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## **LONDON POWERLIFTER CHRIS MORGAN NAMED GAY GAMES AMBASSADOR**

*Two-time Gay Games medalist adds silver medal in world championships*

**NEW YORK, 23 December 2004** – If the three guiding principles of the Gay Games are Inclusion, Participation and Personal Best, the fourth unofficial principle surely is Inspiration.

For powerlifter Chris Morgan of London, the inspiration to combat stereotypes and homophobia led him to a silver medal in the 1998 Amsterdam Gay Games, a gold in the 2002 Sydney Gay Games, and last month a silver medal in in the World Drug-Free Powerlifting Championships in Atlanta.

Now he hopes to use that drive to inspire other LGBT athletes in his role as the newest international Federation of Gay Games Ambassador.

"The 'spirit' of the Games runs through me," Morgan said after being named the first Gay Games Ambassador from outside the United States. "In 1998 I had the most wonderful, magical experience, one that changed my life forever. Walking into Ajax Stadium, the Opening Ceremony, the Friendship Village, lifting a weight competitively for the first time ... and walking away from my first Games with a shiny silver medal in my hand! I knew then that within myself I had the talent to make world level in my 'new' chosen sport. I also knew that the only way to do this was 'Out' and 'Proud.' This was my calling."



"This is what is unique about the Gay Games," said Roberto Mantaci, Co-President. "On the one hand, in keeping with the Gay Games' founding principles of Participation, Inclusion and Personal Best, no minimum standard is required to participate. Recreational, senior and even inexperienced athletes can take part, feel welcome and have an enjoyable and life changing experience. On the other hand, elite athletes like Chris Morgan can also enter a world class competition that tests their high level performances. In the past, world master records have been broken at the

Gay Games. Such performances can inspire other LGBT athletes to strive even higher in sports and other endeavors in life."

"I believe that it's time that gay athletes who compete at the elite level are open and honest about their sexual orientation while still active in their sport careers," Morgan said. "We've lived in the shadows for too long, and we are missing a whole generation of gay athletes in the world of sport. This is not only due to fear of homophobia, but also because of the perceived lack of funding, support and sponsor endorsements for professional athletes who decide to come out. It's time for that to change, and the Gay Games are contributing to making those changes possible"

Morgan is actively training for the 2006 Gay Games, July 15-22 in Chicago. But his involvement with the FGG doesn't extend solely to competing in the quadrennial event. This year as a volunteer he led the Sports Committee's drafting of a new anti-doping policy that will allow all lifters to perform safely and fairly regardless of health status.

"I was impressed with his persistence, convictions and values," said Sports Committee co-chair Gene Dermody. "There was no equivocation or indifference in his commitment to help us forge a very difficult policy: a visionary policy that sets a new standard for the Gay Games."

Morgan joins an illustrious roster of Gay Games Ambassadors that includes Olympic gold medal swimmer Bruce Hayes, champion figure skater Rudy Galindo, rock musician Melissa Etheridge, former U.S. Ambassador James Hormel, former Major League Baseball player Billy Bean, former National Football League player Esera Tuaolo, tennis legend Billie Jean King, photographer Tom Bianchi, and actors Judith Light and Amanda Bearse.

For information about how to sponsor or participate in Gay Games VII in Chicago, visit [GayGamesChicago.org](http://GayGamesChicago.org), e-mail [info@gaygameschicago.org](mailto:info@gaygameschicago.org), or phone (773) 907-2006. For information about the Federation of Gay Games, go to [www.gaygames.com](http://www.gaygames.com).

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### **About The Federation of Gay Games:**

The Federation of Gay Games is the international governing body that perpetuates the quadrennial Gay Games and promotes the event's founding principles of participation, inclusion and personal best. The Gay Games was conceived by Dr. Tom Waddell, an Olympic decathlete, and was first held in San Francisco in 1982 with 1,350 participants. Subsequent Gay Games were held in San Francisco (1986; 3,500 participants), Vancouver (1990; 7,300 participants), New York (1994; 12,500 participants), Amsterdam (1998; 13,000 participants), and Sydney (2002; 11,000 participants). Gay Games VII will be held in Chicago from 15-22, July 2006.

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