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**State Track Meets in Early May Highlight Growth in Wheelchair Division**

*Georgia High School Association Event Features Wheelchair Events: Girls May 2-3,  
Boys May 8-10*

ATLANTA, APRIL 28, 2008 – Athletes from across Georgia will compete in wheelchair track and field events over two weekends in early May at the Georgia High School Association’s State Track Meets.

The wheelchair track and field events – girls on May 2-3 in Albany and boys on May 8-10 in Jefferson – are the sixth year of the statewide meets and part of a growing component of the GHSA track and field season. Athletes can join their high school teams to compete in four events – two shot put competitions and 200- and 800-meter races. The American Association of adaptedSPORTS™ Programs provides training to high school coaches and provides oversight of the wheelchair competitions.

“We are excited to see the growth in interest in this division,” says Bev Vaughn, executive director of AAASP. “This year will see a marked increase in the number of participants and the largest we’ve seen to date. We see this as a sign that the collective efforts of GHSA and AAASP to expose coaches and high school athletes with disabilities to this exciting sport are working.”

AAASP co-founder Tommie Storms said a recent addition to the association’s staff has also played a role in the expansion of the group’s programs.

“The addition of Scot Hollonbeck, a former Paralympian and celebrated wheelchair racer, to the AAASP staff has also made a big difference,” Storms says. “Coaches have really responded to the energy and confidence he’s brought to the process of recruiting and training athletes with disabilities.”

The wheelchair competitions highlight the partnership between AAASP and GHSA as well as the state’s distinction as the first to provide interscholastic adapted athletics through a dual-governing partnership. Struck in 2001, the partnership designates AAASP as the governing body and athletic association for sports programs serving students with physical disabilities in grades one through 12.

“The athletes have spent a lot of time and energy preparing for this and it’s really the highlight of their season,” says Gary Phillips, GHSA’s assistant executive director who also oversees track programs. “They will see competitors from around the state and they will get a better feel for where they are in their athletic abilities. They can measure themselves against everyone else. Seeing that coming about is what’s fun for me.”

AAASP also works alongside the Georgia Department of Education to provide equitable access to interscholastic athletics for students with physical or visual impairments and fully engage those students in adapted athletics.

Wheelchair track and field is one of six sports offered by AAASP. Others include handball (formerly indoor wheelchair soccer), basketball, power soccer, football and beep baseball. Teams are structured to accommodate several physical disability groups, allowing for a maximum number of participants, and each sport is an adaptation of existing adult sports governed by national organizations.

Founded in 1996, the award-winning AAASP is a national organization based in Atlanta addressing the need for standardized interscholastic adapted sports. AAASP is the nation’s first interscholastic athletic association to operate exclusively for students with physical or visual impairments who attend grades one through 12.

Access to athletics by those with disabilities is an ever-growing area of interest and concern for the nation’s schools and the athletic associations that govern statewide competition. Attention and interest was spurred recently by several federal rulings and the passage of the nation’s first disability equity law in athletics and physical education in Maryland on April 7. For additional details, go to [www.adaptedsports.org](http://www.adaptedsports.org).

*Please note: Coaches and area coordinators are also available for interviews. Photos from the competitions will be available for publication after the events.*

## **EVENT DETAILS**

**WHAT:** AAASP Wheelchair Track and Field Meet – Girls

**WHERE:** Hugh Mills Stadium, 601 South Van Buren St., Albany, GA

**WHEN:** May 2 at 10 a.m. (shot put), May 3 at 2:30 p.m. (800 meters), 3:35 p.m. (200 meters)

**WHAT:** AAASP Wheelchair Track and Field Meet – Boys

**WHERE:** Memorial Stadium, 127 Memorial Drive, Jefferson, GA

**WHEN:** May 8 at 4 p.m. (shot put), May 10 at 2:55 p.m. (800 meters), 4:05 p.m. (200 meters)

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