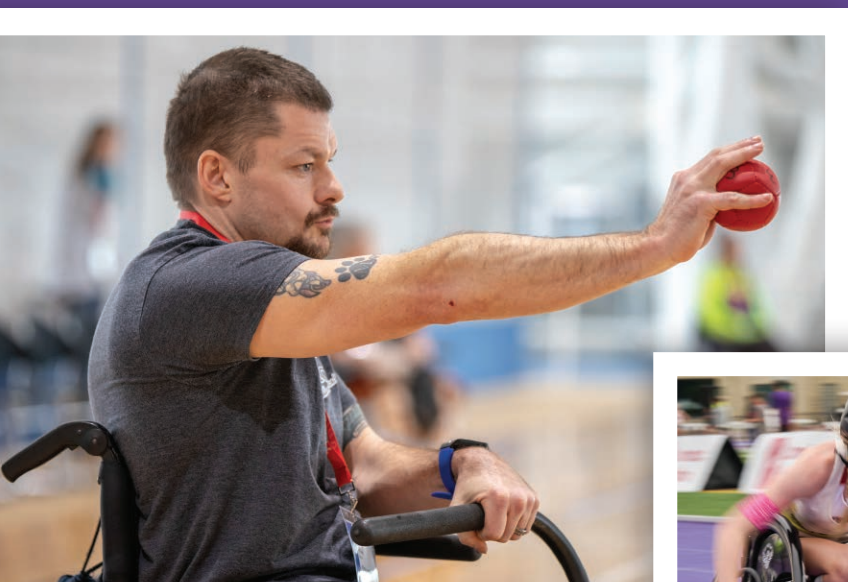


NIAGARA 2025 ONTARIO PARASPORT GAMES

MAY 30TH - JUNE 1ST

OFFICIAL PROGRAM



Sport
Bios



Welcome Messages
Athlete Profiles



Niagara
Para Games
Legacy Fund



Niagara
2025

Ontario Parasport Games
Jeux Parasport de l'Ontario

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THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF ONTARIO
LA LIEUTENANTE-GOUVERNEURE DE L'ONTARIO

May 30, 2025

I wish to extend my warmest greetings to everyone involved in the 2025 Niagara Parasport Games.

These Games are a powerful reflection of what we value in Ontario: inclusion, perseverance, and the conviction that every individual deserves the chance to thrive. Events like yours also remind us that sport is about so much more than results; it is about connection, shared purpose, and the sense of belonging that strengthens communities across the province.

To the athletes: your dedication, focus, and passion are truly remarkable. Through your hard work and spirit, you continue to break barriers and inspire others. You are the heartbeat of these Games, and your presence speaks volumes about courage and determination.

To the coaches, volunteers, families, organizers, and supporters—thank you. Your tireless efforts have helped create more than a competition: you have fostered an environment where people come together, where diversity is embraced, and where sport becomes a celebration of inclusion.

À titre de représentante de la Couronne en Ontario, je tiens à souligner la portée de ces Jeux, qui rassemblent des collectivités de tous horizons dans un esprit de respect et de solidarité. Ces rencontres nous rappellent avec force que le sport peut être un véritable vecteur de changement, en favorisant l'émergence de communautés plus ouvertes, bienveillantes et accueillantes, où chacun et chacune a sa place. De tout cœur avec vous!

Salutations distinguées,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edith Dumont".

Edith Dumont



MAY 30 – JUNE 1

*Greetings from the Honourable Neil Lumsden
Minister of Sport*

On behalf of the Government of Ontario, welcome to the Niagara 2025 Ontario Parasport Games!

These Games provide highly skilled athletes with the opportunity to come together and demonstrate their skills in competition with their peers from across our province. This event is sure to thrill spectators of all ages and spread the powerful message of inclusion, celebration and access to sport for all Ontarians.

Our government is proud to support this event through the Games Ontario Program and to welcome visitors from near and far to this spectacular part of our province. While you are here, I encourage you to get out there and explore everything that the beautiful Niagara Region has to offer.

Thank you to Sport Niagara, Brock University, the participating host municipalities in the Niagara Region, and to the organizers and volunteers for your tireless efforts to make these Games a success.

I look forward to seeing you all at the Games!

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Neil Lumsden".

The Honourable Neil Lumsden
Minister of Sport

Welcome to Niagara!

It is with great pride and excitement that we welcome all of you – our outstanding athletes, dedicated coaches, supportive families, and enthusiastic fans – to the Niagara 2025 Ontario Parasport Games.

