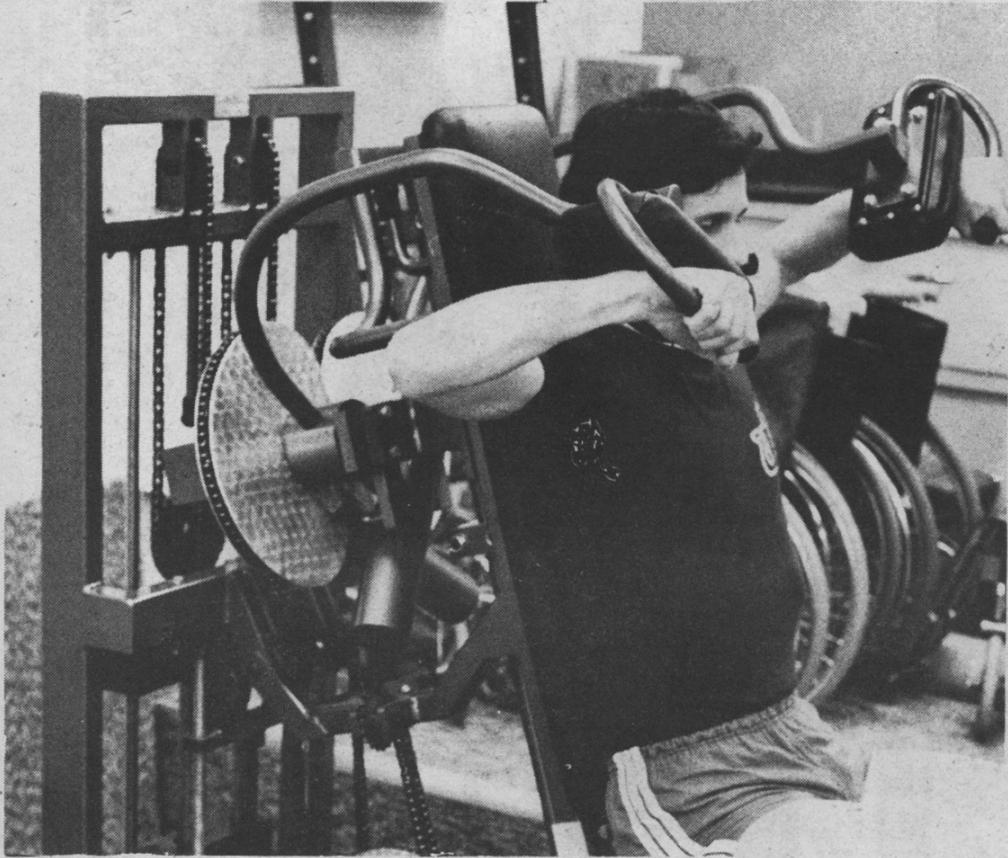


PSA has head start here



Grants for equipment at PSA center come from a wide variety of sources.
by Karl Wilberg

Often disabled people and their programs suffer in a society where priorities for funding do not include the disabled. The situation in Alberta was similar, but a core of dedicated workers have made changes. For example, Dr. Bob Steadward, and his staff, have created the unique Paralympic Sports Association (PSA) training center.

The center is an internationally known up-to-date research and training area at the U of A, which represents a realistic approach to the disabled. Steadward says the center was formed to "put together objective information to train disabled athletes." In addition, he says, the center overcomes awkwardness encountered by disabled athletes "attempting to train in able-bodied centers."

Although the center's purpose is simple, the conditions behind its creation are numerous. In spite of the center's obvious benefits, its creation is unique and is the result of dedicated workers and not

progressive governments.

Steadward points out one of the largest problems encountered in gaining support has been the disabled athlete's low status. He comments, "The media concentrate on professional and then amateur sports" and little on sport for the disabled.

Consequently, gaining support can be difficult. Steadward has approached governments, business, and the university. So far, the center receives help from the ACT, the 3AU fund, the Muttart foundation, and the U of A sport grant program. In addition, the Phys Ed faculty has donated the equivalent of \$15 to \$20 thousand in office and laboratory space.

Surprisingly, Steadward claims the money was given "with no strings attached." He says he believes contributors trusted in his many years of experience and his reputation as "the only person publishing" disabled sport information. Whatever the reason, Steadward has been successful: He says he believes much of his fund-raising success is the result of "talent and

time" in addition to having a "sellable" product.

Indeed the product is sellable. In disabled Olympic competition, the Canadian team won 80 medals to place fourth. Steadward points out, "Guys in wheelchairs are doing 2:09:01 marathons, guys bench press 600 lbs., and do less than a 4:40 minute mile. One-legged jumpers do up to seven feet." In all, he points out these "astonishing accomplishments in a short time" have been done without coaches or information.

Needless to say, the PSA center is attempting to change the lack of knowledge about training disabled people. But first, the disabled must be approached and helped to readjust. "First contact is made in the hospital," Steadward says. He emphasizes, "You have to get on them right away to get them away from depression and psychological problems."

Then, a one-on-one relationship is used to overcome "hang-ups". However, after a while the disabled develop attitudes and problems similar to those of any elite athlete.

After readjustment, disabled athletes have always dealt with problems when trying to train. Simple things are discouraging and frustrating. For example, showers and lockers at the U of A had to be modified to be accessible to the disabled. In addition, outdoor ramps to the building have been built.

Steadward says he finds it "very self-fulfilling to travel and train with disabled athletes." His involvement, he says, has led him to develop most of the existing disabled athlete training techniques. Also, he adds, American teams regularly beat his athletes. Steadward didn't like that state of affairs and has made innovations that have made Canada a leader in disabled sport.

