

Overall US Deaflympic Team Medal Performance Lowest in Recent Years USADSF Creates a New Committee for the Next Quadrennial

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At the Summer Deaflympics in Melbourne last January, the US Team earned a total of 31 medals (8 golds, 11 silvers and 12 bronzes), the lowest medal tally in recent memory. Using data beginning with the 1989 Games in New Zealand, the average total medal count was 72, and number of golds won was 28.

Both athletics and swimming took the worst hit, having missed an opportunity for a total of 35 additional medals if they performed as well as they did in the 1989-2001 era. None of the other individual sports outperformed their 2001 Games counterparts either. Team sports held steady, with basketball continuing its trademark gold-medal streak and women's volleyball winning a medal at all Games.

Russia, the overall medal tally leader with 55, was strong in athletics, orienteering, swimming, and wrestling. If not for the world-record efforts of South African Terence Parkin (12 golds and 1 silver), the Russians would have swum for more medals (18) than any other nation.

Close behind Russia with a total of 51, Ukraine led all nations in athletics with 20 medals, swept indoor volleyball, finished first in women's beach volleyball, and performed very well in orienteering and swimming. Ukraine's training and reward program has already established a reputation.

Just seven medals ahead of the fourth-place Americans, the Germans' gold output was half a dozen and a near perfect split between silvers and bronzes.

OVERALL US TEAM MEDAL COUNT: 1989-2005					
YEAR	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL	US TEAM ATHLETES
1989	21	23	19	63	207
1993	36	23	22	81	195
1997	31	18	26	75	156
2001	24	21	22	67	191
2005	8	11	12	31	172

So, what happened? Questions and speculation swirl around. January? Potential athletes staying home for professional, academic or even economic reasons? Better training and support systems in our competitors' homelands? "Superstar" athletes with multiple top-3 finishes becoming a relic of the past? Lack of awareness in the general public about the Deaflympics? Perhaps the USA Deaf Sports Federation (USADSF) and its sport affiliates responsible for recruiting, developing, and sending best athletes to international events did not really emphasize the "train hard at all costs" message?

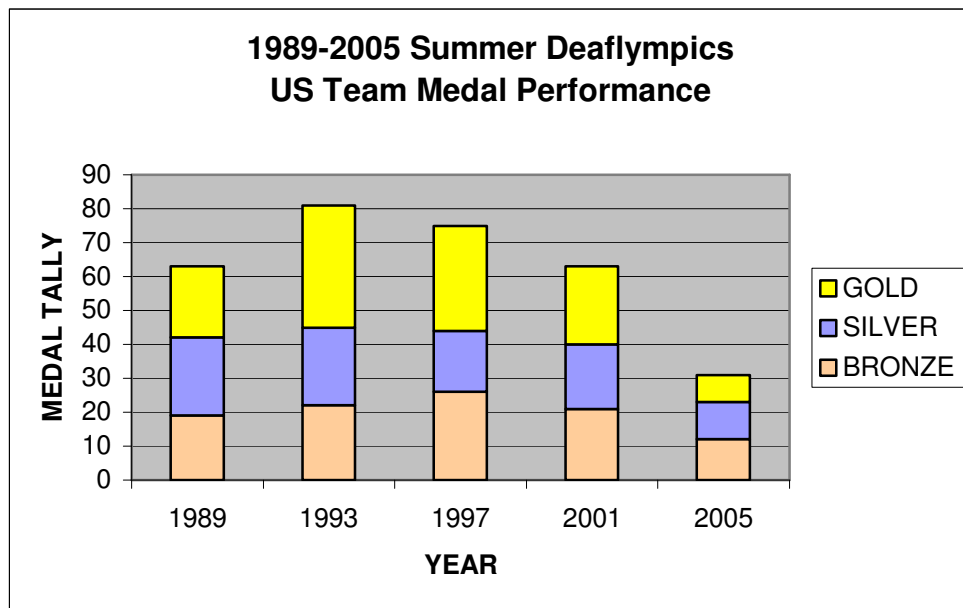
Ironically, despite the misleading conception that sending the largest delegation to the 2005 Games "should" translate into the most medals, the U.S. has scored 7 out of 10 possible medals in team sports, the best team percentage ever! Traditionally, there were no American entries in badminton, orienteering and table tennis. A group of enthusiasts is mapping the road to American success in orienteering by organizing educational and competitive events for anyone

interested. USADSF is looking forward to welcoming orienteering as a new affiliate in the near future.

USADSF recognizes and appreciates the hard work and efforts put in by Ms. Michele Berke and her Summer Deaflympics committee staff. Approved last November, the USADSF is merging three standing committees—International Relations, Winter Deaflympics, and Summer Deaflympics—into a single committee, the Games Preparation Committee (GPC). The intent of the new GPC is to consolidate duplicate roles of such committees and provide more consistent service to PANAMDES, World Championships and Deaflympics programs. The GPC is mandated to have the coordinating authority in all matters pertaining to the selection and participation of U.S. athletes and team officials by USADSF’s sport affiliates in international competitions.

In order for the GPC to succeed, each sport affiliate is asked to develop a Quadrennial Plan, which is going to serve as the cornerstone between USADSF and all sport affiliates via the GPC. The comprehensive plan includes tryout/qualifying and training events, clinics, meetings, domestic and international competitions, apparel requirements, fundraising strategies, and budget, to name a few. A practical and well-executed plan will benefit everyone involved in terms of expectation, publicity, budget forecasting, event scheduling, and value-added performance.

Looking at the bright side, the US Team is on the rise in Winter Deaflympics, hoping to outdo its 2003 Sundsvall Games record performance as the Americans will be competing on its native slopes and ice in Salt Lake City in 2007.



Author’s Note: A team sport is defined as an activity that has a single and only shot at winning a medal. “All-Events” winners in tenpin bowling are honored in name only, thus no actual medal is awarded.

Sources: www.2005Deaflympics.com (unofficial results) and USADSF Archives.

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