These Games are more than just a competition. It's a celebration of hard work, determination, and the unbreakable spirit of sportsmanship. Each of you has trained tirelessly, pushed limits, and overcome challenges to be here – and for that you should be proud.

This tournament is not just about winning medals or setting records. It's about respect – for the game, for your opponents, and for yourself. It's about building friendships, sharing unforgettable moments, and representing your sport with pride and integrity.

As you take to the ice, court, track, mat, pool, field, or green – remember that every cheer, every effort, and every challenge overcome is a victory in and of itself. Play with heart, compete with honour, and most of all – enjoy every second.

On behalf of Sport Niagara and the organizing committee, we wish each of you the best of luck. May this tournament bring out the best in all of us!

Dan Kennedy
Executive Director
Sport Niagara – Host of the Niagara 2025 Ontario Parasport Games



Nothing for Us Without Us

As a 12-time participant in the Ontario Parasport Games, it was a tremendous honour to lead the Steering Committee for these Games, a group balanced with a wealth of lived-experience and expertise from Niagara's disability community.

My personal mandate as the Chair of the Steering Committee was to ensure athlete representation in all aspects of the event's design, including the Steering Committee, consultants and suppliers.

To this end, we created an Athlete Council, with its members representing different sports and regions of Ontario, to share past Games experiences and make recommendations for the Niagara event... the very first Athlete Council in the Ontario Parasport Games' 44-year-history.

Add to that, the Games website was developed by former para-athlete and multi-time competitor in these Games, Kimberley Barreda. We turned to Paralympic nordic skier Christina Picton and her graphic design company for the medal design. From Niagara-based accessibility consultant Donna Herrington to our exciting line-up of Opening Ceremony performers and presenters with disabilities, our community is equitably represented.

Niagara has such a rich parasport history, and I'm very excited for even more adaptive sport opportunities to come through the creation of the Niagara Para Games Legacy Fund and its commitment to the disability community's mantra of "Nothing for Us Without Us" as well!

Jeff Tiessen, PLY
Chair, Games Steering Committee



Games Organizing Committee

The 2025 Ontario Parasport Games was led by Sport Niagara and supported by a Games Steering Committee of enthusiastic community leaders, an Athlete Council and a dedicated volunteer team of Committee Leads, all committed to creating an exceptional games experience for athletes, participants and spectators from across Ontario.

Sport Niagara

Dan Kennedy, Executive Director

With over 30 years of working experience with professional sporting events, including MLB All-Star Games and NFL Super Bowls, Dan leads Sport Niagara, the legacy organization of the Niagara 2022 Canada Games.

Kimberley Barreda, Website Developer

Mathew Milne, Sponsorship & Marketing

Courtney Roffel, Games Project Director

Kevin Tang, Games General Manager

Daniel Vieira, Games Sport Manager

Steering Committee

Jeff Tiessen, PLY, Committee Chair

A three-time Paralympian, gold-medalist and world record holder, Jeff is the founder of Disability Today Publishing Group, Inc. Much of his work is focused on parasport, adapted recreation and physical activity.

Donna Herrington, Accessibility Consultant

As someone living with a disability and over 20 years of experience in senior management and accessibility consulting, Donna leads the Herrington Group – experts in the field of accessibility services.

James Davis, Athlete Council Representative

Co-founder of the Brock Niagara Penguins, “Jim” is a two-time national and provincial boccia champion. With NCCP coaching certifications, Jim is the head coach for three sports with the Penguins – wheelchair basketball, boccia and handcycling.

Dr. Maureen Connolly, Community Relations Consultant

A long-standing Brock University faculty member, Maureen is a Professor of Physical Education and Kinesiology with her life’s work materializing in the Brock-Niagara Centre of Excellence in Inclusive and Adaptive Physical Activity.

James Murphy, Parasport Consultant

James has a diverse background in sport and community partnerships, program leadership, and advocating for the benefits of physical activity and inclusion for everybody. He is the Executive Director of ParaSport® Ontario.

Daniel Vieira, Parasport Consultant

Daniel is the Community Events Manager at ParaSport® Ontario. In that role he facilitated a large-scale activation at the Niagara Parasport Festival, serves as the coordinator for the Niagara Sledge Hockey League, and delivers ParaSport Ontario’s Try-It programming.

Faye Blackwood, Technical Consultant

Faye is an Athletics Classifier and a National Coaching Certification Program Level III coach. An athletics coach for cerebral palsy sports at the provincial and national level, she was a Paralympic Games staff coach from 1992 – 2004.

Gerry McIlhone, Transportation Consultant

The operations superintendent with City of Hamilton Transit, Gerry’s experience with sports events in Niagara includes the 2022 Canada Games, OFSSA Championships and FIBA’s under-18 men’s basketball Americas Championship.

