

## ANOTHER AMBASSADOR FOR MILITARY RACQUETBALL and WOUNDED WARRIORS

### Chris Coy – What an Amazing Story!!

This future racquetball champion, Chris Coy was born with cancer in his stomach, which was discovered at five weeks of age. At three, he was diagnosed with a vascular infection that spread down his leg. The Coy family endured three years of chemotherapy and Chris's left foot and ankle were amputated at age four. He began preschool using a prosthetic limb below the knee.



"In the beginning, there was a lot of adjustment," Coy's mother, Susan, said. "He didn't want to wear (his leg) to preschool. So we decided that we would cover it up, so that the other kids wouldn't see it. That seemed to help him, and as he got more comfortable, he began wearing shorts."

At age seven, Coy first became interested in racquetball when his parents bought "The Health Club" in his hometown of Elk City, Oklahoma. "I spent a lot of time watching the guys play and would get in the court and practice on shots that I watched them do," he said. Everyone at the club would show him the game, but Coy always had his dad coach him at every tournament.

"I learned a lot from these guys," Coy said. "One man in particular, his name is Mike Dobson. He used to always tell me, 'Chris shoot your shots. It doesn't matter if you skip it, because eventually you're gonna have those shots down so good that no one will be able to return them'." Coy said he learned from that advice and realizes now that good shots and consistency is what it takes to win.

And his love of racquetball has also helped to manage his other medical conditions. "Many of the kids with prosthetics become couch potatoes. They don't get out and become active, which Chris needs to do in order to stay in shape to help combat his other conditions. Racquetball has been a great way for him to stay in shape," Susan said.

But there are still barriers to overcome. The family must deal with the cancer issue and Coy has suffered some heart damage from the chemotherapy. There is no bend or flex in his prosthetic leg, making it difficult for him to hit forehands. Doctors at the Shriners' Hospital in Dallas have said they will be able to fit the youngster with a workable leg in the future, allowing flexibility in the foot and ankle area. Right now, the prosthetic leg is easily broken. Susan said, "Every few months we have to get a new one, because he'll dive and slide on the court with his leg and tear it up. He wants that mobility, and tries the best he can to get it out of what he has."

This determination has brought the youngster extraordinary success. Chris played in his first Junior World tournament at the age of eight, boasting a sponsorship from Pro Kennex. He continued to play and improve his game with his dedication and four-hour-a-day practices. Susan said, "Pro Kennex believed in him." In 1998, he captured his first medal at the Junior Olympic championships: a silver with partner David Lewis of Colorado in the boys' 10-and-under doubles. Later that year, Coy earned two silver medals in the boys' 10- world junior singles and doubles competitions.

Even with his tournament successes, Coy feels the Sports Illustrated award was one of the most prestigious awards he has ever received.



"This award was not just for racquetball, but for all sports and junior athletes of all ages," he said. "I was extremely proud that the sport of racquetball got noticed and hope it will help in the future of our sport."

The award was presented to Coy on December 14 by tennis star Serena Williams and \*NSync's Justin Timberlake and Chris Kirkpatrick at the Beacon Theatre in New York City. After CBS's one-hour telecast of SI's "Sportsman of the Year Awards 2000" the word was out on the street.

Other athletes receiving awards on the broadcast included Tiger Woods (golf), Venus Williams (tennis), Derek Jeter (baseball), Curt Warner (football), Shaquille O'Neal (basketball), and the U.S. Olympic Team's gold medalists from the Sydney Games. Coy said he watches a lot of sports on television and "it was awesome to see those athletes in person."

He got a chance to speak to Woods, former boxers Joe Frazier and Sugar Ray Leonard, former basketball player Bill Walton, several of the gold medalists, and many others.

Coy found out he was being considered for the award on his way to the U.S. Open in Memphis last November. His family received a call from Sports Illustrated New York office, saying that out of 200 junior athletes, the magazine had chosen six finalists. "I thought it was pretty awesome just to be in the top six," Coy said.

Upon arrival in New York, the family met with Sports Illustrated, along with the other five finalists. "They explained the details and told us then that I had won. I was shocked and a bit overwhelmed."

He is seen as a role model in Oklahoma and throughout the racquetball community. Likewise, teachers and parents have been very supportive. This support has helped to give Coy the confidence he needed to succeed. "They don't look at Chris as having a handicap, but as an example for their own kids," Susan said.

Racquetball has given Coy a new set of friends and family. "He seems to know everyone when we come to these competitions," Susan said. "And if he doesn't know them, he will by the time it ends. Everyone seems to love him."

Coy named several athletes who he looks up to. "In racquetball there's Sudsy Monchik, Cliff Swain, Rocky Carson, Jack Huczek, Jason Mannino, John Ellis, Kane Waselenchuk, Mike Guidry, Mike Locker, Todd O'Neil and Ruben Gonzalez. Of course there are the girls: Christie Van Hees, Jackie Paraiso, and Cheryl Gudinas." In other sports, he looks up to Tiger Woods, Venus and Serena Williams, and Gustavo Kuerten, among others.

**FULL NAME: CHRIS COY**

DATE OF BIRTH: October 7, 1987

PLACE OF BIRTH: Elk City, Oklahoma

HOMETOWN: Elk City, Oklahoma

PARENTS: Susan & Mike Coy

SPONSOR: Head/Penn



**COMPETITIVE RECORD:**

Year Event/Site Finish

2000 World Juniors -- 3rd/B12- Gold singles

2000 World Juniors -- 1st/B12- dbls w/Grissom

2000 World Juniors -- 1st/MX12- dbls w/Moyle

2000 National Singles -- 1st/Men's C

2000 National Singles -- 1st/Men's 24- C/D

1999 Schomp Pro-Am, Denver -- 1st/B12- singles

1998 World Juniors -- 2nd/B10- Gold singles

1998 World Juniors -- 2nd/B10- Gold dbls w/Lewis

1998 Junior Olympics -- 2nd/B10- Gold dbls w/Lewis

1998 Junior Olympics -- Round of 16/B10- Gold singles

1998 Junior Olympics -- 1st/10- Blue singles

1997 World Juniors -- Qtrs/B10- Gold singles

1997 Junior Olympics -- Qtrs/B10- Gold singles

1996 World Juniors -- 3rd/B10- Red singles

1996 Arkansas Regional's -- 1st/B10- singles

Chris now resides in Oklahoma City and still plays competitively. He is finishing his Bachelor's Degree at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, concentrating on a degree in Business Administration & Management. He says that his limitations have not stopped him in the least bit in life. "Setting GOALS is my motivation, especially when I achieve what I set out to do!" He hopes that his story will inspire other service members who have been injured in combat and now are facing the new adjustments with prosthetics and rehabilitation. "If I can overcome my challenges, so can you", says Chris. "I am honored to be part of MRF and their rehabilitation program, designed to help Wounded Warriors in their recovery journey. I am ready to help MRF in anyway so I can motivate Soldiers", Chris concluded.