



ON A ROLL

Ryan Nelson was born with spina bifida, a birth defect that causes different degrees of paralysis. Ryan gets around mostly in a wheelchair, but he will often sit on his legs and scoot around the house. In fact, he uses this method when he plays football in the front yard with neighborhood kids. Ryan loves sports. He enjoyed watching his older brother and wanted to be on sports teams too. He started wheelchair basketball when he was about 5 and tennis when he was 12.

What has tennis done for you? It has opened up a lot of opportunities. I have found success. I went to England and played on the world team cup for tennis. Here at home I play for the Brighton High School tennis team. I think I am the first wheelchair athlete to make a regular high school sports team in Utah. Wheelchair players use spin rather than power. I can play against able-bodied players, but it's hard to beat them. I love playing doubles.

How about basketball?

I play point guard for both of the teams I am on. I'm pretty fast. Most of the other players are in wheelchairs because of injuries, so they sit regular height. I'm shorter, so I have to use my speed. I appreciate my coach, who spent so much time teaching me. Now I like to serve by helping the little kids who are just starting out. Some of them have a hard time, but I enjoy encouraging them.

What would you tell people who are scared to try new things? Just do it, because it opens up so many more opportunities. There is so much more you can do.

Have you ever questioned why this happened to you? No. I know that God has a plan for me. I just know it's supposed to be. It doesn't matter to me anymore.

You are part of another team, your priesthood quorum. What have you learned from them? My testi-

mony has definitely grown from hearing other people's testimonies, mainly my teachers quorum advisers. It's a group of guys who are just amazing. They bear their testimonies almost every Sunday, and it has strengthened mine. **NE**

—As told to Janet Thomas,
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Name: Ryan Nelson

Age: 16

Location: Sandy, Utah

Accomplishments: Ranked 3rd in the USA and 17th in the world in junior wheelchair tennis. Plays on the Utah Wheelin' Jazz adult and junior wheelchair basketball teams.