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WHEELCHAIR
BASKETBALL
CANADA

For Immediate Release

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Team Canada qualifies for 2010 Wheelchair Basketball World Championships

Canada places 2nd in Americas Cup Qualifier in Richmond BC

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(Richmond, BC) – A decades worth of adversary between two international wheelchair basketball powerhouses reached a fever pitch on Saturday when Canada and the USA met in the championship game of the Americas Cup held August 24 – 29, 2009 in Richmond BC. Team Canada took home second place in the gold medal match up Saturday following defeats of Columbia, Argentina and Mexico in earlier round robin match-ups and Jamaica and Brazil in the quarter and semi-finals. Despite a hard fought battle, Team Canada lost to Team USA 69-79.

Canada and USA both carried undefeated records (5-0) into the final.

Team Canada dominated the first half of play, leading 41-34, with Joey Johnson (Winnipeg, MB), Adam Lancia (Toronto, ON) and Dave Durepos (Fredericton, NB) contributing 10, 8 and 7 points respectively. The second half of the game saw Team USA fight back hard, sinking an impressive 18 points in the third to narrow Canada's lead to two at 54-52 and another 27 points in the last ten minutes to finish the tournament in first place.

High scorers for Team USA were Jason Nelms, Jeremy Lade, Paul Schulte and Nate Hinze with 18, 18, 11 and 10. Out of Team USA's total score 61 out of 79 points were scored off the bench. Lancia sunk 14 points for Canada, while Johnson, Richard Peters (Vancouver, BC), Durepos and Bo Hedges (Vancouver, BC) added 11, 11 and 10 each.

"We just did our thing and I just happened to be the one in the position to shoot it and the ball went in," said high scorer Jason Nelms. "We were cold in the beginning but we just stayed with it and our confidence definitely went up when our shots started falling in the second half. The world are yet a year away but hopefully we can build on the momentum and train even harder now."

Their silver medal finish means Canada will be seeded well in the 12 team World Championships next summer.

“We have to concentrate on the positive today,” said Team Canada head coach Jerry Tonello. “We’ve qualified for the World Championship in Birmingham.”

When asked about the game against the USA, he said, “we played against a team of great athletes, just as we did when we met them last year in Beijing. There were times in the game when they got a run on us and we didn’t have an answer for them and that is what killed us. More than anything, we weren’t able to keep up with our offence today.”

“Even though we’ve had some retirements and lost some key players, we’re looking to rebuild... and we see some promise.”

The game concludes a weeklong tournament at the Richmond Olympic Oval in which the top three teams earned a spot at next year’s World Championships in Birmingham, England.

Score at the end of each quarter:

1st quarter: 18-8 (Canada)

2nd quarter: 23-26 (USA)

3rd quarter: 13-18 (USA)

4th quarter: 15-27 (Canada)

Final Score: 69-79 (USA)

In a thrilling Bronze medal game between Mexico and Brazil, favourites Brazil led until the end of the last quarter when leading scorer Raul Ortega evened the game at 50-50. Mexico continued to apply the pressure eventually taking the lead with only three minutes of play left in the fourth quarter. Fighting to the end Brazil scored in the last second ending the game 70 – 71 to Mexico.

“Last time we were in the world championships was in 1998. Now after 12 years we have the opportunity again.” Sergio Durand, team manager. “I don’t have enough words to say how pleased I am.”

“We had the motivation and mindset. That was the key to our winning” Aaron Davilla, head coach added

For more information visit www.wheelchairbasketball.ca

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