22 & 28-29

State Games of Oregon - July 11-13

Keystone State Games - July 22-27

Games of Texas - July 24-27

Utah Summer Games - June 5-22

Washington State Games - July 10-20

Badger State Games - June 20-22 & 27-29



National Congress of
State Games

2008 REGIONAL STATE GAMES DATES:

State Games of the West - July 24-27

State Games of Mid-America - August 1-3

Southeast Sports Festival - August 1-3

ALL IN THE STATE GAMES FAMILY...

DID YOU KNOW...

~Chris Paul, the point guard for the New Orleans Hornets, was named the 2004 State Games of North Carolina Athlete of the Year? If you didn't recognize the name before this year's NBA playoffs, you certainly should now. A graduate of Wake Forest, he was named the 2005-2006 NBA T-Mobile Rookie of the Year. In only his second year in the NBA, Paul lead the Hornets to a Game 7 with the San Antonio Spurs in the Western Conference Semi-Finals, averaging 24.1 pts a game. Although it's early in his career, he's been compared to the likes of Isiah Thomas.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS EDITION OF
THE NCSG NEWSLETTER!**



CUSTOM DESIGNED MEDALS & PINS

MANUFACTURED TO MEET YOUR EXACT NEEDS AND BUDGET

Ashworth Awards
130 Chestnut St. North Attleborough, MA 02760
Phone: 1-800-325-1917
Phone: 508-695-1900 Fax: 508-695-0377

all medals shown at 75%

Industry - Associations - Clubs