Chris Charlebois, Volunteer Consultant

Chris is COO of Tournkey, a firm that has had a hand in the growth of the sporting landscape across North America for over 20 years. An event professional, Chris has built digital products and services for large-scale, sporting events and conferences.



Volunteer Lead Chairs

Amanda Benitez, Special Events

Alyssa Benitez, Medical

Brett Farrelly, Volunteers

Lucas Ferrante, Accommodations

Donna Herrington, Accessibility

Andrew Meloche, Food Services

Phoebe Miksic, Marketing/Communications

Carol Phillips, Administration and Registration

Carson Terry, Logistics and Transportation

Athlete Council

Jim Davis, Co-Chair (Niagara)
Boccia, Coach – Brock Niagara Penguins

Daniel Vieira, Co-Chair (Hamilton)
Community Events Manager, ParaSport® Ontario

John Azlen (Windsor)
Wheelchair Basketball, Rose City Riot – President and Founder

Nasif Chowdhury (Waterloo/Toronto)
Wheelchair Basketball – U23 Men's Team, National Sitting Volleyball Team

Ashlee Dag (Niagara)
Karate, Committee Member – Centre for Adaptive Physical Activity

Sheena Darnley (Niagara)
Para Ice Hockey – Women's National Team

Tiffany Gaudette (Mississauga)
Athletics – Mississauga Cruisers

Joshua Gautier (Niagara)
Boccia – Brock Niagara Penguins, Team Ontario

Hisham Mohammad (Hamilton)
Wheelchair Tennis – internationally-ranked

Brice Parker (London)
Goalball – London Phantoms

Hilary Scanlon (Peterborough)
Blind Soccer – Team Captain, National Women's Team

Jolan Wong (Pembroke/Petawawa)
Sitting Volleyball – 2024 Paralympic Games Bronze Medalist

Ministry of Sport Representatives

Josée Matte
Lead Program Consultant

Sarah Smith
Program Consultant

Rayann D'Aguiar
Program Officer

OLG is a proud sponsor of the 2025 Ontario Parasport Games, celebrating the strength and determination of every participant.

Let's unite in the spirit of inclusivity and empowerment – because every game is an opportunity to inspire and be inspired.



BRING Home THE WIN

Play Smart



The Games Story

For the first time in the 44-year-history of the Ontario Parasport Games, it is the Niagara Region that welcomes athletes, managers, coaches, officials, and volunteers to this prestigious provincial event.

Sport Niagara, the not-for-profit organization established to carry on the sport legacy from the Niagara-hosted 2022 Canada Games, was thrilled to be selected as the host of 2025 Ontario Parasport Games. Sport Niagara is utilizing sporting facilities across the Niagara region for the Games, including Canada Games Park and Brock University in Thorold, Cardinal Lakes Golf Club in Welland, and Port Colborne's Vale Health and Wellness Centre.

The Niagara 2025 Ontario Parasport Games was made possible with funding and support from the Government of Ontario and Sport Niagara. "The Ontario government was pleased to select Sport Niagara and the Niagara Region as the successful bid to host the 2025 Ontario Parasport Games," said Neil Lumsden, Minister of Sport. "These Games are an exciting opportunity for highly skilled athletes to come together in competition with their peers from across the province. The event will provide a significant impact for the local economy... and inspire a new generation of athletes."

"We are extremely excited to continue to advance the legacy of the recent Canada Games in Niagara," said Doug Hamilton, Board member of Sport Niagara. "Hosting sporting events like this will continue to support sport tourism and economic development in Niagara."

The Ontario Parasport Games were first delivered in 1975 by the City of Cambridge. Since then, the Games have grown to a record-setting number of over 500 participants competing in 11 sports here at the 2025 edition in Niagara. The last Ontario Parasport Games were held in Durham in 2023.

Sport Niagara's mission is to support sporting events in Niagara, as a partner or host, and promote sport through various programs focused on advancing high-performance and community sport. For more information, visit sportniagara.ca.

Games Ontario is a brand under the Government of Ontario and the Ministry of Sport. The 2025 Ontario Parasport Games are supported by the Ontario Government through its Games Ontario program. This program delivers and supports multi-sport events, including the Ontario Winter and Summer Games for youth, the Ontario 55+ Winter and Summer Games and the Ontario Parasport Games.

To learn more about the 2025 Ontario Parasport Games, visit niagara2025ontarioparasportgames.ca.

Thank-You to Our Sponsors

The Games Organizing Committee extends our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the sponsors of Niagara's 2025 Ontario Parasport Games.

