



Tuesday, October 12, 2004

## Alumna wins two medals at Athens Paralympic Games

By **Dawn Pauli**, contributing writer

Oakland alumna and champion swimmer Cheryl Angelelli-Kornoelje, CAS '93, returned from the Paralympics in Athens, Greece, as Michigan's most decorated athlete, sporting two bronze medals.

"It was a great sense of relief, knowing I had something I could hold in my hand to justify all the hard work and sacrifice for all those years," she said.

On the podium, she didn't take her eyes off the American flag that was being raised in her honor. "It was an amazing, tremendous feeling," she said.

The Paralympic Games are the second largest sporting event in the world and follow the Olympic Games in the host city. The multi-sport competition showcases the talents and abilities of the world's most elite athletes with physical disabilities. More than 4,000 athletes representing more than 140 countries competed in the **Athens Paralympic Games**.

Angelelli-Kornoelje won a bronze medal in the women's 200-meter freestyle, finishing in a time of 3:51.41. She also was a member of the bronze medal-winning women's 4 x 50 meter freestyle relay, finishing in 3:12.80. Additionally, she finished fourth in the 50-meter freestyle, fourth in the 100-meter freestyle and fifth as the anchor of the women's 4 x 50 meter medley relay.

Now that she's met her Paralympic goal, Angelelli-Kornoelje is working on another – to raise awareness of the Paralympic games.

Angelelli-Kornoelje is the subject of a documentary that will trace her steps as she prepared and competed in the Athens games. The film is being produced in partnership with the Athletes with Disabilities Hall of Fame and the Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan. PBS is among those interested in broadcasting the documentary nationally.

"I wanted to get involved and get the ball rolling to bring about greater awareness about athletes with disabilities," she said. "We're one of the only countries that doesn't televise the Paralympics. I didn't know about the Paralympics until I was in my late 20s, and I was hurt when I was 14."

Angelelli began competitive swimming when she was 8 years old. A devastating diving accident ended her swimming career and left her a quadriplegic.

She competed in the 2000 Sydney, Australia, Paralympics and finished sixth. Arriving at the Athens games, she was ranked second in the world and was a medal favorite.

"It was different going into Sydney, I had no expectations and I was a long shot for a medal, but I knew the experience would be good," she said. "There was a lot more expectation and pressure going into this one."

Next week, she will return to the White House with members of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Teams to meet with President Bush. After the 2000 games, she had the opportunity to meet President Clinton.

It's too soon to say if there will be a third Paralympic Games in Angelelli-Kornoelje's future. She's trained intensely since January without a break, so she plans to take time and "sit on the couch."

"I knew this was my best and last chance of winning a medal. I was ready to retire," she said. "But on that medal stand, in a moment of insanity, I thought, Beijing isn't that far away. I could have signed retirement papers, but passed on it."

**SUMMARY**

Oakland alumna and champion swimmer Cheryl Angelelli-Kornoelje, CAS '93, returned from the Paralympics in Athens, Greece, as Michigan's most decorated athlete, sporting two bronze medals. The Paralympic Games are the second largest sporting event in the world and follow the Olympic Games in the host city. The multi-sport competition showcases the talents and abilities of the world's most elite athletes with physical disabilities. More than 4,000 athletes representing more than 140 countries competed in the Athens Paralympic Games.

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