

James Naughton

*Special
Olympics
Illinois*



Sport: Powerlifting
Hometown: Chicago, IL
Age: 58

1. How long have you been with Special Olympics?

I have participated in Special Olympics for 43 years. I started at Blackhawk Park in July 1978 and was there until July 2002. When the program ended, my former coach got me in at Shabbona Park where I've been competing since 2002. I compete in basketball, powerlifting, floor hockey, volleyball, softball, track and field, snowshoeing, bocce, and swimming.

2. How has Special Olympics changed your life?

In 1978, my friend's parents told my mom all about Special Olympics and thought it would be a great thing for me to do. Most of the time I like to watch TV and I learn from my friends how much fun it was participating in sports. Thanks to my friend and my family, I love doing Special Olympics sports, I've made many friends, and I've had great coaches train me.

3. What has been your biggest obstacle to overcome?

The obstacle I've overcome was being shy at the beginning when I first started Special Olympics. Now I'm easygoing and communicate very well with my teammates, athlete friends, and my coaches who help me.

4. What makes you most proud?

I'm proud of competing in Special Olympics sports and trying my best in every way. I also like it when I win and do well. I like the pledge we take at every event, "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." It means a lot to me

5. What are some other accomplishments you are proud of?

In high school, I took physical education classes with other students for four years. I'm on the Shabbona White Sharks with my coaches and teammates. We competed in volleyball and we all did well and had fun.

6. What other interests or hobbies do you have?

I like going to Chicago sports events. I used to collect hot wheel cars and matchbox cars when I was growing up. I also like buying keychains from the different states and places I go to. I represent Shabbona Park with Matt Gorski and we tried to get more people and athletes interested in Special Olympics. We volunteer at events.



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7. Who do you admire most and why?

I admire my family who are proud of me for everything I do. They are so amazed at how much fun I have competing in Special Olympics sports. I also have a lot of friends and they are proud of how well I do in Special Olympics, too. My family and friends are proud of me when I try my best.

8. What does attending USA Games mean to you?

Attending the 2022 USA Games means a lot because I get to compete in powerlifting sports with different athletes from different states. I look forward to making new friends with the athletes competing and the different coaches.

9. How are you preparing/training for USA Games?

I take a lot of walks. I also work out with dumbbells and weights. I do various stretching exercises to keep me in shape. I will be working with my coaches and family too.

10. Have you been to a World Games or USA Games before?

This will be my first USA Games and I'm very excited about competing in powerlifting with other athletes in Orlando, FL.

11. Are you employed? If so, where at and what's your role?

I worked for the Chicago Public Library and have been there for 39 years. I started as a library page for 11 years and have been a full-time library clerk for 28 years. I get paid by the City of Chicago and I'm a city employee. I also worked at various Chicago public libraries and my favorite is Dunning Branch where I worked with great people and coworkers.

12. Are you currently a student? If so, where and is it a Unified Champion School?

I'm not currently a student in school.

