

# SPORTS Journal

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Monday, August 20, 2012

## 2012 PARALYMPIC GAMES

# Newport man sailing for benefit of others

Quadriplegic CEO of Sail  
to Prevail program will race  
in Sonar Class in London

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The athletes competing in the London Olympics celebrated the close of the games Aug. 12, but the excitement is only just starting to build for another group of Olympic athletes, including one local sailor.

Newport's Paul Callahan will be among the 4,200 disabled athletes

representing 165 countries at the 2012 Paralympic Games, also to be held in London from Aug. 29 to Sept. 9.

"It's time for people with disabilities in the world to be represented on the same stage as able-bodied people," said the 56-year-old Callahan, who will head to England on Monday to represent the United States in the Sonar Class with teammates Tom Brown and Brad Johnson.

A former All-State basketball

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**Newport's Paul Callahan**, center, will race in the Paralympic Games in London, which begin later this month. Callahan, a quadriplegic, is the CEO of Sail to Prevail, a nonprofit serving disabled children and adults.

## GAMES

Continued from C1

### Newport sailor to race

player from southeastern Massachusetts, Callahan became a C4-5 quadriplegic in a freak accident 35 years ago when he slipped and fell on a wet floor while a student at Harvard University.

Although confined to a wheelchair with very limited use of his hands, Callahan learned how to sail by steering the boat through the use of gloves attached to bicycle pedals through the Newport-based Sail to Prevail program. Fifteen years ago, the Harvard Business School graduate became the CEO of the now thriving nonprofit group, formerly known as Shake-a-Leg.

Callahan also qualified for the 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney, Australia, where his team placed seventh among the 17 compet-

ing countries.

A hip injury sidelined him in 2004, and he narrowly missed qualifying for the 2008 Paralympics, making Callahan more determined than ever to win this year's U.S. Olympic Trials.

Partnering with mainsheet trimmer Brown, a single amputee from Maine, and jib trimmer Johnson, a

sailors will abide by the same rules followed by the able-bodied sailors in the recent Olympics. The only difference is that the disabled sailors will compete in boats that have been modified to accommodate their various physical challenges.

"Exact same race course, exact same venue. Everything is exactly the same,"

**"I wouldn't be doing this ... if my goal wasn't to show that anything really is possible for these children."**

Paul Callahan, Newport Paralympian

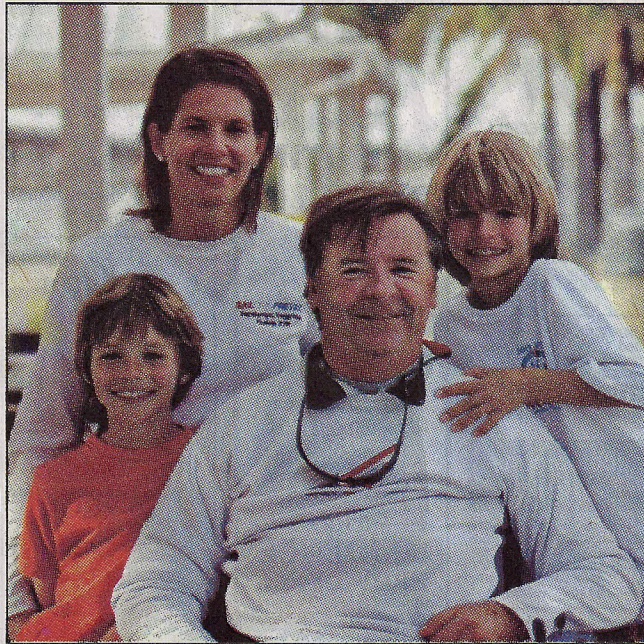
double amputee from Pompano, Fla., Callahan skippered his team to a spot in the Paralympics by posting the highest American finishes for their racing class at both US Sailing's 2012 Rolex Miami OCR, last January in Miami, and at the IFDS Worlds held two weeks earlier in Port Charlotte, Fla.

Callahan and his crew will compete against 42 other disabled sailors representing 14 countries. The

said Callahan, whose team often races against able-bodied sailors with a good amount of success.

Although Callahan and his team will be facing stiffer competition than what he saw in Sydney 12 years ago, he is even more intent on coming home with a medal this time around. Describing his intense preparation for the Paralympics as "a journey for the benefit of others," he says the driving force for him will be about more than achieving personal satisfaction.

"In 2000, I was just learning what competition at the highest level is all about," said Callahan, the father of 9-year-old twin boys Justin and Mitchell with his wife Alisa. "Plus, Sail to Prevail was a very small organization then. Now it is serving more than 1,000 disabled children every summer. So I have an extraordinarily huge appetite to do all that I can for the children of Sail to Prevail. I wouldn't be doing this campaign or representing the United States if my goal wasn't to show that anything really is possible for these children."



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Paul Callahan with wife Alisa and twins Justin and Mitchell.

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