

Living the Dream:

Bodybuilder Arde Johnson, triathlete Reid Decker & sprinter Doug Mendell

Experiencing the Gay Games once is not enough. Arde Johnson, Reid Decker, and Doug Mendell have attended the Gay Games before and are looking forward to competing in 2010.

Johnson trains among the hard sweating, defined bodies in Northwest Portland's 24 Hour Fitness. At 67, Arde has the athletic build and stamina of any 20-year-old with better abdominal muscles than most. Eight years of weight training has provided him with the wisdom to remain youthful in looks and spirit. Such spirit radiates when discussing bodybuilding and attending the Gay Games.

Johnson has previously competed in physique at the 2004 Gay Games VI in Sydney and 2006 Gay Games VII, winning gold medals each time. According to Johnson, there is "nothing like it in the world. It was very emotional to be marching in the opening ceremonies parade, holding candle lights and waving hello with pom-poms for 40,000 spectators in Sydney," Johnson said. "Then to k.d. lang signing 'You'll Never Walk Alone' was very touching."

Even as Johnson is preparing himself to compete in 2010, he is mentoring others. "Bodybuilding is a sport all about form and learning how the body naturally moves. The way you train in the

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"Gay Games shrinks the world so that it is not so big, and dissolves our differences."

DOUG MENDELL

Doug Mendell proudly wears his medal won in the 200 during the Chicago Gay Games, along with fellow athletes from Dallas, TX.



Triathlete Reid Decker says of the Gay Games, "I love the concept with the games that you can compete against the seasoned veteran to other novices."



GETTING THERE

How Team Oregon proposes defraying travel expenses

Team Oregon is working hard to raise funds for state athletes to compete in the 2010 Gay Games. At an organizational meeting on February 25, 2009, board members explained its point system to *Just Out*. Under the current proposal, any athlete requesting funds has to earn funds from the organization. The more dollars raised and, more importantly, more time put into the organization, the more financial help athletes are entitled to. But the system does not create a level playing field for all.

The intention of the credit system is to prevent favoritism through a donor's sponsoring one athlete or team over others. Such sponsorship is being discouraged, yet creating a young scholastic athlete scholarship fund from specific donors is in the works.

Joining Team Oregon promptly is also important. Credits are not recorded until athletes join the group. The greater number of points earned the higher percentage of the total bank an athlete can receive. Board members have the most opportunity to earn points. Points can also not be donated to other athletes if one decides not to attend the Gay Games. The board has not yet confirmed whether athletes earn credits for competing in one's sport in preparation before the Gay Games or through attending other queer athletic events in the state.

Previous Team Oregon members have been comprised of local Portland metro queer athletes with the financial abilities to go. President Rob Patton said, "It is this Team Oregon 2010 intention to reach out for membership outside of Portland, and even send a college athlete." Sending a college athlete like Soren Estvold would surely provide him a life-changing experience, but for now he only has the proposed scholarship fund to potentially fund his trip.

Not being of age for another half a year, Soren will not be able to benefit from upcoming fund-raising activities starting in April which focus on area local bars. Plus, time to commit to serving on Team Oregon's committee and functions is limited. "Shortly before the Gay Games I will have completed the MCATs for medical school. My time needs to be focused on passing the exam then raising money," Estvold adds. Still he wants to experience the Gay Games if Team Oregon can really help.

Athletes outside of Portland have started expressing interest in Team Oregon online. With most events centered in Portland, there are concerns that they won't have opportunities to earn enough points to help fund their trip. Is there a better game plan?

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