

**COPA AMÉRICAS**

**BRAZIL 2014**

**TEAM USA**

**ARGENTINA || URAGUAY || AUSTRALIA**

**CANADA || BRAZIL**

**MAY 2- MAY 4**



# BEN CARPENTER

## #1

### **What does playing power soccer mean to you?**

Power soccer has been one of the most pivotal experiences in my life and has helped me develop and grow by leaps and bounds not only as a competitive player, but also as a person, in terms of maturity, leadership capabilities, and commitment. In short, power soccer has been the catalyst for all of my competitive and social growth.

### **What does it mean to you to be part of Team USA?**

Being a part of Team USA carries substantial weight with me; it means that I am playing at a level seen as fit for international competition, but it also means that I must now work even harder to improve my play so that I can truly be at the top of my game for COPA.

### **How has playing power soccer affected your social life?**

It would be an understatement to say that power soccer has broken me out of my shell and removed me from my former social comfort zone. I certainly would have had a much rougher high school experience and would not have been able to easily adapt to college were it not for the life lessons that power soccer has taught me regarding communication, teamwork, and, most importantly: trust.

### **What would you say is your greatest strength on the court and why?**

I would say that my greatest strength is my versatility in terms of position and play. Whether it's a chair breaking down or my own chair flipping over, I am always willing to adapt to a new situation and overcome whatever challenges it may throw at my team. This is what I believe to be my greatest strength because it means that I can help my team overcome difficulties on the court and can make the adaptation easier for them so that we can all succeed as a team.

### **How important is it to you to win gold in this competition?**

Winning gold in the competition is my highest priority for COPA. I play for fun and greatly enjoy playing the game, but the one thing that always makes the game even more enjoyable is to accomplish something while playing. That accomplishment I am striving for is the gold.



# JC RUSSO

## #2

### **What does playing power soccer mean to you?**

Playing Power Soccer gives me a chance to express myself and challenge myself in ways I cannot in other areas of my life. The experiences I have at tournaments and the camaraderie between my teammates and opponents is has shaped my personality.

### **What does it mean to you to be part of Team USA?**

It is an honor to represent the United States and to be a role model for younger players around the country.

### **What would you say is your greatest strength on the court and why?**

Some of my strengths on the court are vision and being aware of where the holes in the defense are, anticipating where the ball is going and what the other team plans to do before they do it, and finishing shots on goal.

### **What would you say is your greatest accomplishment while playing power soccer and why?**

My most treasured accomplishment in power soccer is winning both world cups. The first world cup was a tremendous accomplishment because at that time, the new rules were still very new and nobody knew what the competition would be like, but the second world cup was even more so because everybody wanted to beat us. The way we came back after a loss to England in pool play is something the whole team is very proud of.

### **How important is it to you to win gold in this competition?**

It is as always my number one priority to win every tournament I go to. Team USA has a history of excellence and we don't plan to stop now. We have three veterans on the team between Natalie, Ed, and I. We have one of the greatest young players in the country Lexi Heer, who just got back from winning the U18 tournament in Paris. I am excited to play with Ben Carpenter and Kevin Mulholland in their first tour on the team. They both bring their own unique set of skills to the club. We're led by two of the best coaches in the country in my dad Dominic Russo and Chris Finn, who are always coming up with innovative ways to play the game. I am confident we will do very well.



# KEVIN MULHOLLAND #3

**Local club:** Tidewater Piranhas

**Experience:** 2005-Present 9 years

## **What are you most looking forward to in Brazil?**

After having been to Brazil before in 2012, I helped teach the Brazilians the game of power soccer along with my dad teaching the referees. I am mainly looking forward to my first international cap with representing the USA. Along with playing in my first international tournament.

