

Team USA and Team Toyota athletes Oksana Masters, Amy Purdy and Evan Strong capture medals at Paralympic Winter Games

March 16, 2018

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PYEONGCHANG, South Korea – A group of Team USA and Team Toyota athletes garnered Paralympic Winter Games medals for their performances in banked slalom snowboarding and biathlon skiing on Friday, March 16.

In banked slalom, Amy Purdy and Evan Strong put in strong third-run performances to capture bronze and silver medals, respectively.

“It’s just amazing,” Purdy said. “There’s a much bigger picture here of thinking you can’t do something because you have a prosthetic leg or have injuries and pulling it together and making it happen, committing and going for it to see what the possibilities are. I look back to when I lost both my legs and just wanting to snowboard again. I certainly wouldn’t have known that I’d come here and win the medals that I have. I’m grateful that I’m able to share that with other people and that they can maybe look at what we do and say ‘hey, if they can do that then I can do that as well.’”

Purdy tallied her third-career Paralympic Winter Games medal after finishing third in the LL1 class of women’s banked slalom. It was her second medal at the Paralympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 after she won the silver medal in women’s snowboard cross earlier this week.

The Nevada native contracted a form of bacterial meningitis at the age of 19 that resulted in both of her legs being amputated below the knee, as well as the loss of both kidneys. Seven months after receiving her leg prosthetics, Purdy began snowboarding, which led her to the Paralympic Winter Games. A 2014 Dancing with the Stars finalist and New York Times best-selling author, Purdy is also the cofounder of Adaptive Action Spots (AAS), an organization dedicated to creating opportunities for athletes with physical disabilities.

Strong’s medal is his second career Paralympic Medal as the California native won the silver medal in the LL2 class of men’s banked slalom. He previously captured a gold medal in snowboard cross in the Paralympic Winter Games Sochi 2014.

“Medals are great but each one went through a life-changing experience and we all had to adapt from this limitation,” Strong said. “To come out and showcase our abilities instead of our disabilities and at the level of riding we’re able to do that through the avenue of snowboarding, I’m so proud of my sport. I’m stoked to be a part of this movement.”

Strong grew up surfing and skateboarding in Hawaii when at the age of 17, while he was on a motorcycle, he was hit head on by a driver which led to a below the knee amputation of his left leg. Strong has since become the first male athlete to win an individual gold medal in snowboarding at the Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi and has competed in and won numerous medals in able body snowboard events.

In addition to Purdy and Strong’s snowboarding medals, Oksana Masters captured her fourth medal in PyeongChang, this time in the women’s 12.5km sitting biathlon. Masters finished second after shooting clean for 20 out of 20 shots and finishing 19 seconds behind first place.

“I just focused on that ‘breathe, exhale, pause, squeeze’ which is everything I’ve been training and practicing,” Masters said. “I couldn’t believe it. I almost fell going around the corner telling my coach “I cleaned!” I can’t believe it.”

Masters is a four-time U.S. Paralympian and now a seven-time medalist. A native of Ukraine, Masters was born with birth defects, including legs with no weight-bearing bones, as a direct cause of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl and had both legs amputated above the knee.