

## SPORT

The wheel deal: Todd Philpott crosses the finish line at the New York Marathon in November, securing first place in his class and a place in history



# Rolling into history

**WHEN Todd Philpott** crossed the finish line of the New York marathon in November, the former rigger and dogman made history. Not only was he the first athlete to finish the gruelling race, he became the first contestant to win back to back titles.

It is an achievement the para-athlete acknowledges was made possible in large part by the CFMEU, which has backed his rising sporting career since he lost his leg in a motorcycle accident in 1992.

"Without the CFMEU and the workers I would never have had the opportunity to be the best I could be in my sport," the world champion para-athlete says.

In New York Philpott's wheels were also powered by the spirit of the disabled children he has "adopted" as patron of Limbkids – an association for children with prosthetics.

"I've got a couple of thousand kids pushing me up the hill in New York," he says.

His role with Limbkids has become an over-riding passion for Philpott and a way in which to acknowledge the help he has received. "You can't save the world, but you can do your own little bit. Helping these kids is just a way of paying back some of the help I've received," he says.

"I was 34 when I lost my leg. They (the kids) figure if an old bugger like me can do what I do, then they can as well."

A chance meeting in Washington could also see Philpott give his likely rivals a helping hand. He joined up with the Marines team for the Washington marathon to find many of his team-mates were soldiers who had lost limbs fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His blitz of the field led to requests from the marines for help in developing training programs for

returned and injured soldiers. "They look at me knowing I am a world champion and sports scientist and know I can do a proper program for them," he says.

It is just another example of Philpott's determination to use his time as world champion well. His focus for the future is to snatch the triple crown in 2006 – Boston, Washington and New York – before easing off in 2007 to focus on the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

He hopes the publicity of a gold medal win there will help promote his main dream – a world handcycle tour in 2009 covering a staggering 42,500km.

The event – which he believes could take as long as 18 months – would be a fundraiser for Limbkids and amputee children worldwide.

"In the States I want to challenge (Californian governor Arnold) Schwarzenegger to go a mile with me .. and I'll hook up with other people on the way to promote the event."

The group that launched his career, the Achilles Club, will supply logistical support through 64 clubs worldwide. Philpott gets no government support or assistance and relies on the CFMEU's efforts on his behalf, a couple of sport product endorsements and a weekly sponsorship from insurance group Coverforce.

His father Vern, a union member all his life, is according to Todd "as proud as punch" of his son's efforts and of the union's support. Philpott repays the CFMEU's allegiance with some sponsorship of his own as a regular figure at protest rallies voicing his anger at Howard's attack on work conditions and fears for the safety of workers.

For more information on the Limbkids Foundation see: [www.limbkids.asn.au](http://www.limbkids.asn.au)



### Touch one, touch all

There are many ways to raise awareness about unions, but one of the more unusual ones happens each Wednesday evening at Wattle Grove. That is when the Touch One, Touch All Austag team, pictured above, take to the field in Liverpool, proudly wearing their Your Rights at Work union T-shirts. The team includes CFMEU Apprenticeship Officer Rohan Tobler, a construction industry apprentice and a concreter. "We thought playing in our union gear would be a good way of making our struggle visible," Rohan said. "We go out and play, and then talk to people afterwards if they are interested to learn about the union struggle." The team had a cracker of a season, narrowly missing out on a place in the finals. So there's obviously something powerful in the push for collective rights. "Well, we all work together, if I don't die of a heart attack first, I'll hang in there for the rest of the season," Tobler says.