

## **Webinar with Johanne Daly, July 16, 2008**

So far we have met some pretty amazing athletes, and Johanne is no exception. On July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008 we held another chat session as part of our “Feel the Rush” series of webinars with athletes who have a variety of disabilities, and who have or are going to compete in the Paralympics.

Johanne Daly, who competes in both adapted sailing and skiing led an animated discussion about how she was introduced to adapted sports and her dream of going to the Paralympics! But I think it was the story of her trip to China, and the opportunity to carry the Olympic torch this year, that captivated our members the most.

Here are some highlights from our chat with Johanne....

**Kristina:** Welcome to Ability Online Johanne.

**Johanne:** Hi to all.

**Danielle:** Do you have any stories to tell about the Olympic torch?

**Johanne:** Yes indeed I do have a special story about the Olympic torch. I recently went to China –in fact I was selected among 25 Canadians to carry the torch in Shanghai.

**Danielle:** Cool – you actually carried it?

**Johanne:** Yes I did,

**Danielle:** Was it hot?

**Johanne:** the torch is not hot unless you touch the top part, below the mark where you shouldn't put your hands.

**Danielle:** Was it heavy?

**Johanne:** Surprisingly the torch is a bit heavy. The weight must be around 6 to 7 pounds.

**Ward:** How far did you carry the torch?

**Johanne:** I was supposed to carry the torch 500 meters. But because of the earthquake and the people who died from it they had to postpone the relay for 4 days. For a moment we didn't know if we would be able to carry the torch – so I did 250 meters instead, in my wheelchair.

**Krystian:** You rock and you are an inspiration to Ability Online.

**Ward:** How did you find the air pollution in the area?

**Johanne:** Pollution is a big problem there though I was surprised because I do suffer from asthma and didn't have to take any puffs of my medication. I was really surprised. You could see the smog all day above us.

**Kristina:** what thing do you like best in skiing?

**Johanne:** Racing for sure. Though working hard is part of the training, I like to work hard to see my improvements.

**Kristina:** How long have you been skiing?

**Johanne:** I was skiing before an accident I had while I was working, that changed my life. I was a ski patrol, so you can say I was a good skier with a great caliber. After my accident I was invited by our past lieutenant governor, who was handicapped, to ski with her.

**Kristina:** That is good for you Johanne.

**Johanne:** So I learned to ski the adapted way, and managed to learn it fast. It took me a full week to learn about sitski.

**Ward:** Many years ago I wanted to get into the ski patrol for my cross country, but that was when I was in high school.

**Johanne:** I think my motions as a car mechanic helped me a lot. I was a car mechanic for 14 years.

**Ward:** How many years have you been skiing now?

**Johanne:** In a sitski, 3 years so far. I started with a 2 ski system then changed it last winter for a monoski – not the same at all! This machine can get to speeds of 100 kms per hour.

**Ward and Michelle:** Wow –that is fast!

**Johanne:** The winters were not long enough for me so I was searching for another sport to practice during summer time, I searched on the paralympic site and I discovered adapted sailing.

**Ward:** So you do sailing in the summer months and skiing in the winters?

**Johanne:** Yes. I went west 3 times to learn to ski more with the Canadian Association for disabled skiing, and went 3 times to BC. Nice mountains out there.

**Stacey:** I would go but I get lost easily!

**Johanne:** We are going again to BC next winter to train in the place where Nancy Green is.

**Krystian:** Cool, I live in BC, it's a nice place to live.

**Ward:** How long have you been skiing competitively?

**Johanne:** I started to learn to ski in a week with the CADS program (Canadian Association for Disabled Skiing). Then learning fast, I was invited to try a race at the end of the week. Surprisingly I finished first and got my first gold medal.

**Johanne:** Searching for an adapted sport I also looked at horseback riding, because my sister is also competing in dressage. Dressage is where the rider gets the horse to do figures, or the horse can also dance to music. I went to Toronto to see the special program.

