



Special Olympics

Great Britain

Year-round sports training and competition for people with learning disabilities

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Interviews & Photos Available Sat Jan 31: 4pm-6pm

Park Inn Hotel Heathrow www.2009worldgames.org

**Special Olympics Great Britain
World Winter Games Ski Team Depart 1st February for
World Winter Games Boise, Idaho, USA, 7-13 February
Skiers to Represent Great Britain vs 100 Countries**

13 January 2009 - London -- This winter, 3000 athletes from 100 countries will travel to Boise, Idaho to compete at **Special Olympics World Winter Games, 7-13 February 2009**. **Special Olympics Great Britain (SOGB)** is proud to be sending a delegation of ten learning disabled athletes joined by Minister of Disabled People, Jonathan Shaw MP. **The athletes will depart from Heathrow Airport the morning of Sunday, 1st February.**

The SOGB World Winter Games team is made up of representatives from 4 of the 19 different SOGB regions: West Midlands, South Eastern, Wales, Lothian. The team members qualified to race on an international stage after achieving some of the top finishes at the SOGB National Championships in Pila, Italy in the Aosta Valley Region of Italy at 1800m last year.

The team is generously sponsored by Virgin Atlantic, Park Inn Heathrow, Squire Foundation, The Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons, White Mountain, Zurich Insurance, Helly Hansen and Pilaski.

According to eight-time British Ski Champion/and **BBC's *Ski Sunday's* Graham Bell**, "I know how much hard work goes into making a skier the best he or she can be. These ten athletes have competed and trained across the country and in Italy. They are the best of our best learning disabled skiers and I am thrilled to know them and be an **Ambassador** for Special Olympics Great Britain."

During their time in Idaho, the athletes will compete in three different Alpine Skiing disciplines - Super Giant Slalom, Giant Slalom, Slalom, in Advanced, Intermediate and Novice levels. The Alpine Skiing events will be held at Bogus Basin, the closest ski resort to Boise.

According to **British Olympic skier Chemmy Alcott**: "As an Olympian, I respect the amount of training, dedication and just plain hard work the Special Olympics athletes put into their athletic performance. It's exciting to think that they will get to know the thrill of competition on a World stage. I am honoured to be a fan!"

The Honorary Board of Directors for the games includes celebrities such as **Clint Eastwood, Demi Moore** and **Ashton Kutcher**, singer **David Crosby, Mariel Hemingway**, and **Picabo Street**. Numerous former and current Olympians are also expected to make the trip to Idaho to lend their support and cheer on the athletes. Among the Ski Ambassadors for the 2009 Games are two-time World Cup moguls champ **Jeremy Bloom** and Olympic medallists **Jure Franko** and **Billy Kidd**.

In conjunction with the 2009 World Winter Games, the athletes will also be wearing knitted scarves courtesy of the Scarf Project – a world-wide scarf-knitting initiative which provides athletes with a gift that promotes community awareness. The World Winter Games has already received over 8,000 scarves.

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The SOGB World Winter Games Team is as follows:

George Brunt- West Midlands

George Brunt is 24 years old and lives with his parents near Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. He has been skiing with the West Midlands Group since 2002 and has taken part in two National Championships. George competes at the Intermediate level, and he has won multiple medals at local, regional and national competitions.

Two years ago George and his family were asked if he might consider modelling for Charles Walker Hazzard, a local artist, who was looking to produce a series of sculptures depicting a young man with Down's syndrome. George has been spending every Saturday since then at the artist's studio. Hazzard's completed works, *Received Offspring*, was on display in October at the Art Workers Guild in London.

Beth Wragg- West Midlands

Beth is 31 years old and lives in Dudley in the West Midlands. Her mother, Candy Wragg, is heading the delegation that will be travelling to Idaho. Beth began skiing at the age of three and started to train with the SOGB West Midlands Ski Group in 2000. Beth has competed in local, regional and national competitions, and returned from the 2008 SOGB National Championship with three Gold medals in the Advanced Female Division. Beth has been lucky enough to compete at the Special Olympics British Columbia Games in Kimberley, Canada. She visits Canada annually for a family ski holiday where she meets up with Special Olympics friends from all over the world. Beth is very excited to be selected for the SOGB Team and is training hard. Her local gym, First Generation, has given her free membership for the year in order to help her prepare for the 2009 Games. Beth loves football as well as skiing and is an Aston Villa season ticket holder.

