

M arathon Raises Millions for Spinal Cord Research

In the summer of 1973, at the age of 16, an outstanding young athlete from western Canada was involved in a car accident that left him with a severed spine, and paralysed from the waist down. Fourteen years later, Rick Hansen has bounced back to receive Canada's highest civilian honour, after completing a round-the-world wheelchair marathon that brought him to 33 countries on four continents and raised millions of dollars for spinal cord research.

By the time of his accident, Hansen was well on his way to an unforgettable sporting career. In 1973, he

The end is just the beginning: Rick Hansen, Man in Motion, on tour for spinal cord research.

was his high school's most valuable player in basketball and received all-star awards in volleyball, pole vault, softball, baseball and badminton. Despite the new challenges he faced, Hansen's Man in Motion Tour reflected the same drive and determination that led him to excel in able-bodied sports. Hansen will be named a Companion of the Order of Canada, the nation's highest civilian award, for his efforts to raise public awareness of the potential of the disabled.

Hansen braved inclement weather, severe neck and back pain, and chronic tendonitis to wheel 80 to 110 km per day for his cause. Tens of thousands of fans around the world cheered him on. At every stop along the way,



Hansen emphasized the overall goals that had guided his Man in Motion Tour from the beginning.

"There have been days when I've been hurting really badly," Hansen said in Hong Kong in April 1986, but "I believe in what I'm doing ... as long as I can lift my arms and put them down again, I'll continue."

"We're trying to show that, just because you're disabled, it doesn't mean you can't reach your goals — you can," he told New York Mayor Ed Koch four months later. "The main objective is to create awareness." With Hansen's inspiration, the Canadian government has

■ ...home again.

instituted an annual disabled awareness week, beginning in 1988.

Born in Port Alberni, British Columbia, in 1957, Hansen is a four-time winner of the World Wheelchair Championships, has captured dozens of medals in international marathons and wheelchair games, and was a finalist in the 1 500-m wheelchair competition at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. The proceeds from the Man in Motion Tour will support spinal cord research and fund rehabilitation programs for people with spinal cord injuries.

■ On the road...

