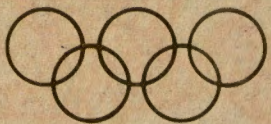


SPORTS

OLYMPIC REVIEW



Snow takes silver in LA Exhibition event makes strong statement

by **Brett Voss**

Shorthorn Staff

Carl Lewis, Evelyn Ashford, Greg Louganis and Mary Lou Retton: names etched in gold, immortalized.

But one performance in the XXIII Summer Olympics that did not capture a gold will not soon be forgotten by those who witnessed it.

He rolled onto the Los Angeles Coliseum track early Saturday morning, before the glittering stars pulled on their cleats and most of America turned on the tube. Appearing loose and relaxed, he smiled broadly during warm-up laps before a crowd of more than 65,000.

When the starter called the athletes to the line for the 1,500-meter race, it was obvious these athletes were different. In lane 5, number 1003 taped across his shins, sat Randy Snow, wheelchair racer.

"I had goose-bumps about this high," Snow, holding this right palm about four inches over his left arm, said recently. "For all of those people to be standing and cheering for us like that — because we're athletes — it was just fantastic."

In dramatic fashion, Snow came out of the final turn in seventh and sprinted to a second-place finish in 4:00.02. Paul Van Winkel of Belgium took the gold, outracing an international field of 16, while Andre Viger of Canada captured the bronze.

"I think the most we've ever raced in front of was about 8,000 at our trials in New York. So many times we have to race in parking lots or wherever people let us. That was great," said Snow, referring to the memory of Coliseum fans standing and

cheering.

Snow, who lost the use of his legs nine years ago when a bale of hay fell on him, believes the event proved a lot of things to a lot of people.

"We were there to compete," he said. "But we were also there to educate. I know we all have our own egos to satisfy, but the most important thing is to show people that we are athletes, too.

"Just because our legs don't work doesn't mean we can't contribute. And just because society has placed a stereotype on disabled people doesn't mean we have to obey that stereotype."

Snow, who lives in Houston when not attending UTA, was congratulated after the race by sprinter Carl Lewis.

"He just said 'Go get 'em, man,'" Snow said. "I used to live in Houston and always tried to work out at U of H. Coach (Tom) Tellez never would let me on the track a minute early. I think Carl recognized me."

Tellez trains Olympians Carl and Carol Lewis as well as the University of Houston track team.

"Even though he was skeptical at first, Tellez has been a big help, letting us on the track at all," said Snow. "I think his view of us has changed since he realizes we are serious athletes. At first, he looked at us and probably thought, 'What are those wheelchair people doing here? Get 'em out of here.'

"But he's opened the track to us, not until 4:45 to the minute. Now maybe he'll let me on a minute or two early."



File photo

Randy Snow