Craig Hannah- West Midlands

Craig Hannah is 32 years of age and lives in Halesowen, West Midlands with his parents Phil and Ellie Hannah.

Craig leads a very active life through his participation in the Special Olympics Great Britain. He trains weekly in athletics, football, and swimming and fortnightly in skiing. While Craig will confess to not being the best athlete in the world he enjoys 'taking part' and rarely misses a competition. Craig has relatives in Australia and has visited them three times. During one of his visits to Sydney, he carried out a tandem parachute jump from 13,000 feet, which he said he thoroughly enjoyed.

Claire Jeffray- East Lothian

Claire is 31 years old and lives in Gifford, Scotland. It was recently announced that Lothian Disability Sport has chosen her as their Senior Sports Person of the Year 2008. Before she began skiing, Claire swam competitively for Special Olympics Great Britain. She participated in 4 consecutive SOGB Nationals, where she won a total of 2 Gold, 11 Silver, and 2 Bronze medals. In 1995, she was selected to represent Great Britain in the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Connecticut, USA where she won Bronze. In March 2002, she received the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award, which was presented to her at Holyrood Palace by the Duke of Edinburgh himself. As a result, she was invited to the Queen's Garden Party, also at Holyrood Palace. As the Queen entered the gardens, the Lord Lieutenant of East Lothian brought Claire out from the crowd and took her into the roped off walkway to meet the Queen!

Claire took up race skiing following her retirement from competitive swimming. She competed at the SOGB National Championships in Pila, Italy this past January, and she came away with 3 silver medals in the Ladies Advanced Division.

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William Cottrell-South East

William Cottrell is 21 and lives in London with his family. He has been skiing at the Bromley Ski Centre for about four years. At the 2008 SOGB National Championships, William won gold in the Giant Slalom and finished fourth in the Super Giant Slalom. He spends his free time supporting Charlton Athletic Football Club and Blackheath Rugby Club. William's father used to play for Blackheath and his brother and uncles still do. He loves to cheer on his relatives at the games.

Hannah Dempsey- South East

Hannah is 20 years old and lives in Bromley, Kent. She leads a very busy and active life through her participation in both sport and dance. She competed as a swimmer in the 2006 SOGB National Games in Glasgow, where she won both Silver and Bronze medals. Hannah also participated in the 2008 SOGB National Championships in Pila, Italy where she skied her way to Silver and Bronze.

Along with skiing and swimming, Hannah is a gifted dancer. She recently joined Anjali, a professional contemporary dance company based in Banbury, Oxfordshire. This company is one of the first in the world to be made up completely of people with learning disabilities. It produces and tours performances and undertakes educational and outreach work. Hannah had the opportunity of starring in the opening performance at a major dance festival in Stuttgart. She is constantly working to bring dance and movement to younger people.

Jonathan Frett - South East

Jonathan Frett is 41 years old and lives in New Malden, Surrey. He learned about competitive skiing through Special Olympics Surrey last year, but has skied for 14 years with ROYAD (Reach Out Youth and Adult Disabilities) - a charity that his mother started 14 years ago to help Jonathan make new friends.

Jonathan went to a special needs school in Kingston and then college in Wales. He has worked for Tesco New Malden for 21 years. Jonathan has a very busy social life: Mondays he is with friends, Tuesdays is Special Olympics ten pin bowling training, and Wednesday is Special Olympics football. Jonathan qualified for both the World Winter Games Team for skiing and the Special Olympics National team for ten pin bowling. He receives free training at the Top Notch Health Club in his area.

Jonathan lost his father six years ago who was a great influence on his life. He has a brother who is a policeman with 12 year old twin daughters who play for Fulham Football Academy. They are football mad like Jonathan -- who supports Manchester United.

Greg Friend- South East

Greg Friend is from Cobham, Surrey. When he was born, doctors were worried about the severity of his learning disabilities, but through years of intense therapy he is now able to speak clearly and with reasonable fluency.

He first started skiing with ROYAD (Reach Out Youth and Adult Disabilities), a local group set up to provide sporting opportunities and a social life to those with learning disabilities. In the summer of 2007, Greg began participating in the Special Olympics Great Britain programme. He excelled at the SOGB National Championships in Pila, Italy this year winning two Gold medals and one Bronze.

Greg has been assisted by the generous support of the Metropolitan Police Sports Club who will be providing him with a year of training at their gym in Imber Court.

