

Team Canada headed to Abu Dhabi

Written By JOSHUA SANTOS

Over 150 Canadian athletes will compete in the 2019 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Participating Olympians and distinguished guests joined in on a ceremony at Teen Ranch, on Friday, Oct. 12. The athletes will train at the facility in preparation of the World Games. They will compete in the competition from March 14 to March 21, 2019.

"I'm very excited and very honoured to be a Canadian. It's a great accomplishment in my life. This will be my third trip to the world games," said Kyle Grummett.

"I know it's going to be extremely hot. You just have to keep your focus, keep your concentration and make sure you're hydrated properly. If you're struggling with something, just try to flush it out and progress."

Grummett is golfer from Kelowna, B.C. He will participate in the Level 5 golf category consisting of 18 holes every day. He first attended the World Games in 2011 in Athens, Greece as a softball player. He decided to go back to his roots of golf during the 2015 World Games in Los Angeles, USA.

"I'm fortunate enough to start at a young age," said Grummett. "I was four years old when my dad had me join. He got me on the course and I was swinging golf clubs and in my first ever tournament when I was four-years-old. That was back when I was growing up in Saskatchewan. The junior program was always excellent and even to this day it's still good but the fact is I don't get back to Saskatchewan as much as I'd like."

This will be the first time a World Games will happen in the Middle East and North Africa. It will be the largest sport and humanitarian event anywhere in the world in 2019, according to a news release.

Athletes were selected based on their participation in the Special Olympics Canada 2018 Summer Games this past August, in Antigonish, N.S.

"Athletes compete regionally, and then provincially and if they succeed provincially they go on to the national games which were held last summer in Nova Scotia. Based on the results, some of them get selected to go to the World Games," said Michael Greek, chef de mission for Special Olympics Canada.

Federal Minister of Science and Sport Kristy Duncan was in attendance to congratulate athletes and their coaches.

"After seeing the athletes compete this summer in Nova Scotia, I can't wait to cheer them on again as they represent Canada at the 2019 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Abu Dhabi. Each and every one of these athletes has worked hard to earn their place on the team, and with their honorary coach, coaches and mission staff, they're going to make all of Canada proud," said Duncan.

The Government of Canada is supporting Special Olympics Canada athletes by providing \$6,200,000 in 2018 to 2019. An incremental \$16 million over five years, starting in 2018 to 2019, with \$2 million per year ongoing, was announced in Budget 2018 for Special Olympics Canada to sustain its empowering movement, which supports more than 45,000 children, youth and adults in Canada with intellectual disabilities through its network of more than 21,500 volunteers, according to a news release.

Designated sports include 10-pin bowling, athletics, basketball, bocce, golf, powerlifting, rhythmic gymnastics, soccer and swimming.

Greek said a lot of athletes are from Ontario but they still have representation from every province and territories from the Yukon to Newfoundland.

Athletes will begin to intensify their workout regime as they head out in about five months from now.

"The athletes sign a training agreement and they commit to training anywhere from three to six times a week. They may do a gym session. If you're in a golf, you may not golf four times a week but you'll go to the gym or you'll do a mental training," said Greek. He said athletes will stay at the host town, where they will have a three-day period to climatize to the time difference while exploring cultural areas of the middle east.

"After those three days we'll be bussed into what we called athletes village, which is where we'll be staying for the games," said Greek.

"My role as chef de mission is an organizer. I work directly with people on our team that we call mission staff which are designated to a sport but are not coaching. The set up for the mission staff is so that we can take care of logistics. If they need something, we can do it so they can just focus on coaching. It's kind of like a manager."

Grummett said it's a privilege to represent Canada and wear the Canadian colours. He feels fortunate to continue playing for over 30 years.

?There's so many athletes that are just wishing they can be in the position that I'm in. They just can't quite make it for some reason or another. Some athletes work hard all their lives and don't get the success they maybe deserve. I'm very lucky and appreciative that I was chosen as a member of Team Canada once again,? Grummett said.