



Fireworks brighten the night sky at Rice-Eccles Stadium during opening ceremonies of the eighth Paralympic Winter Games. A crowd of 40,000 attended the festivities.

2002 Paralympics

Return of the fire

By Lisa Riley Roche
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A flame is burning again in the caldron above Rice-Eccles Stadium, this time for the athletes competing in the 2002 Paralympics.

Two members of the U.S. team, Muffy Davis and Chris Waddell reignited the caldron Thursday night during the Paralympic opening ceremonies.

Eric Weihenmayer, the only blind person ever to scale Mount Everest, carried the flame from the stadium floor up to the base of the caldron.

Weihenmayer, who navigated the crowded stands and a long corridor assisted only by his guide dog, was a powerful symbol of the theme of the 2½-hour-long ceremonies — overcoming obstacles to reach goals.

He later compared carrying the torch to his historic climb. "There are a lot of similarities in terms of pushing past what you think your limitations are and pushing through doubt, pushing through fear and celebrating every step."

The final torchbearers who carried the flame into the stadium were competitors from previous Winter Paralympics in Sweden, Austria, France, Norway and Japan.

These, the eighth Paralympic Winter Games, continue through March 16 and have brought nearly 450 athletes from 36 countries to compete in alpine and cross country skiing, biathlon and ice sled hockey.

The scale is smaller than the 2002 Olympic Winter Games that attracted some 2,500 athletes from more than twice as many coun-



Wheelchair athletes enter Rice-Eccles Stadium during opening ceremonies. Nearly 450 athletes from 36 countries are competing in the Games, which run through March 16.

SALT LAKE PARALYMPICS

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