

American Figure Skating Great Michelle Kwan Will Light 2007 State Games of America Torch On August 2

COLORADO SPRINGS, July 8—One of America's greatest athletes has been selected to light the torch and open the 2007 State Games of America as part of the Opening Ceremony on August 2 at the Colorado Springs World Arena.

Olympic medalist and World Champion figure skater Michelle Kwan will welcome athletes and spectators from 47 states and ignite the flame to open the fifth edition of the nation's largest Olympic-style multi-sport event for athletes of all ages and skill levels, including a record 1,100 figure skaters.

Kwan joins the ranks of Olympic greats who have shared this honor at previous Games, including track and field legend Jackie Joyner-Kersey, wrestling icon Rulon Gardner, and basketball star Vince Carter.

"We are thrilled and honored that Michelle Kwan will take part in the Opening Ceremony," said State Games of America honorary co-chair Bill Hybl, President Emeritus of the United States Olympic Committee and former IOC Member. "She is not only one of our nation's greatest athletes, but a young woman who has inspired our nation with her grace, passion and performance."

The most decorated figure skater in U.S. history, Michelle Kwan's skating brilliance and accomplishments have earned her a place among the all-time greats of the sport. For over a decade (1995-2005) she dominated the sport like no other skater in history, winning an unprecedented 43 championships, including five World Championships, eight consecutive and nine overall U.S. National Championships and two Olympic medals. In the nearly 100-year history of U.S. figure skating, no American man or woman has won more world titles, national titles or Olympic medals.

Her activities off the ice have been equally noteworthy. This past November U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice appointed Michelle as the first American Public Diplomacy Envoy. In this capacity Michelle travels the world and meets with young people to speak about leadership and to engage them in dialogue on social and educational issues. Michelle, 27, is currently a full-time student at the University of Denver where she is majoring in political science with a minor in international studies.

Kwan's skating artistry and grace are without equal. In her career she received 57 perfect 6.0 marks, the most by any skater in history. No performances were better than her two at the 1998 U.S. National Championships, where Michelle earned a record 15 perfect 6.0 marks out of a possible 18. To this day it is called "the gold standard for future generations of figure skaters."

Michelle has earned numerous awards and honors, including: 2003 U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) SportsWoman of the Year; 2001 Sullivan Award as the top amateur athlete in America; 1998 Sportswoman of the Year by the Women's Sports Foundation; 2002 and 2003 Kids' Choice Award and the 2002 Teen Choice Award as America's favorite female athlete; and a 2002 CosmoGirl! of the Year for her accomplishments and inspiration to others.

In 2000 she was selected one of *People Magazine's* "50 Most Beautiful People in the World". In 2003 Michelle earned her seventh U.S. Figure Skating Skater of the Year award, the only multiple winner of the prestigious award. In an unprecedented move, U.S. Figure Skating renamed the award in her honor. It is now called the *Michelle Kwan Trophy*.

Michelle's philosophy, in skating and in life: "Work hard, be yourself and have fun!"

And, that is precisely what the 10,000 athletes will do over the long August weekend in Colorado Springs.

The Opening Ceremony, sponsored by AT&T, is set for 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 2, at the Colorado Springs World Arena.

Athletes will receive free admission to the Opening Ceremony. Spectators can purchase Opening Ceremony tickets, \$10 for adults, \$5 for youth (18 & under) & seniors (55+) Call 866-

464-2626 to purchase tickets or go to www.ticketwest.com. 1,931 of 5,000 available tickets for the public have already been purchased.

Athletes from across the nation can still go to: www.stategames.org, then click on the State Games of America logo for complete registration information, lodging and accommodations information, ticket details and much more.

Prominent State Games alumni athletes include Olympians and others: Jeff Blatnick, Ralph Boston, Tracy Caulkins, Calbert Cheaney, Diane Dixon, Tom Dolan, Suzy Favor-Hamilton, Dan Gable, Rowdy Gaines, Harvey Glance, Nancy Hogshead, Roy Jones, Sarah Hughes, Kobe Bryant, Rebecca Lobo, Nancy Kerrigan, Bill Guerin, Mike Richter, Danny Manning, Henry Marsh, Eric Montross, Chris Mullin, Tab Ramos, Glenn Robinson, Mike Mussina, Christian Laettner, Lones Wigger, Jr. and Paul Wylie.