Your generous support has made these Games possible and demonstrates a powerful commitment to inclusion, accessibility, community spirit, and to our athletes and volunteers.



SPORTS PROGRAM & PROFILES



5-A-SIDE SOCCER

The rules of 5-a-side soccer are similar to the rules in indoor soccer with a few distinct modifications: the ball is audible and makes noise when it moves; the four outfield players are legally blind and wear eyeshades while the goalkeeper is fully sighted and also acts as a guide for players in their defensive zone. In the attacking zone, a Goal Guide helps direct the attackers towards the net. Ontario Soccer is the recognized governing body for the sport of 5-a-Side Soccer in Ontario. [Learn more at ontariosoccer.net](https://ontariosoccer.net).

BOCCIA

Boccia is a sport originally designed for those with severe cerebral palsy, but is now enjoyed by athletes with various disabilities. It's a co-ed game of control and accuracy, similar to curling, where players propel balls towards a target, or "jack" ball – the closest ball to the jack scores. Players can throw, roll, kick, or use a ramp and/or head pointer if needed. Played indoors, boccia demands precision, focus and coordination and strategy. The Ontario Cerebral Palsy Sports Association is the governing body in Ontario. [Learn more at ocpsa.com](https://ocpsa.com).



Jean-Baptiste Benavent © Défi sportif AlterGo 2024

Paving a Path for Parasport Athletes

JOSHUA GAUTIER doesn't hesitate when naming his most memorable parasport moment. It was winning gold at the Canadian Boccia Championships last year. "This was my first individual medal at the national championships and it took a lot of hard work and perseverance to get there!" he explains. "I am very proud of this accomplishment!"

Gautier is also committed to encouraging the development of his sport in Ontario. The Niagara resident is doing that as a high-performance athlete and as a member of the Athlete Council for the 2025 Ontario Parasport Games. "I am very excited that the games are coming to Niagara. I've always looked forward to competing at the Ontario Parasport Games which is a great showcase of Ontario athletes and parasports."

Competitive by nature, is how Gautier describes himself. "I hold myself to a high standard," he shares. "If I set a goal, I give it 100 percent. I've experienced a lot of challenges in my life, and I know that it's essential to adapt to the challenges that I encounter. There is

always a path forward", he maintains. "It just might not be the one that you first anticipated."

Gautier has set his sights on representing Team Ontario again, and defending his gold medal at the 2025 Canadian Boccia Championships. Off of the boccia court, Gautier is passionate about collecting hockey cards, a hobby he thoroughly enjoys as a self-professed all-around sports fan.

NIAGARA 2025

PARA KARATE

Para karate is focused on developing the ancient discipline of “kata” – Japanese word meaning “form” – for wheelchair athletes, visually impaired athletes and athletes with intellectual disabilities. Kata refers to a choreographed pattern of martial arts movements. Karate Ontario is the governing body for para karate in Ontario. Learn more at karateontario.ca.



Para-Karate Athlete is Energized by Accessibility

St. Catharines’s **ASHLEE DAG** will never forget her first karate tournament. “I felt so accepted,” she remembers. “As a power wheelchair-user I’m the only seated karate athlete in my region. And I won two bronze medals in that tournament.”

Her second tournament, the Nationals this past November, rewarded her with a gold medal for her Kata. “I have never won in any sport in my life,” she shares. “It was so sweet.”

Her parasport success has not been without its challenges. The most difficult perhaps, was finding a wheelchair-accessible dojo. “I started in karate over twenty years ago but was never thrilled about the number of stairs that I had to climb up. And my Sensei was not educated about disability at all.”

After a twenty-year break from the sport, Dag is back. Much has changed as her renewed enthusiasm for karate will attest. “Fast forward twenty years and my Sensei is amazing,” she touts. “She will go to the ends of the earth to make sure I can take part in the tournaments, making sure that they are accessible. I have found my sport again and I love it.”

With her fresh zest for her sport, Dag has reset her parasport goals. “I want my 2nd degree black belt, and I want to have my own dojo that caters to athletes with autism and athletes with medically-complex disabilities like myself. This is a way of giving back to something that has given me so much in just one short year.”

Dag serves on the Brock-Niagara Centre of Excellence in Inclusive & Adaptive Physical Activity Committee as well as volunteering her expertise to the Athlete Council for the 2025 Ontario Parasport Games.



WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

The sport has various clubs and programs for youth and adults available throughout the province. Wheelchair basketball is a fully inclusive sport, with able-bodied athletes permitted to compete at the provincial level. Mixed-gender teams are also common among club teams. The Ontario Para Network is the governing body for the sport in Ontario. Learn more at onpara.ca.



