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the first leg of the Invacare series. At the end of the year, points are awarded to the top finishers in each race to determine the cup champion.

"It was nice to beat Murray; he's won the series two years in a row and has won this race in Tampa eight of the 10 years it's been run," Blanchette said. "My sponsor was also impressed by my record-breaking win (so) he decided to sponsor me full time and pay my expenses to every race."

Blanchette also was proud to represent Eugene/Springfield, the "track capital of the world," and defeat the local Tampa champion. "Tampa is trying to steal this distinction from Eugene, so my victory and world's record was a moral victory for Eugene also," gleamed Blanchette.

Blanchette's coach, Kevin Hansen, a quadriplegic and also a wheelchair athlete, thinks Blanchette can win every race he enters this season and should win the Invacare Cup.

Before the start of this year,

run marathons. He'll probably race the Honolulu and Portland Marathons. The Boston Marathon is where the big money is (\$10,000 to win and an extra \$5,000 if a world is record is set), but they only accept the top nine wheelchair athletes with times around two hours and two minutes. It will probably be better for Craig to wait until next year before trying Boston."

Blanchette agrees and said he probably won't compete in a major marathon until he is 21 or 22.

Meanwhile, Blanchette's next major competition is in April when the second race in the Invacare series is run in New Orleans.

When not racing, Blanchette is a part-time student at Lane Community College and a disc jockey at high school dances.

"Right now racing is the most important to me. It could lead into becoming a sales representative for different racing companies, and I could go pretty far, so that's where my priority

said. "He won't let go of his goals and hates to finish second. He's the best overall athlete I've ever seen, he just happens to not have any legs. He's like Robert Redford in 'Downhill Racer.' He lives a straight life and is the best role model for handicapped athletes in Eugene-Springfield and all of Lane County. He proves that any handicap can be overcome."

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— Kevin Hansen

Blanchette drastically changed his workouts. "I now do weights three times a week, pushing three days a week and take one day off."

Pushing involves racing his wheelchair on a track 20 to 50 miles a week to build up his arm strength and speed.

The next big step for Blanchette is to wheel in a marathon. But his coach doesn't think he's ready yet.

"I prefer he not run a marathon now. I want him to stay injury-free, so I'm gradually working him up to 50 miles a week," Hansen said.

"By fall he should be ready to

is right now. If I ever lose interest in racing, I will probably go back to school and get a degree, but right now I'm having fun with this."

Blanchette lives with his grandfather in Springfield and was a 1986 graduate of Springfield High School where he also wrestled.

"I like doing about anything, especially racquetball and snow skiing," he said. He designed his own snow ski and owns a specially designed pick-up truck that allows him to control everything with his hands.

Blanchette's strengths are his youth and tenacity, Hansen

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