



Coach Jeff Sauer brings hockey to deaf, paralyzed individuals!

Jeff Sauer spent decades coaching men's hockey at Colorado College and the University of Wisconsin, winning nearly 500 games and two national championships, but these days he finds himself rejuvenated and his love for the game strong as ever through his work with both the United States Deaflympics and the U.S. National Sled Hockey Team.

Sauer, who began his collegiate coaching career more than 40 years ago as an assistant to the legendary "Badger" [Bob Johnson](#), is in the process of putting together a team to play at the World Deaf Championship in Finland at the end of March. He first became involved with the American Hearing Impaired Hockey Association when it was established back in the 1970s by [Chicago Blackhawks](#) great [Stan Mikita](#), and has been marveling at the accomplishments of its players ever since.

"The hearing-impaired kids, most play on teams back at home with guys that don't have handicaps," Sauer said. "They're put on the end of the bench or used sparingly. People are either intimidated by the fact they don't hear well or just don't give them the chance to play often.

"When we get them together, and it's kids from all across the country, the chemistry is unbelievable right away. There is specific sign language we use and in most cases communication is easy because it's hockey. They're just normal players who want to play the game and don't hear well. They bond together well, and we've had success on the international scene."

Highlighting that success was a gold medal won by the U.S. team at the 2007 Deaflympics on their home turf in Salt Lake City.

"The biggest competition on the international scene is Canada and the toughest teams to play are Finland and Russia," Sauer said. "We were relatively young in relation to those teams, and at the international level experience can take its toll on a young team, but we based ourselves on conditioning and being in the best shape, and it paid off for us in Salt Lake."

Through his work with the AHIHA and the USA Disabled Hockey Committee, involvement in sled hockey followed in the past several years.

In this capacity, Sauer has found himself often working with military veterans who lost limbs in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. He raved about their leadership abilities and, similar to his hearing-impaired players, the near instant chemistry they seem to develop with one another.

"Every one of these guys has a story, whether they were disabled from birth or lost a limb in an accident or in war," Sauer said. "These guys have used hockey, and being part of this at the international level, they've taken the bull by the horn so to speak and become advocates for 'your life is not over when this happens' type of thing. ... The big thing is they've used [disability] not as a crutch but as hey, losing my legs was not the end of the world, I'm coming back and doing whatever I can to help myself."

With the National Hockey League celebrating the 15th anniversary of Hockey is for Everyone Month, Sauer reflected on what the initiative has meant to his players.

"I think it's very important. It's opened up the world of hockey for paralyzed guys, and hard-of-hearing players," he said. "It's often a situation where guys have maybe had to prove themselves more than a normal hockey player. The big thing is they're like sponges learning the game of hockey and being coached. It's really rejuvenated me, the way they want to learn and work hard. It's been a very rewarding situation."

In what came as well-deserved recognition, Sauer was bestowed with the [Lester Patrick](#) Trophy in 2011 for his outstanding service to hockey.

"When you look at the list of people who have been recognized, it's neat to be in the same company as those people," Sauer said. "My dad once said I never really had a real job. I coached college hockey for over 40 years, played at Colorado College, I've been involved at all levels including some international coaching at world tournaments. It's been a life of hockey that's been really rewarding and really fun, too, and to be on the same level as some of those other recipients is a real honor."



Coach Jeff Sauer to coach 2014 Paralympic Hockey Team

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – Jeff Sauer (Madison, Wis.) has been named head coach of the 2014 U.S. Paralympic Sled Hockey Team it was announced today by USA Hockey. Sauer is currently in his second season serving as head coach of the U.S. National Sled Hockey Team.

In April 2012, Sauer guided Team USA to the gold medal at the International Paralympic Committee World Championship in Hamar, Norway. The U.S. will defend its world title this April in Goyang City, Korea, at the 2013 IPC World Championship.

