

Jessica Long, Jeff Skiba Honored with 2009 Courage Awards

Jessica Long and Jeff Skiba were honored with the 2009 Courage Awards from the Tempe Sports Authority Foundation March 9 at the Marriott Buttes Resort in Tempe, Ariz. Also receiving an award was Arizona Diamondbacks starting pitcher Doug Davis, who is a cancer survivor. The Courage Award celebrates athletes who triumph over individual obstacles to rise above physical challenges or overcome significant injury to persevere and achieve their goals.

Skiba also was named as the San Diego Hall of Champions' 2008 Challenged Athlete of the Year. He was presented the honor at the Viejas Salute to the Champions Dinner Feb. 18 in San Diego.



Paralegic Ricky James Champion of 2008 West Coast Pro Truck Series

Ricky James, a 20-year-old paraplegic from Murrieta, Calif., capped-off an amazing 2008 by taking the overall points and championship in the West Coast Pro Truck series. In his rookie year, James clinched the 2008 Rookie of the Year award, the Toyota Speedway at Irwindale Championship, and the overall West Coast Pro Truck Championship.



Besides his achievements in stock car racing, he earned a Silver Medal at the 2008 X Games 14 and competed in the 2008 Ironman World Triathlon Championship in Kona, Hawaii, finishing in 12 hours and 44 minutes in his first attempt. A month later, he won the Overall Half Ironman World Championship in Clearwater, Fla.

James became a paraplegic after being injured in a motocross accident on the track at one of the largest Amateur National races in the country. The blow to his T7 vertebrae left him paralyzed from his sternum down.

Mere days after the accident, James declared that he would ride again. In 2007, he competed in the SCORE International Baja 500 in Ensenada, Mexico. Completing his grueling 120 mile leg in four hours made him the first paraplegic to ever attempt this race on a two-wheeled dirt bike.

Walker Wins X Games Gold

After taking the silver last year, the U.S. Adaptive Ski Team's Tyler Walker (sit-ski), who helped pioneer adaptive mono-ski cross in the X Games in 2007, crushed the competition to win his second X Games gold. The X Games were held in Aspen in January. Walker's time was 144.033.

Winning silver was Sam Ferguson with a time of 165.260. Ferguson trains with Challenge Aspen. Bronze medalist was Kees-Jan van der Klooster (The Netherlands) with a time of 300.000.

In the race, monoskiers rip over a course of tabletop jumps, banked turns, rollers and gaps at speeds approaching 80 miles per hour.



Photo Credit: Jessica Tidswell

