

Sports stars inspire disabled athletes

Web posted at: 4/23/2009 2:37:5

Source ::: The PENINSULA / BY RAYNALD RIVERA

DOHA: Renowned athletes who have been a source of inspiration for young people around the world interacted with physically challenged student athletes at the Shafallah Centre on the final day of the Fourth Annual International Forum on Children with Special Needs.

Nine-time track and field Olympic gold medallist Carl Lewis, Paralympic gold medallist high jumper Hou Bin, world champion skier Chris Waddell, and Qatari Paralympian weightlifter Ali Abdullah, along with Sir Philip Craven, President of the International Paralympic Committee, met with the children, encouraging them to unlock their potential, compete and succeed.

Speaking to media persons, Carl Lewis, who has been helping young people with disability through his Best Buddies project, underscored the significance of integrating the physically challenged into the society.

"I think people should realise that those with disabilities are like everyone else and should treat them equally. They have challenges and we have our own challenges as well, and our objective is to integrate them into the society," Lewis said.

He said people around him inspire him to contribute towards those in need and in turn gain and learn from them.

"I had tremendous role models. I was raised by parents who made me believe that I can achieve and be the best that I can be, and I hear people in my hometown about the difference they made in their lives. So, it's not really about me, it's about what I see in them, which makes me a better person," Lewis said.

"What motivates me is that I have a wonderful life and great opportunity and I think that the more you give, the more you get in life," he added.

Hou Bin said sport can play a very important role in the life of people with disabilities. "Sport is a platform to show everyone how great these people with disabilities are, attracting more attention from the world," said Bin. He lauded those who were working to make the Shafallah Center and the forum successful.

Assessing the success of the forum, Hassan Ali bin Ali, chairman of Shafallah Centre, said, "The objective of this is to show to the world that these children can be independent, be part of the society, have jobs, and participate better, so in that way I think we were very successful."



Olympic gold medallist Carl Lewis and other Olympic and Paralympic medallists with Shafallah athletes at the Center on the final day of the Fourth Annual International Forum yesterday. See also page 3 IBRAHIM R O