

June 2006



ATHLETE PROFILE

Kevin Brown

Age: 40
Residence: Albany
Occupation: Mailroom Clerk, Federal Bureau of Investigations, Albany
Primary Sports: Volleyball, Softball, Bowling, Cross-Country Skiing, Track and Field

Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt

by Amy E. Tucker

Catching up with Special Olympics New York athlete Kevin Brown can be a challenge, whether on or off the court ... field, lane or as the sport may suit him. When he's not training for one of the half-dozen Special Olympics events in which he competes, Kevin holds down a full-time job with the FBI, serves as a global messenger for Special Olympics, owns and maintains a home with his brother, and finds time to do yard work for friends and neighbors as a side business. He's currently preparing for the Special Olympics New York 2006 Summer Games, which is coming to the University at Albany on Thursday-Sunday, June 15-18.

Special Olympics New York, which does not charge athletes to participate, provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-style sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Kevin, who was born with a learning disability, began competing in the Special Olympics when he was eight years old – the minimum qualifying age for athletes – and this year marks his 32nd year of competition.

"I participated in training programs through the O.D. Heck Developmental Center in Schenectady," said Kevin. "Then, our coaches signed us up so that

we could compete in tournaments."

Kevin participates in a number of Summer Games events including the long jump and the shot put for track and field, as well as bowling, volleyball and softball. In the winter, he also competes in cross-country skiing. "My best sports are volleyball, track and field and cross-country skiing," Kevin confessed. "But, when I run, I also like to do the Law Enforcement Torch Run."

The Law Enforcement Torch Run is the largest grassroots fundraiser and public awareness vehicle for the Special Olympics in the world. Law enforcement agencies provide security for events, organize fundraising runs and provide opportunities for volunteers and athletes to participate and join in the excitement of torch bearing and the Olympic Games. Kevin has been involved with the torch run for nearly 15 years. "I run with the torch," he said. "They let me hold it. And if I want to take a break I can. They let me decide if I want to carry the torch or what I want to do because I'm the athlete."

Kevin carried the torch in Ireland and Greece when he went to the World Games in 2003 for the torch run. "Ireland and Greece were my favorite places that I've seen so far," Kevin gushed. "I got to meet different athletes and presidents from



▲ KEVIN AT THE LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN IN IRELAND. PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS NEW YORK

other countries and to see how they live in other places. I was there for three weeks!"

Kevin has won more than 100 medals in 32 years of competition and hopes to someday be the oldest competing Special Olympian. "I like to compete and show them what I've got to do," Kevin says. "I would like to compete for the next 40 years as long as I stay healthy."

So far, all systems go! Kevin participated in a basketball clinic hosted by UAlbany head coach Will Brown and the Great Danes student athletes last week and is prepared to compete in volleyball – his best event – when the Summer Games kick off at the University next week. He's waiting to hear if he's been selected to participate in the first-ever Special Olympics USA National Games in Iowa on July 2-7. And, many athletes who win gold medals at the Summer Games at UAlbany will qualify for the World Games in Shanghai, which takes place October 2007.

Kevin, no stranger to the Special Olympics World Games, would love to return and feels that volleyball or the torch run would offer his best chances at medaling. "I'll do whatever they want me to do if I'm training that sport," said Kevin. "Maybe I could do a track event again."

Kevin was in Reno, Nevada, for the 1989 World Winter Games and Minneapolis for the 1992 World Summer Games. But he achieved his proudest moment during a World Winter Games in Anchorage, Alaska. "I was competing in the 4 x 400 relay in cross-country skiing and I won my first-ever gold medal in the World Games," Kevin recalled.

Success for Kevin has been measured in achievements both on and off the playing field. Kevin had harbored a long desire to work for the FBI and eventually applied to work in their offices. "They called and asked me if I wanted to work for them and I said, 'Sure I would!'" Kevin exclaimed. But, his dream was not to be. When he took the test, he missed a passing score by 30 points. Not one to be daunted, howev-

er, he got a study tool and prepared for the exam for the next five years until it was offered again. "I took it again and passed, so I've now worked there for 10 years sorting all of the incoming mail."

When you meet Kevin for the first time, you often come away with the feeling of what a joker he is. Whether new or old or made up on the spur of the moment, he's always got a fresh joke to spring on some unsuspecting soul. Special Olympics recognized his friendly spirit by enrolling him in their Sargent Shriver Global Messenger Program, where athletes receive public speaking and presentation training to help spread the message and vision of the movement as well as the benefits they have gained by participating.

Kevin has been a global messenger for over 15 years. "The presentation training was easy because I was already speaking for Special Olympics New York, so I knew what I was up for," he continued. "I especially love TV. I'm scared for the first couple of minutes, but then once I start speaking and getting into it I'm all set."

Kevin's message to people who are thinking about becoming involved with Special Olympics is as follows: "You should join it and have a great time. It's good for you and you'll make a lot of friends."

The Special Olympics New York Summer Games is the largest of more than 400 competitions held each year throughout New York. More than 2,000 athletes and coaches will take part in the Summer Games, which are returning to the University at Albany for the first time since 2000. All events are free and open to the public. For more information visit: www.specialolympicsny.org. ▲

Amy E. Tucker lives in Clifton Park and is a local freelance writer specializing in sports and education.