**Ward:** the CARD program?

**Ward:** Were you injured in a car accident?

**Johanne:** No, working on the Premier's limousine. I was so nervous that while pulling my toolbox, my foot got under it and was crushed.

**Ward:** Ouch!

**Stacey:** Yikes!

**Johanne:** I was a car mechanic and was also doing car chronicles in TV, radio and magazines.

**Ward:** Ok.

**Johanne:** So my foot being crushed, it made me lose my left Achilles. So since then, I went through 5 surgeries and still don't know if I'll be losing my left foot.

**Ward:** That's not good.

**Krystian:** I am sorry to hear you hurt yourself Johanne.

**Ward:** Will this be your first Olympic games?

**Johanne:** I am not an Olympic athlete yet, though I am working to get there and be recognized. That is why I am doing 2 sports. One of them will get me there, if not both!

**Ward:** So you will not be in the games this year then?

**Johanne:** Not this year, sad about that. It will be though the thing to come. Maybe I have a good chance for the 2012 summer games in sailing.

**Ward:** Do you have many sponsors yet?

**Johanne:** I started to get sponsors three years ago, for sure they are not the biggest ones. It will come though. I'm getting myself discovered by my sponsors and the amounts are getting bigger every year. In sailing though I am about to get on the Provincial team.

**Krystian:** I wish we could give you money as a sponsor.

**Johanne:** You are great. I am supposed to be on tv soon, in a sports channel so I am getting known by a lot of people. The fact that I went to Shanghai to carry the Olympic torch will be helping me.

**Ward:** what kind of sail boat do you use?

**Johanne:** I'm racing with a Martin 16. Is a 17 foot long boat specifically adapted. Then there is the 2.4 m – these are accepted in the Paralympics.

**Ward:** Are you in the boat by yourself or do you have a partner with you?

**Joahne:** this is a single boat. From last year I was sailing with a trainer because I was in the silver fleet. This week though, my coaches let me out on the water alone so I think I could fit in the gold fleet now.

**Johanne:** the funniest thing happened to me.

**Ashley:** what happened?

I was starting as a solo and 2 things broke. No more shifter and then the rudder failed. So I improvised as a mechanic - searching for a nut.

**Ward:** The rudder failed? That would make it impossible for you to steer the boat then!

**Johanne:** Exactly what happened. By chance our coaches were out on the water in a motor boat and they helped me otherwise I wouldn't have gotten too far. It was so windy that the wind would have helped me get far away from the point.

**Michelle:** How did the rudder get damaged?

**Johanne:**The rudder got out from the water because a pin broke.

**Ward:** Which event do you enjoy most – sailing or skiing?

**Johanne:** Both sports. It is so different. I'll be racing for "coup du Quebec" in 2 weekends to come, then I'll be going to Kingston Ontario, then to the USA and then the big Mobility Cup. Sam Sullivan, ex mayor of Vancouver created this event. There will be sailors from USA, Mexico, England, New Zealand, and all across Canada.

**Krystian:** Cool!

**Johanne:** I just missed the podium last year.

**Michelle:** Is this an annual event?

**Johanne:** This is an annual event that travels in Canada, and it will be in Montreal this year.

**Krystian:** I have a dream, of opening my own summer camp, where you stay for 2 weeks and get healthy, and do sports and have fun.

**Johanne:** If this is your dream, just go for it.

**Ward:** You seem to get around the country then?

**Johanne:** Yes exactly, traveling a lot, and meeting many people.

**Ward:** That's always fun to do and you get to see more of the country then

**Michelle:** Thank you so much Johanne for the wonderful stories. I know I am inspired and the members who couldn't be on tonight because of storms in their area will enjoy reading the notes. We will be cheering you on in the days to come.

**Johanne:** Thanks for inviting me, it was cool.

**Krystian:** I like these chats so much.

**Ward:** I wish you all the luck in your activities.

**Joahne:** Thanks for your support. The last thing I would like to add is that never limit yourself –go for it!

**Ward:** Thank you Johanne for being part of our chat here on Ability Online I am sure it will encourage more people to take up sports and get into the competitive parts of them.