For instance, he claims to have changed "drastically the technique of wheelchair racing." His innovations include using hands in a cyclical motion, instead of an up-and-down fashion, to propel a wheelchair. Larger rims and smaller push rims are also used. Finally, the outer rim is used for acceleration and when high speed is reached, the smaller push rims are used.

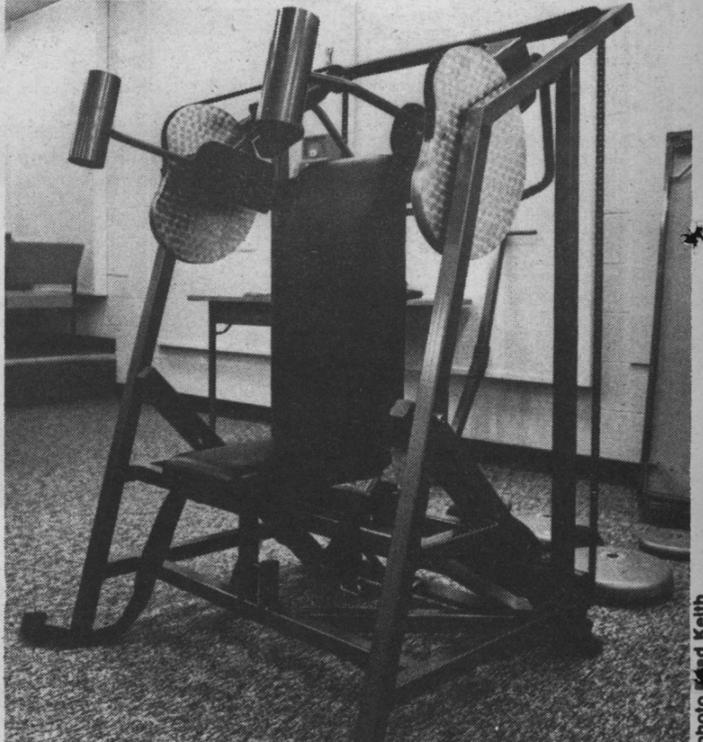
The center uses high-speed cinematography to analyse and improve an athlete's performance. Testing also includes

cardiovascular power and endurance analysis and muscle power measurement. After testing, a customized training program can be set up for an athlete. Nautilus weight-training equipment is used with other apparatus to carry out an athlete's program. Steadward mentions many people from across North America have visited the center and taken advantage of the center's ability to produce 30 to 35 page reports.

Not surprisingly, Steadward is in demand at workshops and conferences on the disabled. European nations like Belgium, Holland and England are interested in the PSA center. Canada's position as a leader is not the result of a superior government policy for the disabled. Rather, as Steadward comments, the fortunate situation here "shows the interest and enthusiasm of dedicated people."

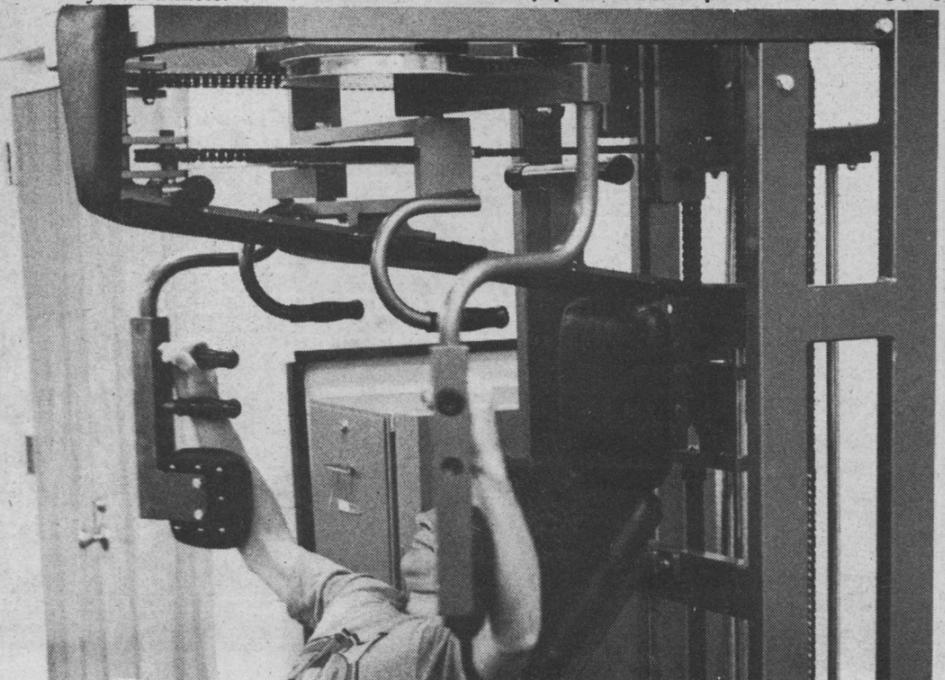
Here in Alberta, the disabled athlete can make the most of competitive spirit shared by any elite athlete. Steadward points out disabled sports are sports for the disabled, and not half-sports. Undoubtedly, these sports will appear more legitimate with time, but Alberta has a head start.

photo Rick Lawrence



Expensive Nautilus equipment is a small part of PSA's training program.

photo Rick Lawrence



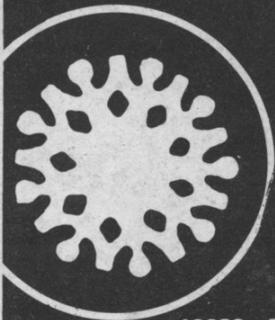
Special training techniques lead to astonishing results.

photo Rick Lawrence

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