

## John Huminski



John Huminski never let obstacles keep him from participating in sports and accomplishing some remarkable feats. He never let the fact that he was born with Cerebral Palsy and with short heel cords stop him. He never even let the fact that he was confined to a wheel chair since his mid-twenties and had virtually no use of his legs stop him. Instead, he overcame extraordinary physical handicaps to reach exceptional athletic achievements, playing a variety of sports throughout his years in the Norwalk School System, including softball, basketball, swimming and running.

And through his participation in sports, John Huminski became an inspiration and role model to many people, both athletes and non-athletes alike, and both handicapped as well as able-bodied.

Since 1977, Huminski has competed in almost all of the sports programs sponsored by the United States Cerebral Palsy Athletic Association. In fact, in his very first international competition, the Fifth International Cerebral Palsy Games in Greve, Denmark in 1982, Huminski won two gold medals in swimming and a bronze medal in weight lifting. He was also a member of the U.S. wheelchair soccer team that won the gold medal.

Then in 1989 at the Sixth National Games for Cerebral Palsy Sports in Mankato, Minn., he captured five gold medals in swimming competition while setting new records. Huminski added three more first-place finishes in the 100, 200 and 400 meter freestyles at the Can-Am Pacific Game at Hofstra University in 1987, and won three more gold medals (100 and 500 meter freestyles, and 100 backstroke) at the World Games in Aussen, Holland swimming for the U.S. Disabled Sports Team.

Huminski has also competed in the Paralympics Trials at Hofstra and in the Cerebral Palsy Sports Meet at Trinity College in Hartford, both held in 1992.

The Norwalk High School graduate also participated in numerous road races over the years, his first coming in 1977, a 20K race set around the perimeter of New Haven. From 1977-94, Huminski ran in both the annual Minute Man 5-Mile Run in Westport and 10K Mother's Day Road Race in Norwalk. He's also run in various 10K and 15K road races throughout Fairfield County.

In addition, Huminski competed in the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C. six straight years from 1987-92, as well as the Stamford Classic Marathon from 1987-90, and the Shoreline Marathon in Bridgeport in 1992 and '93. And from 1989-92, he competed in the Westport Triathlon.

An avid trainer during his years of competition, it wasn't unusual for Huminski to put in an average of 20 hours per week into his road-race training, and swim and lift weights another six to seven hours a week.

But Huminski's own participation in sports wasn't enough for him. In an effort to promote others to do the same, he established "I Can Do It, Too!," a non-profit corporation funded by individuals and civic organizations. The mission of the organization, Huminski stated, is "dedicated to building self-esteem among handicapped and able-bodied through joint participation." The "I Can Do It, Too!" organization sponsors road races, swim meets and bench press meets, all activities Huminski excelled in despite his handicaps.

In addition, Huminski started Cerebral Palsy sports teams in swimming, weight lifting, and track and field. He also coached soccer, basketball and sponsored a girls Little League softball team. And as a part-time teacher in the Westport School system from 1972-90, Huminski spent much of his time working with learning-disabled and handicapped children, and participated in the Mentor Program at several schools in Norwalk and Westport.

Huminski has been the recipient of many citations for his work in the area of physical fitness and also for his support of many civic and humanitarian causes such as the Big Brother program, the Fresh Air Fund, the Girl Scouts, CROP Walk for the alleviation of world hunger, the volunteer program at the Apple Festival in Westport, literacy programs, and mentoring school children with special needs.

He was also named to the Governor's Committee on Physical Fitness in Connecticut in 1989, was Honorary Chairman of the Minute Man Five-Mile Road Race in Westport from 1986-94, and in 1979 was named "Sportsman of the Year" by the Northeast Regional Cerebral Palsy Games Committee.