Medals Make Memories

Medals make for memorable parasport moments. That's certainly the case for Windsor's Rose City Riot wheelchair basketball athlete **JOHN AZLEN** who brought his team to its first Ontario Parasport Games in Mississauga in 2022 to return home with a bronze medal.



Apart from Azlen's individual parasport goals, he's committed to developing upcoming athletes so they too can reach their highest potential. That commitment includes being part of the Athlete Council for the 2025 Ontario Parasport Games in Niagara. "Sports are for the athletes, and it's important that the athletes have input on these events so that we're provided with the amenities we need that might otherwise be overlooked," he says.

For Azlen, a great Games experience also includes athletes from other sports coming together and socializing at the same event. "Parasports create an environment where everyone is welcome, regardless of disability," he asserts. "It's where we are able to try something new without judgment."

Aside from sport, and his day job as a frame specialist in the eyewear industry, Azlen is busy with other interests too, like camping, kayaking and photography.

SPORTS PROGRAM & PROFILES

SITTING VOLLEYBALL

Players must keep contact with the floor at all times except when making a defensive play in the back or front zones. The game is played the same way as traditional volleyball, only the court is smaller and the net lower, which makes for a fun and fast game. The Ontario Volleyball Association is the governing body in Ontario. [Learn more at ontariovolleyball.org](https://ontariovolleyball.org).



NIAGARA 2025

Medalist Jolan Wong

For Paralympian Jolan Wong, the “sense of community” is what makes for a great Games experience. On the heels of returning from the 2024 Paris Paralympics with a bronze medal performance in the women’s sitting volleyball event, her next parasport goal is to achieve another podium finish at the 2028 Paralympics in Los Angeles.

Self-described as optimistic and determined, Wong is a full-time mom of three. She home-schools her children while finding time to be active in her community of Pembroke, Ont., teaching sitting volleyball in schools and public speaking. She has also studied to be a personal fitness trainer.

For Wong, the most challenging part of competing in parasport is the lack of resources and established parasport communities outside of major city centres. But she strives to be part of the solution to that problem by teaching the next generation. “That, and creating inclusive environments where everyone can play, are what I consider to be my best accomplishments in parasport,” explains Wong.

As a member of the inaugural Athlete Council for the Ontario Parasport Games, she joined the advisory team for Niagara’s Ontario Parasport Games to share her experiences and expertise that comes with 16 years as a national team member and three-time Paralympian.

“Sport is sport,” she asserts. “I want people to know that parasport is played in an adaptive way that can include everybody, and not just people with a disability. Every adaptive sport has skills that cross over between the traditional sport and the adaptive sport.”



SPORTS PROGRAM & PROFILES



GOALBALL

From opposite ends of the court, each three-player team takes turns hurling the ball across the court to score into the opposition's nine-metre net. Players wear eyeshades to ensure a level playing field as they listen for the ball, dive to block it, and throw it back. A sport that calls for crowd silence during play, bells in the ball enable players to track it while tactile tape on the floor orientates them to their location on the court. Goalball is specifically designed for athletes with a visual impairment. The Ontario Blind Sports Association is the governing body for the sport in Ontario. Learn more at ontariogoalball.com.

BRICE PARKER Giving Voice to the Silent Sport



Winning gold in an overtime shootout at the 2023 Ontario Paraspport Games stands as Brice Parker's most memorable parasport moment. That makes perfect sense for an athlete who describes himself as confident, optimistic and very goal-oriented.

A goalball player, Parker cherishes the medals he has won but also appreciates the acknowledgements he has received for being a role model for the next generation of athletes with vision loss. Mentorship comes naturally to him. "I love the atmosphere of elite competition and connecting with all types of athletes," he says.

Parker is a member of the Niagara Games' Athlete Council to help, in part, promote the sport of goalball to generate more participants. "Goalball is still an unknown sport to many," he shares. "I want to help grow experiences in parasports for everyone."

An Algonquin College graduate, now working as a registered massage therapist, Parker also loves hiking, baking and playing with his furry babies.

PARAGOLF

Adapted for athletes with a wide range of disabilities, paragolf is played on courses that accommodate diverse needs. Governed by the official rules of golf, paragolf ensures fair and competitive play across all disability categories and celebrates inclusivity and the relentless pursuit of excellence. Golf Ontario is the governing body for the sport in Ontario, in partnership with ParaGolf Ontario. Learn more at golfontario.ca or paragolfontario.ca.



