



UNIVERSITY of CENTRAL OKLAHOMA
U.S. PARALYMPIC TRAINING SITE
U.S. OLYMPIC COMMITTEE COMMUNITY PARTNER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 26, 2007

Contact: Ryan Wilson

rwilson18@ucok.edu, (405)974-3158

Paralympian shares Anti-Drug message for Red Ribbon Week

U.S. Paralympic Archer, T.J. Pemberton, spoke to 4th and 5th-grade students at John Ross Elementary in Edmond, Okla., to help celebrate Red Ribbon Week.

Students across the nation have been celebrating Red Ribbon Week, Oct. 23-31, with various anti-drug events, but very few were able to hear from Olympic and Paralympic athletes sponsored by the U.S. Olympic Committee.

The Edmond school was chosen because of the University of Central Oklahoma's (UCO) designation as an U.S. Paralympic Training Site, one of only two in the nation.

Pemberton, a resident Paralympic athlete at the University of Central Oklahoma, an official U.S. Paralympic Training Site, used the Olympic spirit and anti-doping regulations to motivate kids to stay away from drugs.

"Drugs do nothing for you," said Pemberton. "They hurt you in the long run."

Pemberton cited how the U.S. Olympic Committee's (USOC) regulations on performance enhancing drugs affect his personal and athletic lives.

"I have to watch everything I take, including vitamins, because I'm not only representing myself, but the U.S.A."

Pemberton's drug-free message fascinated students because of his devotion to train for the 2008 Paralympics.

"As a Paralympian, he emphasized to the students the importance of making healthy choices and living a drug-free life regardless of what your dreams are," said Jana Wood, John Ross school counselor.

After hearing Pemberton's message and seeing video of fellow Olympians and Paralympians, the assembly was opened for questions. Students were curious not only about drug testing and procedures, but also about Pemberton's disability.

"I have no feeling in my right leg," Pemberton responded to a question about his leg-brace. "This brace allows me to walk."

"He captivated the students' attention with a message of encouragement and strength in overcoming adversity as well as living up to one's full potential," said Wood.

Pemberton lost the use of his right leg after a near fatal ATV accident in 2002 and started training to make the Paralympic team in 2003. He recently returned from the 2007 World Championships in Seoul, Korea where he finished in 13th place.

As a U.S. Olympic Committee Community Partner, UCO works with public schools throughout the metro area to provide Olympic and Paralympic athletes appearances that promote different character traits. If a school or organization is interested in hosting a presentation they can contact Shelly Ramsey at UCO at (405) 974-3151.

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