

climbing and chess have been added. Johnson intends to compete in rock climbing, though she has yet to attempt the sport. Not classifying herself as athletic before joining the lesbian dragon boating team, Amazon Dragons, Susan believes competing in rock climbing during the Gay Games will push her athletic abilities higher. "Trying this sport in the games will help me push past my fear of heights," Johnson explained.

Wheatley and Johnson say their relationship needs to maintain a degree of balance with the pressure of competitive training. "There comes a time before a competition which we need our individual space," Wheatley said. They're looking forward to sharing the experience in Cologne, Germany and plan to "watch hot women's volleyball."

After chemistry classes at Portland State University, one of Team Oregon's youngest Gay Games hopefuls, 20-year old Soren Estvold, swims. First

"This organization is a great way for us in the college crowd to connect with others in the queer community."

SOREN ESTVOLD.
SWIMMER



impressions are broken when one learns that Estvold's smaller stature and boyish looks cover a highly driven athlete. After learning about Team Oregon through a coffee date with another athletic hopeful, Estvold added swimming in the Gay Games to his list of goals. Though he played sports growing up, Estvold never competed in swimming. "I picked up swimming through my job as a life-guard," he said. "It is like dancing without gravity. I am so in my element." He admits his favorite movie growing up was *The Little Mermaid*.

Estvold plans to compete in the 100-and 200-meter backstroke. He has already found Team Oregon a productive group for him. "This organization is a great way for us in the college crowd to connect with others in the queer community we sometimes feel distant from." He hopes that Team Oregon will be able to provide major financial assistance to get him to the Gay Games. "The drawback about this process is not the training but the sponsorship. Being a typical starving college kid, I don't make money to pay for such cost. Plus, I need to focus more on my class work than looking for sponsorships." To help with conditioning, Estvold has started training with members of Portland gay swim team, the Riptides.

Coming from a "red neck" part of Montana before college, Estvold often felt intimidated by the heterosexualized world of sports. His dream is that the Gay Games will someday destroy the jock closet. "I hope my interest and presence in going to the games will bring more confidence to other college athletes still in the jock closet and help them to become more visible." JO



Susan Johnson plans to compete in rock climbing during the Gay Games and believes the experience will push her athletic abilities higher. "Trying this sport in the games will help me push past my fear of heights," she says.

MATTHEW FREE, a freelance sports writer, dreams to compete in couple's bodybuilding (if he finds a partner) and be the first Portland journalist to report live from the Gay Games.

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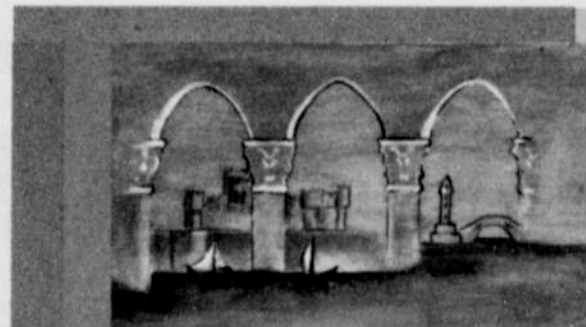


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