"Jeff has been a terrific leader for our U.S. National Sled Hockey Team and he was the unquestionable choice for this position," said Dave Ogrea, executive director of USA Hockey. "He has a wealth of coaching experience at so many levels and has translated that knowledge to the game of sled hockey."

"I'm excited and honored to be chosen for this position," said Sauer. "I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to be the head coach of the U.S. National Sled Hockey Team these last two seasons and I look forward to seeing this talented group of players through to next year's Paralympic Games in Sochi."

The U.S. Paralympic Hockey Team will compete in the 2014 Sochi Paralympic Games March 7-16, 2014, in Sochi, Russia. The U.S. will be defending its gold medal from the 2010 Vancouver Paralympic Games, and seeking its fourth consecutive Paralympic Games medal (2002-gold; 2006-bronze).

Sauer has coached a wide array of U.S. teams throughout his career. He was the head coach of the U.S. Men's National Team at the 1995 International Ice Hockey Federation Men's World Championship in Stockholm, Sweden, and at the 1990 Goodwill Games in Seattle, Wash., along with serving as head coach for the U.S. Men's Select Team at the 1989 Pravda Cup in Leningrad, Soviet Union, and at the 1997 Tampere Cup in Tampere, Finland.

In addition, Sauer has been deeply involved with the U.S. Deaf Ice Hockey Teams. He will be the head coach of Team USA at the 2013 World Deaf Hockey Championship in Vantaa, Finland this April. Additionally, he has been the head coach of the last three Deaflympic Ice Hockey Teams, leading the U.S. to a gold-medal finish at the 2007 Winter Deaflympics in Salt Lake City, Utah. Sauer also is currently a member of USA Hockey's International Council and Disabled Hockey Committee, and is president of the American Hearing Impaired Hockey Association.

Sauer's illustrious 31-year NCAA Division I college coaching career featured 655 wins (seventh all-time) and two national championships, both of which came during his tenure with the University of Wisconsin (1983, 1990).

Sauer led Wisconsin to three NCAA Men's Frozen Four appearances, 12 NCAA tournament berths, six Western Collegiate Hockey Association playoff titles and two WCHA regular-season crowns in 20 seasons as head coach (1982-2002). He also spent 11 years (1971-82) as head coach of the men's ice hockey team at his alma mater, Colorado College, where he was twice named WCHA Coach of the Year (1972, 1975).

In 2011, Sauer was honored with the National Hockey League's Lester Patrick Trophy for his outstanding service to hockey in the United States. In 2000, he was recognized with USA Hockey's Distinguished Achievement Award. He was also named to the Wisconsin Hockey Hall of Fame in 2004 and received the John 'Snooks' Kelly Founders Award from the American Hockey Coaches Association for his contributions to the overall growth and development of the sport of ice hockey in the U.S.

NOTES: Team USA has won the last three major international events, including the 2009 IPC World Sledge Hockey Championship in Ostrava, Czech Republic; the 2010 Paralympic Games in Vancouver, B.C.; and the 2012 IPC World Sledge Hockey Championship in Hamar, Norway ... During the 2012-13 season, the U.S. has won a pair of international tournaments; Team USA defeated Canada on Dec. 8 in the championship game of the 2012 World Sledge Hockey Challenge in Calgary, Alberta, and it topped Korea on Jan. 26 in the title game of the 2013 USA Hockey Sled Cup in Indian Trail, N.C. ... Currently, Sauer and the U.S. National Team are in suburban Ottawa, Ont., to play a three-game series vs. Canada Feb. 14-16 ... The appointment of Sauer is pending approval from the U.S. Olympic Committee ... The management of the U.S. Paralympic Sled Hockey Team is under the direction of USA Hockey's International Council, chaired by Tony Rossi. Jim Johannson, assistant executive director of USA Hockey, oversees all hockey operations for the organization and Dan Brennan is the general manager of the 2014 U.S. Paralympic Sled Hockey Team.