On Course for Greatness

As a self-described “laid-back, keep-it-light, funny guy”, **Ethan Warcop** is pretty serious about his golf game. The 21-year-old from Mississauga is kicking off his fourth competition year in ParaGolf Ontario events this year which will include the Ontario Adaptive Open, Golf Canada All Abilities Open, ParaSport® Ontario’s Para Pro-Am and the 2025 Ontario Parasport Games.

While each of these events has had memorable moments for him, Warcop says it’s the Para Pro-Am that he really looks forward to every year. “It’s always a great experience playing alongside the tournament sponsors, where I can showcase my abilities while having fun, building connections, and helping grow the game!”

Growing the game is something else that Warcop is serious about. “My goal is to help gain enough attention to where paragolf will be added to the Paralympic program like other sports,” he shares. “I want to compete for my country in my sport on the largest stage and hopefully bring home a medal.”

Warcop maintains that the most rewarding part of competing in paragolf events is meeting new people and making friends who share similar challenges and interests. “On top of that,” he adds,

“I’ve had the incredible opportunity to work with companies I never thought I’d ever collaborate with. I’ve been fortunate to represent Titleist for the past few years, and I’m now working with TaylorMade.” It’s been a game-changer for him, he says. “It allows me to pinpoint my focus and enhance my game every day.”

Off the course, a quick trip to a cottage with friends to relax and unwind is something Warcop enjoys too. He works as a film production catering chef, “delivering the best on-set catering to all of the top film productions and events in the Greater Toronto Area,” he states without reservation.

NIAGARA 2025

SPORTS PROGRAM & PROFILES

PARA ICE HOCKEY

Para ice hockey follows the same rules and structure as ice hockey. Players balance on a sledge consisting of a metal frame, “bucket”, and two skate blades. Players manoeuvre using two specially-constructed sticks, each with a pick at one end for propulsion of the sled, and a blade at the other end. The Ontario Hockey Federation is the governing body for the sport, in partnership with the Ontario Sledge Hockey Association. [Learn more at ohf.on.ca](https://ohf.on.ca) or ontariosledge.com.



Team Canada's Sheena Darnley Advocates for All

As someone who has lived with a disability all of her life, Sheena Darnley is very familiar with the challenges that come with being recognized as equal to those without disabilities. “I want those who don't know much about parasport to understand that para-athletes are athletes first and foremost,” she says. “We are hardworking and deserving of all the same benefits that sport affords others.”



Darnley's hard work took her to Norway in 2024 for the World Challenge. She was a member of Canada's Women's Para Ice Hockey Team which returned home with a silver medal. “It was a great opportunity to perform on a global stage and showcase the skills that I've worked so hard to develop,” she shares.

Being named to that team stands as Darnley's greatest athletic accomplishment. Now 18, she's been part of the national team since she was 15 years old. She relishes the chance to play at a highly competitive level and make her country proud. “My number one goal is to become the best para-hockey player I can be. I'd love to compete at the Paralympic level but unfortunately there is a significant amount of gender inequality in my sport,” Darnley reveals. “The Paralympics needs to include a women's team.”

Darnley is a member of the Athlete Council for the 2025 Ontario Parasport Games, a platform she wants to use to “educate all athletes on the diversity of parasport and the joy it brings to countless communities. I want to help create an inclusive, fun environment that is engaging for everyone who is competing,” she adds.

Currently in her last year of high school at Notre Dame College School in Welland, Darnley plans to study accounting at Brock University with her intention of earning a Chartered Professional Accountant degree.

PARA SWIMMING

Para swimming includes 14 officially recognized classifications within the Canadian swimming system. Swimmers with physical disabilities compete in classes S1 to S10. Athletes with vision loss compete in classes S11, S12 or S13, and swimmers with an intellectual disability compete in the S14 class. Swim Ontario is the governing body for the sport in Ontario. Learn more at swimontario.com.



Ian Steadman is Doing It Differently

When Ian Steadman takes to the ice at the 2025 Ontario Parasport Games, he'll be competing in his seventh edition of these provincial games. His first was in Huntsville in 2012 where he competed as a swimmer and was an alternate for para ice hockey.

The multi-sport athlete from Campbellville, Ont., now 26, was introduced to sledge hockey when he was just five years old by a therapeutic recreation specialist at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital in Toronto. The centre offered "learn to play" sessions on Saturdays. Two years later, Steadman joined the Mississauga Cruisers and its Junior sledge hockey team and today stills plays with the club on its Intermediate team.

"I've participated in parasports since I was a toddler," says Steadman. "My family gave me opportunities to participate in horseback riding, water sit-skiing, downhill sit-skiing, para-nordic skiing, wheelchair tennis, paragolf, and recently, I tried wheelchair curling. I've competed in high school wrestling and varsity para-rowing too."

