**Sports**

Seeing the world for another’s eyes

Jack Todd leads blind team to victories overseas

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 coach so well-versed he could lead the blind (literally), has returned from the Rio de Janeiro Paralympic Games. After taking part in the 15th Paralympic games, Jack Todd has now attended 10 games. Todd, head Cross Country and distance Track & Field coach, has dedicated two weeks every four years to assisting at the Paralympic Games.

Cross Country and Track enthusiast sophomore Nathan Jones is thankful for his time so far spent as a runner for Todd, and has learned a lot from his leadership.

“We are fortunate to have such a unique coach. He is extremely dedicated to his team. He has nearly perfect attendance for practice,” Jones said.

In a report submitted to SCRunners.com, the state website for all things Cross Country and Track & Field, Todd expressed concern with the lack of knowledge about the Paralympic Games.

“Many people in the United States equate the Paralympics with the Special Olympics. Nothing could be further from the truth,” Todd said.

In the report, Todd highlights differences between the two. The Special Olympics is for those mentally handicapped. Participation in these events is often thought to be more important than competition. However, the Paralympic Games are held for the physically disabled, with high levels of competition.

Athletes at the Paralympic Games fall into one of four categories: amputee, wheel-chair, cerebral palsy, or blind. Todd attended his first Paralympic games in 1980, held in The Netherlands, as a guide runner for the blind. Todd ran back-to-back 400 meter runs as well as back-to-back 1500 meter runs with American blind runners. After assistant coaching the US blind team at the New York 1984 games, Todd became the head Track coach for the US blind team at the 1988 games in Seoul, Korea. At the 1992 games in Barcelona, Spain, Todd accompanied the Americans as Head US Track and Field coach. He was a referee at the 1996 games in Atlanta.

Todd became an International Technical Official (ITO) at the games held in Sydney, Australia, in 2000, a position he would hold for the two following games, in Athens, Greece and Beijing, China, held in 2004 and 2008, respectively. For the 2012 London Paralympics as well as the 2016 Rio Paralympics, Todd was a member of the Jury of Appeals. Being on the Jury of Appeals for the Paralympics is a position held by Todd and only two others in the world. Todd and his two partners deal with direct protests, or disputes from coaches, and decisions made by referees. For a coach to protest, they must pay a fee of $120. If the Jury agrees with the coach, the coach will get his or her money back. At the Rio Paralympic Games, there were a total of 21 protests from coaches. On only two occasions the coaches got their money back. The other 19 times, the decision made by the referee was kept in place.

Athletic Director Todd Staley is grateful that his athletes on the Cross Country team are given the opportunity to train under the leadership of such a cultured, dedicated coach.

“The work Coach Todd has done for the Paralympic games this year in Rio de Janeiro, and all of the years in the past is remarkable. His dedication to coaching his runners here at Spartan High and his dedication to the Paralympics is unmatched. Jack Todd is a great reflection of Spartanburg High School as well as District 7 athletics,” Staley said.