

## Tampa Athlete Rings Up Paralympic Trifecta

It's nice to know that hard work really does pay off. Tampa athlete and CAF grant recipient Robyn Stawski has turned two years of intensive training into a dream trip to Beijing in September, where she will compete in the 2008 Paralympic Games as a member of the US Team.

Robyn qualified to compete for medals in three events this fall – the shot put on Sept. 11 (Day 5 of the competition) and in the Javelin and Discus on Sept. 14 (Day 8).

"It was quite an experience, that's for sure," she said after returning from an 11-day whirlwind trip to the Endeavor Games in Oklahoma in early June, followed by the 2008 US Paralympic Track and Field Team Trials in Phoenix last week. "I've been working really hard and giving it everything I've got . . . and with the help of my new coach, I've been able to really dedicate myself and adapted my workouts, and it's paying off."



Not only did she exceed the Elite US Standard in all three events, she set two new American records, in the women's F33 shot put with a throw of 5.67m (previous 5.45m), and the women's F33 discus with 12.93m (previous 11.78m).

Since last summer's Para Pan American Games in Brazil, Stawski has been ranked in the top three in the world in all three events in her women's Field 33 classification. That designation applies to athletes who have cerebral palsy with functional abilities similar to hers. Stawski was born with Spastic Diplegia Cerebral Palsy, which affects her mobility, balance and the use of all four limbs, particularly her legs. She uses an anchored throwing chair for all her events, designed specifically for her by the University of South Florida's College of Engineering.

Her next stop? The Canadian Nationals July 1-6 to gain some international experience, then to Colorado Springs and the national Olympic Training Center Aug. 21 for last-minute training and processing prior to flying to Beijing by way of Okinawa, Japan.

"It's all going so fast," she said last week, "but it's definitely exciting."

Over 4,000 elite athletes with a physical disability from around the world are expected to compete in the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing, China, September 6-17. The U.S. will field a team of 206 athletes who will compete in 18 sports.