But it is para ice hockey and para swimming that has Steadman's full attention right now. One of his most memorable parasport moments came last year at the Ontario Swim Championships when he heard his name announced for breaking a long-standing record in the 100 breaststroke for his classification.

Steadman's long-term parasport goal is to achieve a gold medal at the Paralympic Games one day. But in the short-term, he's intent on breaking more provincial swimming records enroute to qualifying for the national swim championships.

When it comes to challenges associated with parasport, Steadman says that what he finds most difficult is getting people to understand that "parasports are equal to able-bodied sports and take the same, or maybe more, effort to compete at a high-performance level. We just might do sports differently."

He explains that para-athletes not being treated equal to able-bodied athletes can mean not receiving equal training times and the same training environment without restrictions. "There are often less opportunities for para-athletes," Steadman emphasizes. "Personally, I've had coaches who were not enthusiastic about coaching me because of my disability and some lacked knowledge in coaching a para-athlete. That often means lesser expectations for





us compared to able-bodied athletes. And in sports like para ice hockey where there is no classification, the least disabled players qualify for national teams more easily. That limits someone like me with cerebral palsy."

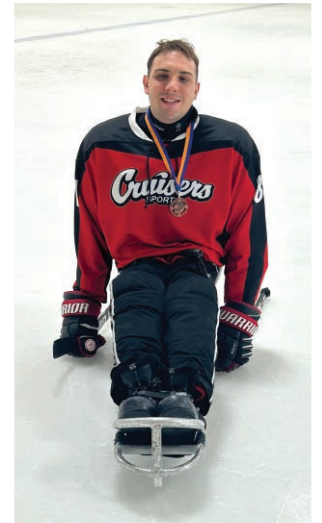
Despite the challenges, the rewards provided by parasport are plentiful for Steadman. "The most rewarding part about competing in parasports for me is participating with teammates... other athletes

with physical disabilities who understand each other. Making new friends is great," he adds, and "the encouragement I get and give is really rewarding too."

Sport has been the theme in Steadman's work and education worlds as well. For more than six years, he has worked as a Sports Monitor for the Town of Milton, overseeing and enforcing rules and safety protocols in recreational programs. This past year, he volunteered with a First Shift hockey program which introduces para ice hockey to physically disabled youths. He has a Sports Administration diploma from Niagara College, and is graduating with a Recreation and Leisure Studies degree from Brock University this year.

"For someone with a disability," Steadman starts, "I'd like them to know that there are many different parasports to participate in. For someone without a disability," he adds, "many parasports can be inclusive and fun for able-bodied athletes, such as sitting volleyball, para ice hockey, tennis and curling."

Steadman sums it up this way: "I would like people to know that parasports are parallel to able-bodied sports, just played differently. Like one of my favourite slogans – the famous Nike slogan "Just Do It" – as I just do everything, but I do it a little bit differently."



GOLF ONTARIO ANNOUNCES
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HOLE 18



CONGRATULATIONS
*to all those
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**2025 Ontario
 Parasport Games
 in Niagara**

*showcasing excellence
 from across Ontario!*



PARA ATHLETICS

Para athletics for athletes with physical, intellectual, or vision loss includes running, wheeling, throwing and jumping. Athletes are classified according to their level and type of disability. The rules of Paralympic track and field are almost identical to those for able-bodied athletes with some allowances to accommodate certain disabilities. For example, visually impaired runners compete with a guide runner. Athletics Ontario is the governing body in Ontario, in partnership with the Ontario Cerebral Palsy Sports Association, Ontario Para Network and the Ontario Blind Sports Association. [Learn more at athleticsontario.ca](https://athleticsontario.ca).



Tiffany Gaudette is Passionate About Parasport

Tiffany Gaudette's parasport goals have always focused on having fun doing what she loves to do. Her medals at the Canadian Track and Field Championships

in para-seated field events added to that fun before turning her passion to coaching boccia athletes toward their parasport goals.

Gaudette describes herself as "a compassionate individual who loves to give back to my community." She received her Child and Youth Worker Advance diploma with Honours from Humber College and volunteers with her hometown Cruisers Sports parasport club in Mississauga and the Ontario Cerebral Palsy Sports Association. She says winning gold "on home soil" in Mississauga at the Ontario Parasport Games is her most memorable parasport moment.

Her volunteering extends to the 2025 Ontario Parasport Games as a member of its Athlete Council. "Representation matters," she maintains, "so when I was asked to be an athlete advisor to these Games, it was an absolute 'yes'." The power of parasport brings opportunities to keep fit, heal, build life-skills and be part of an amazing community. I want all of that to be part of the athletes' games experience."

