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KELLY BRUSH WINS PRESTIGIOUS NCAA INSPIRATION AWARD
FORMER COLLEGIATE SKIER A MODEL OF PERSISTENCE, POISE



BURLINGTON, Vermont (Jan. 12, 2009) – Former collegiate ski racer and 2008 Middlebury College graduate Kelly Brush has been recognized by the National Collegiate Athletic Association for her courage and determination in overcoming adversity granting her the prestigious Inspiration Award.

The Inspiration Award honors an individual who, when confronted with a life-altering situation, used perseverance, dedication and determination to overcome the event and now serves as a role model who gives hope and inspiration to others in similar situations. The honor is not automatically presented each year.

Brush was paralyzed in a ski racing accident while competing for Middlebury College in 2006. She returned to Middlebury, graduated with her class and started a foundation to promote ski racing safety and help others with spinal cord injuries.

Brush will receive the award at the NCAA Honors and Delegates Celebration Thursday, Jan. 15 in Washington, D.C. The ceremony will air at a later date on cable sports channel ESPN.

“Kelly is a true role model of perseverance and dedication for all NCAA student-athletes and individuals, and we’re proud to honor her with the NCAA Inspiration Award,” said Tim Gleason, chair of the NCAA Honors Committee and commissioner of the Ohio Athletic Conference. “Kelly could have easily given up, but her determination to return to competition and the classroom, and then to establish a foundation, shows a strong commitment to accomplish her goals, and it shows her compassion for others and devotion to the sport of skiing.”

Brush said she was honored to receive the Inspiration Award.

“I’m touched to receive this honor from the NCAA,” said Brush, who grew up in Charlotte, Vt. “Sports have been such a vital part of my life that when I had my accident I never thought about living any differently. I feel very fortunate to have had the support of my family, friends and the skiing community all of whom inspired me to dedicate myself to turning a tragedy into a catalyst for change and a forum for improving the lives of others living with spinal cord injury.”

After her fall in a giant slalom race at the Williams College Winter Carnival, Brush underwent 10 hours of surgery to realign and stabilize her spine and spent 2-1/2 months in rehabilitation. Currently, Brush has the use of her arms and has feeling at chest level and above.

Brush learned to navigate daily life in a wheelchair, and through determination and perseverance she learned how to ride a hand bike and drive a car. She returned to Middlebury, where, in addition to resuming her academic pursuits, she learned to mono-ski and rejoined her teammates traveling with them to races across northern New England. Brush’s goal was to race at Middlebury’s Winter Carnival in late February last

year, and after months of dedication to mastering mono-skiing, Brush successfully completed the steep and icy course with hundreds spectators looking on.

Brush didn't just focus on her own goals, she also kept the big picture in mind creating an awareness event at Middlebury in the fall of 2007 that gave students an opportunity to spend a portion of their normal day in a wheelchair, giving them a better understanding of the challenges faced by people in wheelchairs.

Despite missing a semester during her recovery, Brush made up her work with summer classes and graduated with her class in May 2008. As she accepted her diploma, a cheering crowd showed its support for all that she has accomplished, and the inspiration she has provided.

In the summer of 2006, Brush and her family established the Kelly Brush Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving ski racing safety. The foundation also works to enhance the quality of life for those with spinal cord injury by providing adaptive sports equipment, advancing scientific research on spinal cord injury and supporting the U.S. Disabled Ski Team.

The foundation created the Kelly Brush Century Ride, a 100-mile bicycle event that this fall drew 366 riders and raised \$137,000. Brush and her father Charlie Brush rode their hand bikes 29 miles.

Last winter The Kelly Brush Foundation launched a national campaign to improve ski racing safety and prevent spinal cord injury. The *Ski Racing Safety is No Accident Campaign* has granted over \$58,000 to ski clubs across the country, helping clubs purchase essential safety equipment including fencing and protective gear.

Brush's accomplishments have made a significant contribution to the college community and beyond, said Erin Quinn, Middlebury College director of athletics.

"Kelly has been an inspiration to the Middlebury College community, the ski community, and beyond, through her own personal recovery, but also through her outreach through

the Kelly Brush Foundation,” Quinn said. “Kelly's participation in the Kelly Brush Century Ride on a hand bike, her participation in the Middlebury College Winter Carnival on a mono-ski, and her commitment to help others through the Kelly Brush Foundation set an inspiring example and also make a significant contribution to enhancing ski safety and to improving the lives of others with spinal cord injuries.”

The Inspiration Award recipients are selected by the NCAA Honors Committee. Members of the committee are Gene Corrigan, former Atlantic Coast Conference commissioner; Tim Gleason (chair), commissioner, Ohio Athletic Conference; Calvin Hill, consultant, Alexander & Associates, Inc.; Jackie Joyner-Kersey, former UCLA track and field student-athlete and Olympian; Gibbs Knotts, faculty athletics representative, Western Carolina; Robert Lawless, president emeritus, Tulsa; Roxanne Levenson, associate director of athletics, Pepperdine; Barbara Walker, senior associate director of athletics/senior woman administrator, Wake Forest; and Willie Washington, director of athletics, Benedict.

About the foundation: The Kelly Brush Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization dedicated to improving ski racing safety, enhancing the quality of life for those with spinal cord injury (SCI) through providing adaptive sports equipment, advancing scientific research on SCI and supporting the U.S. Disabled Ski Team. Kelly Brush, together with her family and friends, started the foundation in 2006 after she sustained a spinal cord injury while racing in NCAA Div. 1 competition as a member of the Middlebury College Ski Team in Vermont. That injury left Kelly paralyzed from the chest down. The Kelly Brush Foundation affirms Kelly's ongoing commitment to live life to the fullest on her own terms and better the lives of others living with SCI.
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