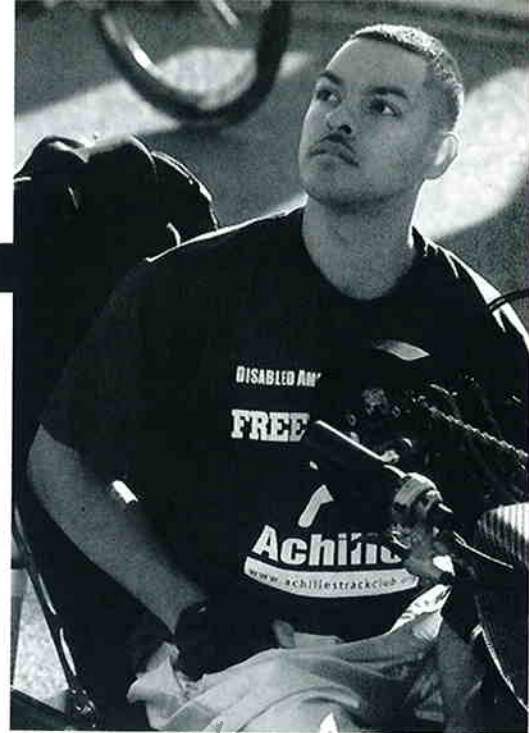


# Freedom Team



Photos: Alex Tolchinsky Photography

More than a dozen amputees returning from Iraq and Afghanistan will participate for the first time in the West Palm Beach Marathon.

"The team was started three years ago at the **Walter Reed Army Medical Center** in Washington, DC, when these young men and women were coming back with missing limbs," said **Achilles Freedom Team** Director **Mary Bryant**. "It's exactly what our program is about — running, walking, wheelchairs, giving them a goal to work toward so that even after something traumatic happens, they can enhance their rehabilitation. We motivate, train and provide the opportunity to out and get into an endurance sport."

"In our second year, we expanded to include injured Marines from **Balboa Navy Medical Center** in San Diego, and this year, we added wounded veterans from **Brooke Army Medical Center** in San Antonio, and

**Bethesda's Naval Hospital**. Achilles provides support with the help of **Disabled American Veterans Charitable Trust** and **AVIS**. The team participates in a National Marathon tour, and has been to Miami, L.A., Boston, Washington, DC — the **Marine Corps Marathon** — and New York. We have been featured in the *New York Times* and *Runners World Magazine* as "Running Heroes."

The mission of the Team is to get these individuals "back in service" to themselves by running, walking and wheeling in a sports wheelchair. We set goals, train on a regular basis, and travel as a team to cities across the country. Team members get stronger and help each other as they embrace the newly wounded. Due to the increased sophistication of enemy explosives, we have many more double and triple amputees. Therefore, our handcrank program demands continue to increase," says Bryant.

**AVIS** and **Double Tree Hotel** are the major sponsors of the Freedom Team, but



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*The Gazebo*

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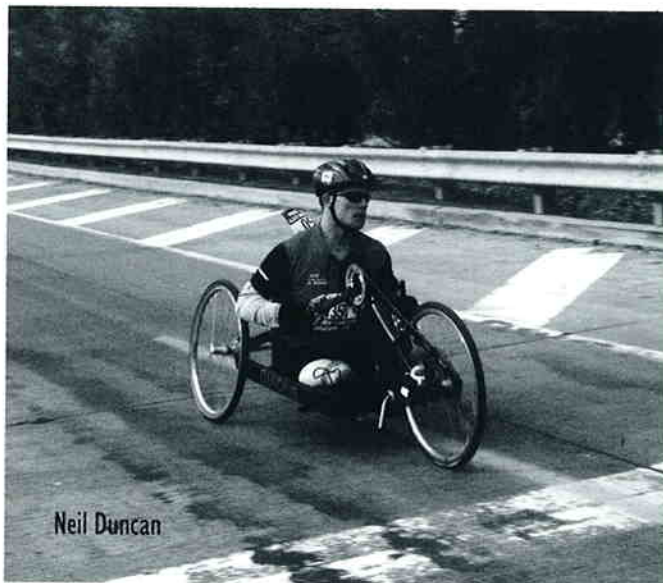
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