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Hannah Gleeson- Wales

Hannah Gleeson is 19 years old and lives in Nantycaws, Carmarthenshire. She attends Ysgol Heol Goffa in Llanelli along with team-mate Amy Raddon. Hannah did not begin skiing until 2006, but she has made fantastic progress in that short time. She discovered skiing through school trips to the local dry ski slope, but she has since had the opportunity to try out the slopes in Austria. Hannah has competed in various SOGB competitions over the last few years, including the 2008 SOGB National Championships in Pila, Italy. At those games, she was awarded Silver in both the Novice Slalom and the Novice Super Giant Slalom and Gold in the Novice Giant Slalom.

Amy Raddon-Wales

Amy Raddon is 18 years old and lives in Llanelli, Carmarthenshire. She attends Ysgol Heol Goffa in Llanelli with team-mate Hannah Gleeson, and she participates in skiing each week as part of her curriculum. Amy picked up the sport in 2003 and has worked hard to develop her skills both on the local dry ski slope and on school trips to Austria. Amy has competed in numerous local and national SOGB competitions. This year at the National Championships in Pila, Italy, she won Silver in the Novice Giant Slalom and Gold in both the Novice Slalom and the Novice Super Giant Slalom.

Liam de Vanney - Head Coach BASI 2, Alpine Performance Coach – Bromley, Kent
Keith Parish – Assistant Head Coach, Snowsport England Coach - Redditch
Alan Lines – Assistant HOD Canadian level 1 Instructor - Redditch
Alexis Williams – Family Co-ordinator - Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire
Candia Wragg – Head of Delegation - Stourbridge, West Midlands
Sue Hugh-Paynes – National Grid Volunteer - Leamington

END

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EDITORS NOTES:

- **2008 was Special Olympics Great Britain's 30th Anniversary Year.** Our Chairman is **Lawrie McMenemy MBE.**
- **Special Olympics and Paralympics are two separate organisations.** **Special Olympics Great Britain** is recognised as the third member of the Olympic family, providing year-round sports, sports training, and local, regional, national and international competitions for all learning disability levels. **Paralympics** provides elite-only level sports competition for multi-disabled groups including physical, blind and deaf.
- **Special Olympics Great Britain** was established in 1978 and has nearly **8,000 athletes** who participate in local sports programmes, and regional, national and international competitions. National Games are held every 4 years (Glasgow 2005, Leicester 2009) alternating between Summer World Games (Shanghai 2007 and Athens 2011) and Winter World Games (Boise Idaho 2009) and then European and International Games.

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- **Special Olympics Great Britain's** first sports Ambassador was **Olympic Gold Medalist Sebastian Coe**, now Lord Coe, Chairman of the London Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games. Our current Sports Ambassadors include: England and Portsmouth FC goalkeeper **David James**, Olympic Champions **Darren Campbell** and **Katharine Merry**, England Women's Football Coach **Hope Powell**, Tennis legend **Mark Cox**, NBA superstar **John Amaechi** and England Basketball Team Captain **Delme Herriman**, World and Olympic Champion Canoeist **Anna Hemmings**, Extreme Kayaker **Shaun Baker** and SOGB athletes **Georgina Hulme** and **Moira Brown**.
- Special Olympics was founded in 1968 by Eunice Shriver Kennedy, sister of US President John F. Kennedy. The programme originally started out as organised summer camps for people with learning disabilities. Since then, the Special Olympics movement has evolved world-wide to include **160 countries** and **2,256,733 athletes**. In 20,000 communities around the world for 365 days of the year, Special Olympics provides sports training and athletic competition in 30 Olympic type sports for learning disabled children and adults from age 8 to 80 with an IQ of 75 or less.
- In 1988, Special Olympics was recognised by the **International Olympic Committee (IOC)**. It is the only sports organisation authorised by the IOC to use the word 'Olympics' in its title.
- **Special Olympics Great Britain** is a registered charity and is generously supported annually by individual and corporate donations and receives no government funding. **Special Olympics GB's Official Partner is National Grid Plc**. Its current Premier Partners & Sponsors are the Coca-Cola Youth Foundation, FlipFlops, ABB, SAS, Dominos Pizza, The Geoff & Fiona Squire Foundation, and Lions International.
- One of the guiding principles of Special Olympics is that anyone, with encouragement, support and access to resources, can be provided with a positive sporting experience, raising their self-esteem and the expectations of the community around them. Special Olympics seeks to focus on a persons abilities and qualities giving them opportunities to develop further.

www.sogb.org.uk

30th Anniversary
1978 - 2008



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