## **What drives you as a player?**

Just the opportunity to play a sport that brings out Team work, Camaraderie and friendship. Power soccer even gives you the opportunity to become an international player to play for your country. To play a sport that enables severely disabled wheelchair bound people a chance to become athletes. The more games we play the more messages it sends out to people who have never even heard of power soccer who are using power chairs, living their lives in isolation with no hope or even awareness of a sport that could change there lives forever! I think that every place that fixes and sells wheelchairs should give out flyers and tell them about Power Soccer. Even let the able bodied community know about it because one day even they can become disabled. The first time I played power soccer I loved it. Prior to Power Soccer, there was only watching sports, watching your siblings play sports and mainly watching all sports from the sidelines. When I first hit that ball and started to play against other players I realized this is a true competitive sport. I never sat on the sidelines any more, I am now an athlete! When you play, you are now being watched by family and friends cheering for you. Going to practice, traveling to national tournaments and meeting new people, new friends. Right now I have friends across the World! I would really like to see power soccer in the Paralympics. I hope that one day power soccer athletes get paid. I hope some big sponsors out there donate money to the league and get everybody using the Strike Force. That we can become the biggest wheelchair sport in the world. Power Soccer is just a variation of the world's most popular sport, and that showing a televised world cup of power soccer would get peoples attention on a global stage!



# NATALIE RUSSO

## #4

**Local Club:** Circle City Rollers

**Experience:** 2-time National Champion (once with Sudden Impact and once with Circle City) and member of 2007 World Cup Championship Squad. Been playing for 10 years total.

**Your thoughts on representing the US for a second time?**

I'm very excited. It's of course an honor to be representing our country and the great power soccer we ensue!

**What are you most looking forward to about Brazil?**

I'm really looking forward to seeing and playing Team Australia. I was there a couple years ago to help them get started so I'm excited to see them as well as see how far they've come! I'm also really excited to meet Team Brazil and Team Argentina. It'll be great to welcome them into the international arena.

**What's it like playing alongside your brother JC?**

It's nice having the brother-sister connection. It makes chemistry that much easier! Plus it helps that we started at the same time in the same place so we've grown as athletes together as well.

**Your thoughts on Coach Finn and what he's meant to the sport?**

Chris has been a strong leader for Team USA with two World Cups under his belt. Back in 2007, no one knew what to expect from Team USA, we were definitely the underdog. But with Chris' leadership and intense workout program, we showed the world what US soccer is all about. The rest is all history.

**What drives you as a player?**

More and more now, the competition is getting tougher. With the new chairs, the speed of the game has increased adding a whole new dynamic and challenge. I'm driven to perform my best in challenges. Wanting to be an excellent teammate for my team to rely on also drives me. Besides the adrenaline and competition itself, of course.



# LEXI HEER

## #5

**Age:** 17

**Hometown:** Fishers, Indiana

**Years Played:** 10

**How did you begin playing power soccer?**

I first began playing power soccer when my Grandma saw an ad about it on the news. She then told my mom about it and my mom got connected to the Russo's. She took me to the first practice that they had and I have been hooked ever since.

**How does it feel to represent the country in this tournament?**

It is an honor to be able to represent our country and everyone who plays power soccer here.

**What would it mean to you to win the gold medal in this competition?**

It would mean that all the work I have put in throughout the years has paid off.

**What are you looking forward to the most during this international tournament?**

I am definitely looking forward to playing with my teammates and meeting new athletes.

**What strength do you add to Team USA?**

I think I add international playing experience and leadership skills.

**What is most exciting about playing power soccer against other countries?**

The most exciting part is that I get to see and learn how other countries play power soccer.

**What is the one thing you want other countries to know about American Power Soccer?**

I want other countries to be aware of the sport so that other people like me can experience the thrill and happiness of playing power soccer.



# ED MCGUIRE

## #6

**Age:** 33

**Hometown:** Mesa, Arizona

**Years Played:** 20

**How did you begin playing power soccer?**

My track & field coach introduced me to it.

**How does it feel to represent the country in this tournament?**

It is an honor.

**What would it mean to you to win the gold medal in this competition?**

That I can do anything I set my mind to.

**What are you looking forward to the most during this international tournament?**

Playing some awesome soccer with some awesome friends.

**What affect do you think the strike force chair will have on international play?**

It will only improve the level of play. Compared to other power soccer chairs, the strike force chair does exactly what the driver wants, when they want it done. When you take away the need to mentally compensate for the chair's shortcomings, you take away the chair. When you take away the chair, you take away the disability. All you are left with is a player.

**What strength do you add to Team USA?**

Defense

**What is most exciting about playing power soccer against other countries?**

Knowing you are amongst the top players of your game.

**What is the one thing you want other countries to know about American Power Soccer?**

We are in it for the players and nothing else.