

Penn State at the Paralympics

PSU athlete is 'a winner' at more than just sports

By Chuck Sypula

"How'd she do?" the excited voice came across loud and remarkably clear via a cell phone from half a world away.

The "she" was Maggie Redden, the former Penn State Ability Athletics program athlete representing the United States and Penn State while competing on the world stage at the recent Paralympic Games held in Beijing.

I hesitated before answering, taking time to think through what initially appeared to be a rather simple question.

I had traveled to the Games as a fan of Redden's, as a friend of her coach, Teri Jordan, and as the founder of the Lou Lamie Endowment Fund.

The fund supports the PSU Ability Athletics program for disabled PSU students and honors Lou Lamie, the 1950-51 PSU basketball team captain, the one-time PSU basketball career scoring record holder and my uncle.

He died an untimely death in 1986.

An odd association, Lamie and Redden, to be sure.

Two generations apart and as different from each other as are the eras in which they grew up, the cultures from which they came and the sports to which they were committed, Lamie and Redden are nonetheless connected by two common links: Penn State athletics and a character and persona that are truly inspirational.

While young men openly and joyously seek out and most often successfully find their life heroes, grown men do so quietly and longingly and most often with far less success.

I have been fortunate to have found two to emulate, two to look up to in my life.

Or perhaps it was they who have found me.

Like iconic bookends, the two of them sit to either side of my life, a hero and heroine in the purest sense of those terms; Lou, in my youth, as a mentor and father figure, Maggie, in my later life, as a precocious teacher far ahead of her years.

Both are heroic figures to me for the courageous way in which they dealt with adversity in their lives.

Born in India, Maggie Redden was stricken with polio as an infant and was placed in the country's vast adoption system spending the first two years of her life in numerous Indian orphanages.

It was in a Calcutta orphanage where she was discovered by Dr. Patricia Redden, her adoptive mother and currently a professor at St. Peter's College in New Jersey. Redden, a single mother, would later magnanimously adopt a second child from an Indian orphanage,



Photos for the CDT/Chuck Sypula

Maggie Redden, an athlete in the Penn State Ability Athletics program, represented the United States at the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing as a wheelchair athlete in the 100 and 200 meter sprints and as an alternate in the 400 and 4 x 100 meter relay. Below: Redden competes in the Paralympic Games at the "Bird's Nest" National Stadium in Beijing.



Patricia Redden recalls with understandable emotion how upon seeing Maggie's photo for the very first time that she immediately knew that "Maggie was my daughter."

And today, as well, upon meeting the young adult Maggie Redden for the first time, one is similarly drawn to her.

Her incandescent eyes, her glimmering smile both belie her plight as does her vibrancy, her enthusi-

She is an adaptive ski instructor for disabled skiers and a scuba diver.

She was a finalist in the Miss New Jersey pageant.

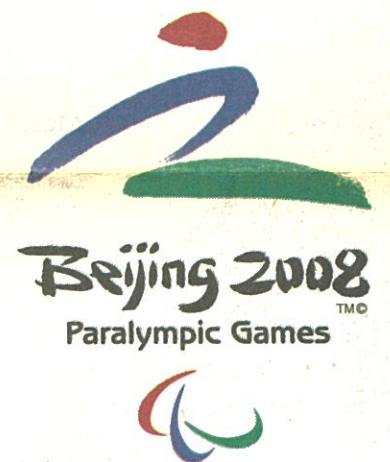
She was a torch bearer carrying the Paralympic torch through New York City on its way to the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens.

She has been a tireless worker and fundraiser for Penn State's nationally recognized Dance Marathon where, not surprisingly,

She has given both her time and her considerable energy as a volunteer in orphanages across Mexico during her spring break in both her sophomore and senior years.

And now, at the age of 21, Maggie Redden is a Paralympian representing her country as a wheelchair athlete in the 100 and 200 meter sprints and as an alternate in the 400 and 4 x 100 meter relay against the best disabled athletes on the planet.

Her heat times at the Games in



National Stadium were competitive and world class.

Maggie Redden raced to a time of 19.12 in the 100 meters and 35.28 in the 200 meters and while both times were only slightly off from her best career marks and just barely missed qualifying her for the event finals, they were, nonetheless, remarkable.

So as to the question before me by the caller and its answer that I had been pondering, I know the caller could sense the smile on my face when I repeated the question pensively and responded quite simply.

"How'd she do, you ask?"

"Maggie is a winner."

Chuck Sypula, of St. Michaels, Md., is founder of the Lou Lamie Endowment Fund, a Penn State