

Dreams of Victory

Team Oregon is helping to create Gay Games 2010 dreams

BY MATTHEW FREE

From all over Oregon, they gather under one banner, as Team Oregon athletes and Gay Games hopefuls of 2010.

These games have provided strong foundation to the queer community's purpose. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, focus was on providing visibility to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Gay Games III, held in New York, recognized the 25th anniversary of Stonewall. Even during Gay Games 2010, in Cologne, Germany, darkness will be illuminated when Oregon athletes unite with others around the world to challenge the status quo against sexual minorities for their rights to partnerships and visibility for queer athletes in professional sports.

Completing its second mile in the marathon mission to financially support 100-plus Oregonian athletes, Team Oregon is looking strong. A fund-raising dinner is from 6 to 10 p.m. March 27 for \$50 for members and \$65 for nonmembers, at Francis Restaurant, 2338 N.E. Alberta St. Team Oregon will also be hosting a skate night March 30 at Oaks Park. Cost for the skate night is \$10 for members and \$15 non-members, and attendees are encourage to "come as your favorite athlete" to win costume prizes. Proceeds from both events will benefit the athletic travel fund.

New members are joining Team Oregon, volunteering their time and donating money through its Web site, www.teamoregon2010.com. Suzanne Foster recently introduced herself to Team Oregon, volunteering to help the group launch a big marketing campaign with a variety

of visual aids. Foster, who recently opened up her own public relations company, Foster Design Group, felt a commitment to help. "After being in the corporate world for so long, I finally get to make my own choices to be of service to the queer community in which I belong."

Team Oregon has recently established a tiered sponsorship program for such marketing efforts to bring in big dollars. President and hopeful softball player in the next Gay Games, Rob Patton, said, "There hasn't been this much effort in the past by Team Oregon to ask the community for its support."

New directions with online networking efforts have also shown to be successful. Athletes in parts of Oregon, like Bend and Eugene, have expressed interest in joining Team Oregon's net presence. Team Oregon board members are still deciding how to distribute money to athletes (see "Getting There," page 17). Cost for travel, lodging, sports registration and passports are estimated at \$2,700 per athlete. With Team Oregon's goal to raise \$200,000 for travel and lodging cost, many Oregonian athletes are more encouraged to go to Cologne, Germany competing in the 2010 Gay Games.

Just Out caught up with past, current, and future Gay Games athletic hopefuls, learning along the way that participation is not only a statement about athletic abilities, but also visibility.

Lived the dream:

Marathoner Gary Chappel

Lean, muscular legs and dense calves demonstrate the amount of miles Gary Chappel, a member of Portland's Front Runner gay running team, has traveled on foot over the years. Participating in the marathon during the 1988 Gay Games II in San Francisco and 2006 Gay Games VII in Chicago,



Gary Chappel

he learned that queer athletes are "not an anomaly in the world." From the early years of the Gay Games, Chappel still remembers the rush of competition and the inspiration of hearing Gay Games' founder Tom Waddell speak. In 2006, Chappel felt the Gay Games had grown into a broader community event. "In Chicago, everyone turned out and the whole city was involved. It was also unique to see how each

host city put its own flair into the event."

Though unable to attend in 2010, Gary hopes many other athletes will join Team Oregon to foster unity in the experience. "Becoming visible now will inspire someone else who has never done it before," he said. For other athletes who are interested in running the Cologne marathon, Chappel shared his wisdom. "I am really disciplined about my training and approach to races, usually starting a 12-week prep program before a competition. At the games, be patient and flexible to changes but still have fun. In addition to having fun in the competition, the best parties are at night."

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