



SUCCESSFUL SUMMER GAMES

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incredible 440 pounds for a combined Power Lifting total of 710 pounds. Along the way, Benson shattered three SONY records.

In a surprise and welcome announcement, SONY's president disclosed that the Summer Games will return to Hofstra in 2005.

"Never in the 35-year history of Special Olympics New York have we conducted our Summer Games at the same location for three consecutive years," Johnson said. "Since our first two years at Hofstra University have been an unmitigated success we're returning for the trifecta. The facilities at Hofstra are world class and the community of Long Island has truly opened its arms to our athletes. They can't wait to come back." ■ JF & JD

Long Island Athletes Stay Close to Home

The Long Island contingency of athletes didn't have very far to travel for Summer Games. In past years, those on the southernmost piece of New York State could spend seven or eight hours on a bus to get to Summer Games. Not this year.



SONY Staff / Jeff Foley

"It was great," said Benjamin Beavers of Amityville, who competed in three Track & Field events. "We took a 45-minute ride this morning to get to Mitchell Field."

There's a flip side to hosting Summer Games, though. Some host region athletes say that competing in their backyard adds a little additional pressure to perform well.

Other athletes are unfazed whether the track they run on is in Long Island or Buffalo: "I don't feel any pressure," said Long Island's Allison Coffin, who competed in four Track & Field events. "I just do my best and if someone else is having a hard time, I cheer them on."

Pressure or no pressure, Beavers and Coffin are both excited that the Summer Games will return to their home in 2005.

"It'll make me work hard so that I can come back to this wonderful place and represent Long Island to the fullest," Beavers said.

"I can't wait," Coffin said. "I love it." ■ JF

A Laugh a Lap Leads to Gold

David Crandall got the Summer Games started in style. The Windsor resident pulled away from the field in the 5,000-meter race at Mitchell Field – the event took place at 8 a.m. and was the first competition of the Summer Games – and he smiled while he did it.

"We keep it light," said Jeanne Johnson, Crandall's long distance coach, who joked with Crandall on each of his 13 laps. Sometimes he shot a one-liner back at her, and other times he just threw his hands in the air and laughed. "We love for him to have fun."

Don't let Crandall's smiles or laughter fool you, though: the Windsor resident is fast. He used his long legs to clock 20 minutes and 18 seconds, which was good for the gold medal.

"I get psyched up when I run and I think about how much fun it would be to win," said Crandall, who trains as much as 20 miles per week. He also is a BOCES student and he works. "When I crossed the finish line, I knew I'd achieved my goal and helped my team." ■ JF



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Syracuse Athletes Set the Bar for Special Olympics

Don't let Benson Simpson's size fool you. The 5-foot-2 Special Olympics athlete from Syracuse packs a lot of power into his 146 pounds.

In fact, at SONY's 2004 Summer Games, Simpson smashed three state-wide Power Lifting records.

On June 18, Simpson bench pressed 270 pounds, shattering SONY's old record by 50 pounds. Then, on June 19, Benson dead lifted 440 pounds, exceeding the old record by 40 pounds. His combined total of 710 pounds is 90 pounds over the former mark. The old records were set in 1999. ■ JD

New Initiative Helps Athletes Get the Right Fit

As Dr. Karen Langone says, Fit Feet are fleet feet. "Having shoes that are the right size, wearing the correct socks for athletic competition, wearing shoes that are good for sports – these all should translate to a stronger performance on the field," said Dr. Langone, who is one of the coordinators of Fit Feet, a Healthy Athletes initiative that made its New York State debut at the Summer Games.

The program's objective is to provide high quality foot care for all Special Olympics athletes.

Fit Feet was a hot spot at Olympic Village. The Fit Feet crew consisted of about five doctors and a half-dozen podiatry students. Every athlete that visited – dozens came by and removed their sneakers – received a screening complete with a dermatological exam, an orthopedic exam and a computerized test that measured gait, pressure points, etc.

"We plan to be involved with Special Olympics for a long time," Dr. Langone said. "Our hope is that we can collect data that will attract a corporation to step in and help Special Olympics athletes receive the kind of high quality foot care so they can compete to the best of their ability." ■ JF



SONY Staff / Doreen Hand