Away from the field of play, Gaudette loves to travel and is an avid reader and gamer.

SPORTS PROGRAM & PROFILES

WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

Just like its able-bodied counterpart, wheelchair tennis requires power, speed, finesse, precision and strategy. It can be played with and against stand-up players. There are no modifications to the court size, and the only rule change is the allowance for a double-bounce before playing the ball. The Ontario Para Network is the governing body in Ontario. [Learn more at onpara.ca](https://onpara.ca).



Coach Paul Rylett is a Niagara Legend

Respect from his players, shares Paul Rylett, was the greatest reward in his 36-year-tenure as coach of the Sport By Ability Niagara Thunderblades sledge hockey team, now the Brock-Niagara Thunderblades.

With recent health problems necessitating Rylett to step away from coaching, his son Kyle has stepped in to take the job. Rylett's foray into para ice hockey – known to many as sledge hockey – began in the late 1980s when he was accompanying his late son Kellan to sledge hockey games. Kellan didn't play, but was accompanying his friend Ryan, who has spina bifida, to sledge sessions.

Rylett was called on to drag hockey bags and lug 25-kg first-iteration sledges from storage to the ice. Then the Thunderblades needed a coach. Rylett sourced a coaching course in Hamilton and volunteered for the job. "I was really the chief cook, bottle washer and coach," he laughs.

Ever unheralded, but never unappreciated by his players and Ontario's para ice hockey community, Rylett says he found great joy in seeing his athletes band together as one. "I'm proud of what I accomplished and proud of my athletes," he assures. "They are the reason for it all," he adds.

Among a number of his players who progressed to national para ice hockey teams, like Christina Picton, Sheena Darnley and Jessie Gregory, was Paralympic bronze medalist Kevin Rempel who was introduced to para ice hockey by Rylett. "Playing for Paul is where I learned how to push myself on the ice and get to know the sledge hockey and disability community after my injury," Rempel explains.


"Paul has been relentless in promoting and growing the game of sledge hockey which inspired me to do the same when I retired from Paralympic sport," shares Rempel. "People like Paul make such a difference in their community and in the lives of so many. They create a ripple effect that lasts for years."




Photo Courtesy of Kevin Rempel

Coach Rylett (left) and Paralympic Para Ice Hockey player Kevin Rempel

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Niagara Para Games Legacy Fund

In association with the 2025 Ontario Parasport Games, Sport Niagara has proudly created the Niagara Para Games Legacy Fund in partnership with the Niagara Community Foundation. The Fund will be managed by a Board comprised of representatives from Niagara's disability sport community.

"Sport Niagara, as the legacy organization of the Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games, is excited to welcome Ontario's para-athletes to compete in Niagara," states Dan Kennedy, its Executive Director. "Our vision is to leave a lasting and sustained legacy for our disability sport community."

The Niagara Community Foundation (NCF), in operation for 25 years, is one of 200 community foundations across Canada under the umbrella of Community Foundations of Canada. NCF helps connect donors to causes, and charities to resources, through the creation of permanent endowment funds, like the Niagara Para Games Legacy Fund.

"This partnership with the NCF will ensure that the Niagara Para Games Legacy Fund is positioned for continued growth through investment and future contributions which is critical to the long-term success of the Fund and its programming," adds Kennedy.

"After the success of the 2022 Canada Summer Games, our region is extremely fortunate and excited to welcome the 2025 Ontario Parasport Games to Niagara," enthuses Bryan Rose, Executive Director of the Niagara Community Foundation. "NCF is honoured to extend our collaboration with Sport Niagara to the Niagara Para Games Legacy Fund. The endowment fund will create annualized revenue that will have an enduring impact by providing vital funding for adaptive sports here in Niagara for the generations ahead."

The Fund will be supported by surplus revenue generated from the Niagara 2025 Ontario Parasport Games and legacy donations.

"On behalf of the Ontario government, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Sport Niagara and the Niagara Community Foundation for sharing our commitment to growing opportunities for participation in sport for people of all abilities," said Neil Lumsden, Minister of Sport. "The creation of the Niagara Para Games Legacy Fund will ensure ongoing benefits from the 2025 Ontario Parasport Games for years to come."



About the Niagara Community Foundation

Established in 2000, the Niagara Community Foundation has raised over \$86 million and has granted over \$31 million to charities working in the arts, heritage, environment, social services, health, education and community development sectors. NCF turns intent into impact. **To learn more, or to donate to the Fund, visit niagaracommunityfoundation.org.**



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