

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks Honoring the 2024 United States Olympic and Paralympic Teams
September 30, 2024

The President. Hello, hello, hello!

[At this point, the President turned around and addressed participants positioned behind the podium.]

If I didn't say this, my dad would come down from heaven and you know what—*[laughter]*. Please excuse my back while I'm speaking. I apologize. *[Laughter]*

Folks, hello, Team U.S.A.! You've got a few fans out there on the South Lawn. *[Laughter]* Yes, let's hear you. Let's hear the South Lawn.

Paul, thank you to the introduction.

Audience member. U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. You've got it, kid. *[Laughter]* You got it.

And, Paul, for your incredible courage. Adrina, I thank you. I *[don't; White House correction]* doubt you'll be representing Team U.S.A. one day as well. I think it's going to happen.

Paul, along with Torri, thank you for representing your fellow Olympians and Paralympians. But, Torri, let me say, this is not my house; this is your house. This is your house. That's the God's truth: Team U.S.A.'s house. I'm just a temporary resident. It's only a couple months left. *[Laughter]*

But thank you to all your family and friends who support these incredible athletes.

Torri's dad said it best, only in America—only in America—do we believe anything is possible.

I spent close to 100 hours alone with Xi Jinping of China. He asked me—when I was in the Tibetan Plateau with him, when I was Vice President, he said, "Can you define America for me?" This is the God's truth. And I said, "Yes, in one word." He looked at me. I said, "Possibilities."

We're the only nation that thinks anything is possible when we set a mind to do it. That's what all of you embody.

On behalf of the entire nation and thousands of fans here today, thank you. Thank you for representing the very best of America.

And because I'm President and I cause commotion when I go places—*[laughter]*—they wouldn't let me go the Olympics. But I watched it all. Jill, my wife, went to the Olympics. Guess what? I was supposed to be introducing at the Inauguration of the President of Mexico, who is a fine woman—I'm going to be seeing her shortly—but I said I'm staying here and meeting you guys. She's going to represent the United States. She's in Mexico. *[Laughter]*

But she was able to say hi to many of you this morning before you left. I said: "Where were you this morning? I was looking for you." She said, "I was out saying hello to the Olympians." *[Laughter]*

Now, as you know, she led the U.S. delegation to Paris. All she did when she came back home—I mean this from the bottom of my heart—was talk about how amazing you all are, talk about the amazing resilience, the courage, and the commitment, and your loyalty to one another.

My staff would have their TVs on watching you as I was trying to get briefed on national security. [Laughter] But, in fairness, I had the TV on in the Oval Office as well. [Laughter]

We felt so much pride, and I'm honored to welcome 400 athletes from—[inaudible]—U.S.A.—Team U.S.A. today here at the Capital. Part of a nation so vast, so diverse, and so talented, it's like no other country on Earth.

Two hundred and thirty total medals win—won at this year's Olympic and Paralympic Games to finish the top of overall medal count, period.

When you competed, it wasn't just you in the spotlight. You were—you represented all the people who sacrificed for you, as was mentioned earlier, just as you've sacrificed yourselves: early hours, long days, intense training, sometimes overcoming extreme disappointment. For many of you, you hold down multiple jobs to fund your dreams.

And by the way, we need to do more to support all of our Team U.S.A. athletes. You're parents. You're caretakers. And 28 of you have also worn a uniform representing our country and one of our Armed Forces. As your Commander in Chief, I say thank you for your service, wherever the hell you are. [Laughter] We owe you. That's not hyperbole. We owe you.

Yes, you've sacrificed, but you look at—you have to look at who you lift up. Your families wept with joy, filled with pride. Your hometowns honor you. And to your fellow Americans, most of whom have never known—you've never known, you've become their heroes—their heroes.

How many—how many parents talk to their kids who are having difficulty and say: "You can do this. You can overcome anything"? I think we underestimate how much you do, what incentives you provide for people. You know, they see you, and they begin to believe in themselves.

And by the way, I told her, when she's President of the United States—[laughter]—and they say, "Joe Biden is in the waiting," she promised me she won't say "Joe who?" [Laughter]

Whether this was your first time at the Games or the peak of a distinguished career, your legacy is one of discipline, success, joy, and loyalty to one another. And that legacy is part of something bigger than yourselves: It's about your country, the greatest sports nation in the history of the world.

In the next few years, we get to showcase to the world from our own backyard. The World Cup in 2026, hosted by the United States of America. And the Los Angeles Summer Games in '28. I won't be President. They can't stop me from going there then. [Laughter] That will include distinctly American sports for the first time: flag football, lacrosse—and making their return—baseball and softball. And the Salt Lake City Winter Games of 2034. It matters.

Let me close with this. Last May, I awarded the Nation's highest honor, a Presidential Medal of Freedom, to the late Jim Thorpe.

If you'll hold for a moment, my grandfather, Ambrose Finnegan, was an All-American in college at Santa Clara. And he was—always talked sports all the time in Scranton. He always talked about Jim Thorpe. I mean it sincerely. And why—why—we didn't pay enough attention, why we didn't honor one of the greatest athletes in American history. The first Native American to win an Olympic gold medal; world record settler in the—settler [setter; White House correction] in the decathlon—world-class football, baseball, a basketball player. Put simply, the greatest ever.

And his legacy wasn't just cemented by example of his power, but by the power of his example. He overcame vile racism and shameful bigotry, and he broke barriers. Just like his given name, Bright Path—that was his name, Bright Path—he led a way for future generations.

And now it's your turn, your turn to take the torch from those before you, to run the race to the fullest, and then pass the torch to those who follow. I know something about that.

Look, folks, Kamala and I had a wonderful time leading this U.S. delegation.

We know the power of sports to empower and bring us together.

There's nothing like the simple truth that's already been stated: only in America. And it's a great honor to represent our Nation and to hear those letters: U.S.A. U.S.A. U.S.A.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. I mean it.

Folks, I've never been more optimistic about our future, and I mean that. We just have to remember who the hell we are. We're the United States of America. And I mean this from the bottom of my heart: There is nothing we can't do when we do it together—nothing.

God bless you all, may God protect our troops.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for all you've done.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:01 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Paul Schulte, wheelchair basketball player, U.S. Paralympic team; Tucson, AZ, resident and wheelchair basketball player Adrina Castro; Torri Huske, swimmer, U.S. Olympic team, and her father Jim; President Xi Jinping of China; President Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo of Mexico; and Vice President Kamala D. Harris.

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