



**NATIONAL
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Sam Blakely Going to Beijing

Media Advisory

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Park City, Utah – U.S. Paralympics, a division of the U.S. Olympic Committee, has announced that Sam Blakely, 13, is one of 25 student athletes with a physical disability selected to attend the 2008 International Paralympic Academy, September 5-11, in Beijing, China..

“It’s pretty cool to get to go to China and see all the competition,” Blakely said. “I think it will be a lot of fun.”

The 2008 Paralympic Academy Beijing offers a very select group of young student athletes with physical disabilities and coaches to experience the Paralympic Games firsthand. Participants have the opportunity to meet U.S. Paralympic team members in addition to attending ceremonies and competition, gaining an insider’s perspective on the Games.

“Less than five-percent of kids with physical disabilities participate in physical fitness programs,” said Charlie Huebner, Chief of U.S. Paralympics. “The Paralympic Academy Beijing provides us an opportunity to recognize those kids with physical disabilities and programs that promote physical fitness programs and health.”

The first International Paralympic Academy took place at the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens, Greece. The second event was held at the 2006 Paralympic Winter Games in Torino, Italy.

Student athletes, coaches and program leaders were chosen based on their essay entries focused on how sports have impacted their lives. Entries were judged by an independent panel.

For more information about U.S. Paralympics and its programs, please contact the U.S. Paralympics office at (719)866-2039 or visit our website at www.usparalympics.org.

The National Ability Center is committed to the development of lifetime skills for people of all ages and abilities by providing affordable sports and recreational experiences in a nurturing environment. The objective of these experiences is to build self-esteem, confidence and physical development, thereby enhancing active participation in all aspects of community life.

For more information about Sam Blakely or a chance to interview him before or after his trip, please contact Ryan Jensen at 435.200.0990 or e-mail him at ryanj@DiscoverNAC.org.