

For Immediate Release
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China's Paralympic Sailors to Compete 2007 Clagett Regatta

NEWPORT, R.I. (August 24, 2007) – Seven Chinese athletes will be on the waters off Newport when competition gets underway next week at the fifth annual C. Thomas Clagett Jr. Memorial Regatta. Hosted by Sail Newport, Rhode Island's Public Sailing Center, racing takes place August 28-30, 2007, in the three classes chosen for the 2008 Paralympic Games: the single-person 2.4 Metre, two-person SKUD-18, and three-person Sonar. China has entered two boats in the 2.4 Metre class and one each in the SKUD-18 and Sonar.

"China will not only host the 2008 Paralympic Games next September, but also have athletes competing in the sailing events for the first time," said Judy McLennan, founder of The Clagett Regatta. "That they have chosen to send a delegation to Newport that includes coaches and a translator can be seen as an indication of their all out effort to perfect their sailing performance."

Chinese athletes first competed in the Paralympic Games at Barcelona in 1992, in sports such as Athletics, Swimming and Table Tennis, and finished as the 12th nation overall in the number of medals won. Over the following five Paralympic Games they steamrolled the competition. At the 2004 Athens Paralympics, China won a staggering 141 medals to place first overall in the medal wars out of the 75 participating nations; Great Britain's haul of 94 medals and the U.S.A.'s collection of 88 placed those countries second and third, respectively.

CLINIC OFFERS STRATEGY AND TIPS - Of the dozen or so prominent competitions held annually in the U.S.A. for sailors with disabilities, The Clagett Regatta has led the way in teaching developing sailors the nuances of the game. The event is once again offering sailors a two-day clinic (August 26-27) before the three days of racing begins in earnest on August 28. Geared specifically to U.S. sailors, the clinic is a stepping-stone to improve the skills of veteran sailors, build confidence in new participants, and ultimately bring about a heightened level of competition.

This year U.S. sailors will have an added incentive to soak up advice and tips during the clinic as

once racing begins they will come face-to-face with not only China's Paralympic Sailing Team but also the 2004 Sonar Paralympic Gold Medallists from Israel, Dror Cohen and Efrati Arnon with their new teammate Rafael Levi. Also on the starting line will be a number of top-ranked Americans who are using The Clagett to prepare for the year's two most important disabled sailing events – the IFDS (International Association for Disabled Sailing) World Championship and the U.S. Paralympic Team Trials-Sailing.

The world championship (scheduled for September in Rochester, N.Y.) is the second of three championships where American sailors can compete to qualify a berth to the 2008 Paralympic Games in the SKUD-18 and Sonar classes (the 2.4 Metre berth was qualified in 2006). The Trials (October 3-14, 2007, in Newport, R.I.) will determine the actual sailors who represent the U.S.A. in those berths. With the 2007 Clagett Regatta being planned to replicate, as closely as possible, the format of the Trials, U.S. sailors with Paralympic aspirations will get a credible warm-up and performance benchmark as the same race management team runs both events on Narragansett Bay.

CALL IN THE MARINES - While competitors at The Clagett are striving for success on the water, they will receive assistance from a group of enlisted Marines who are also on the path to excellence through the Broadened Opportunity for Officer Selection and Training (BOOST) program operated from the Naval Education Training Center in Newport, R.I. The BOOST program provides a 10-month academic preparatory course for eligible enlisted Marines seeking a college education and military commission. BOOST students will assist the competitors onshore with transferring from wheelchairs to their boats; on-the-water they will man the safety boats and act as rescue swimmers should the need arise. This is the second year that students from the BOOST program have volunteered to support the regatta which honors the late Tom Clagett (1916-2001), a U.S. Navy World War II veteran who learned to sail on the Chesapeake Bay.

Racing will take place between Rose and Goat Islands in the East Passage of Rhode Island Sound. Spectators will be able to view the action from Goat Island or the northern tip of Fort Adams.

For additional information on the clinic and regatta, along with results and photos as they become available, please visit www.ussailing.net/Clagett/

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