

Archbishop Wood grad looks for gold in two events

Kyle Atras will take part in swimming and volleyball during the upcoming event in Bangkok, Thailand.

By **KAREN SANGILLO**
COURIER TIMES

Archbishop Wood graduate Kyle Atras will be competing in swimming and volleyball at the 2007 World Transplant Games Aug. 25-Sept. 2 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Atras, a resident of Willow Grove who graduated from Archbishop Wood on June 4, had a heart transplant when he was 8½ months old after a diagnosis of dilated cardiomyopathy at the age of 3 months at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

At the time, CHOP did not have a license to do transplants and St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, also in Philadelphia, had a license but no surgeon, so Atras had the transplant done at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore on October 29, 1989.

Although he has been to quite a few United States Transplant Games, this will be his first World Games.

"I can't wait," he said. "It looks

like a lot of fun. The chance to go to Bangkok doesn't come around every day so my family, and I decided to jump on the opportunity."

"This is my first time at an international competition, so I'm really excited about that," he said. "I expect really good competition there, and I'm looking forward to meeting athletes from other countries."

He heard about the event from other swimmers at the national games.

"Everyone told me how much fun it is and how fast the times are, so I thought it would be fun to do it myself," he said.

He will be joined on the trip by parents Matt and Betsy, brother Chris, age 12, and a family friend, Nancy Harmon.

"I'll have a big cheering section," he said.

Balancing two sports won't be difficult.

"They don't ever run on the same



Kyle Atras

days, so I think it's going to work out for me," he said. "I might have to miss a practice for one to compete in the other, but it's no big deal."

He has been to U.S. Games in Orlando, Fla., St. Paul, Minn., and Louisville, Ky. The next one is in Pittsburgh in 2008.

"That one's a lot closer, so I'm pretty sure I'll be going to that," he said. "The rumor is that the next World Games is going to be in Australia. That would be great to go to, but these things are expensive so I'll have to wait and see if I can swing it."

Atras lives his life without thinking too much about his transplant.

"I just do my thing," he said. "The only time I really think about it is when I'm in the doctor's office because that's why I'm there."

"I want to live my life with no limitations and do whatever I feel I can do. I've been really fortunate not to have any major problems and I hope it stays that way."

He was a four-year letter winner on the Wood swim team.

Wood swim coach Charlie Stillwell enjoyed having Atras on the squad.

"Kyle is a good team person," Stillwell said. "He worked hard and covered all of the events I needed him to cover without complaining. He understood that we had a small team and that he couldn't always swim where he wanted to."

"He almost always made practice and had fun. He was great to work with."

That team attitude will be an asset to Atras as he heads to Hood College, a Division III school in Frederick, Md., where he will major in broadcast journalism and plans to go out for the swim team.

"It's a small team that hasn't been around that long so I think I'll fit it," he said. "It's actually pretty similar to Wood. I'm used to swimming a lot of different events so hopefully that will help me."

Atras will miss the first week of classes due to the World Games.

"The school was completely fine with it," he said. "They actually encouraged me to go, because they saw it the way I do. This is going to be the experience of a lifetime."

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