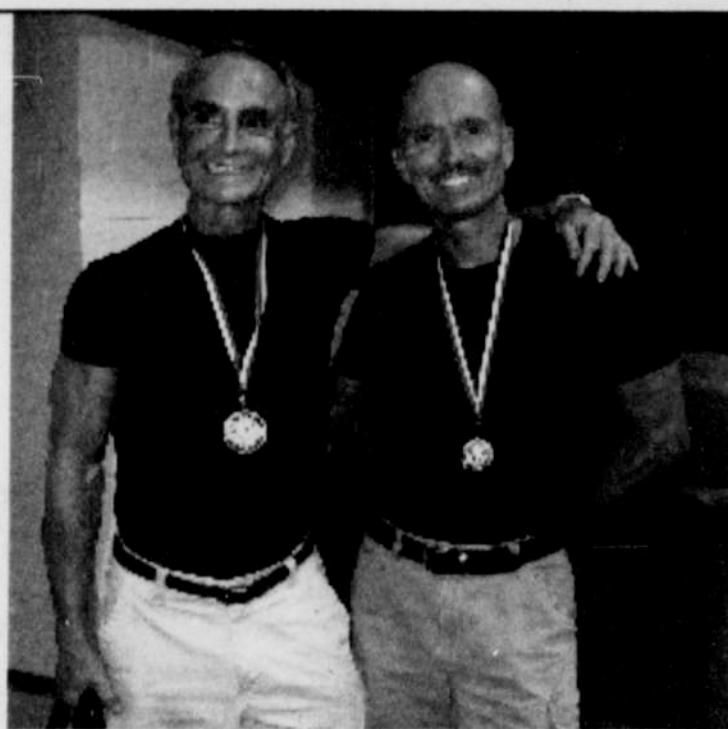


gym will mirror your presence and grace on stage during the competition." Many Oregon athletes have expressed interest in bodybuilding with Team Oregon. Johnson added, "It becomes a really fun thing. Once you get started, you will get hooked." Johnson continues to live the Gay Games dream finding inspiration from others he coaches. He hopes that newcomers to Team Oregon will see the organization as a chance to pay it forward. "It's about being part of a brotherhood and feeling wonderful to be present among other queer athletes."

Reid Decker classifies himself as a weekend warrior. His busy schedule overseeing the Portland Saturday Market does not provide much time to train consistently, but that does not discourage him from going out to challenge himself in athletic ventures like the Gay Games. Decker has previously competed in Gay Games in Sydney and Chicago. "I love the concept with the games that you can compete against the seasoned veteran to other novices," Reid told *Just Out*. During his Gay Games appearances, Decker learned a valuable lesson about his abilities. "By completing the races, I learned how to break through self doubt, a lesson which has been valuable in business thereafter."

Reid Decker looks to run the half marathon for the first time in 2010, and be part of his partner Dustin Shanky's and friend Kyle Sheely's first Gay Games experience. For Decker, his dream is to "always find ways to make the community tighter." He believes Team Oregon does just that.

"I thought running the 200 meters was hard, but training for the 400 meter run is brutal," gasped Doug Mendell, after sprinting laps with the grace



Arde Johnson with team Palm Springs athlete showcase their medals won during the Chicago games

of a cheetah at the Lincoln High School track in Northwest Portland. Mendell competed in the 2006 Gay Games in sprints and won bronze in the 200 meters. "Winning bronze was nearly as exciting to me as having my first son," he shares.

Mendell is returning to the 2010 Gay Games to continue his Cinderella story by winning silver in one event. Mendell feels he is in the best shape of his life with the advantage of age to provide focus and wisdom. His training includes keeping up with his two athletic, teenage sons. As a returning Gay Games athlete, Mendell is most excited to meet or reunite with athletes from around the globe.

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

Continuing the Dream:

Triathlete Jackie Wheatley,
rock climber Susan Johnson
& swimmer Soren Estvold

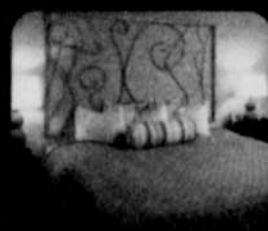
Stories from past Gay Games participants inspire other Oregon athletes to set their mark as future Gay Games competitors. Team Oregon estimates that it will likely represent more than 100 athletes, many of which are first-time participants.

Jackie Wheatley, an avid Portland triathlete of six years, missed going to the 2006 Gay Games. "I heard about the event for the first time ever two weeks before it was going to happen. I would definitely compete if I knew about it earlier," Jackie said. Wheatley has kept the 2010 date on her radar since then. She feels she is waiting for her turn. "What I like about the games' concept is that you don't have to necessarily be a world class athlete to go and compete." Since starting triathlons, Wheatley has lost 100 pounds and kept it off. "Triathlons are extremely challenging, not only physically, but mentally. Mental, because of the duration and distances covered. Physical, because there are three athletic disciplines in one event, each using different muscles. I feel it keeps me more in touch with my body." Wheatley's main focus is not only to compete but have fun with her partner of three years, fellow Team Oregon athlete Susan Johnson.

Gay Games is known to include unique sports not seen on an Olympic stage. Ballroom dancing has always been a hit, and in 2010, events like rock

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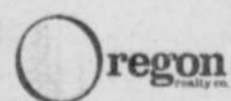
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