

My name is Matt Scott and I've had the honor of representing the United States of America in the Paralympic games for team USA's wheelchair basketball team throughout the last five consecutive games. Throughout this nearly two decades of commitment, I've been proud to compete at the highest level, and have played an enormous role in raising societal perceptions of what it means to be a Paralympic athlete. The equity in adaptive sports has seen a significantly positive change largely due to the public awareness our athletes have generated. This awareness has shifted the minds in our society and elite level Paralympians are being acknowledged for their accomplishments and respected for the hard work and commitment it takes. Unlike our able-bodied counterparts, in order for a wheelchair basketball player to compete we need to have specialized, custom equipment created specifically for the purpose of sport. Our sports wheelchairs are entirely different from my daily wheelchair. The wheelchair that I use on a daily basis is vital to my mobility needs as it is my primary means of movement. My wheelchair makes me feel strong. My wheelchair makes me feel independent. My wheelchair makes me feel whole. While traveling for competition on numerous occasions I have reached my destination, and received my wheelchairs mishandled, neglected, damaged, and sometimes destroyed beyond repair. The reality for the airline in these instances is that a piece of equipment is broken, and they are to take accountability by replacing it. My reality in these instances differs greatly. I consider my wheelchairs to be an extension of my body. These items cannot just simply be replaced. I am an active member in society. I work a full-time corporate job, I serve on a board of directors, volunteer time with non-profits, I have several endorsement deals, compete in multiple adaptive sports, manage sponsorship appearances, and conduct a variety of public speaking roles throughout the country. Many of these commitments require me to not only have access to one of my wheelchairs, but access to both when I fly. When these items are returned to me after being handled improperly by untrained airport personnel the damage that is done is devastating. Travelling internationally to a world class competition and upon arrival realizing I won't be able to represent the country due to negligence is

my worst nightmare, and a constant fear that many athletes like myself have had to experience. My fear is that the chair itself will be replaced in time; however the loss of accolades, loss of income, loss of future opportunity goes unseen and unaccounted for. Not to mention the mental and emotional anguish these experiences cause. I currently travel with an arguably unhealthy amount of anxiety during airline travel that stems from the uncertainty of whether I'll get my wheelchairs returned to me in a suitable condition. My goal is that by providing this testimony that these experiences are palpable. A solution that benefits all parties involved is possible when one thing is clearly and universally understood. Personal wheelchairs and other types of assistive mobility devices are not to be treated as just another piece of equipment but handled with the appropriate care of a trained personnel. My hope is to be part of the solution. This is not a complaint but a call to action. Thank you for an opportunity to be heard.