

Overcoming the Impossible Leads Team Toyota's Paralympic Athletes to Tokyo 2020

August 17, 2021

Image not found or type unknown



They've turned obstacles into opportunities. They've risen above their peers. And now that the Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 are just days away, Team Toyota athletes are ready to continue making the impossible possible.

When the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 were postponed by a year, it unlocked the challenger spirit in each of the Team Toyota athletes. They trained harder with a focus on one goal — determined to continue on and earn their moment. And, Toyota has been there at every step cheering them on.

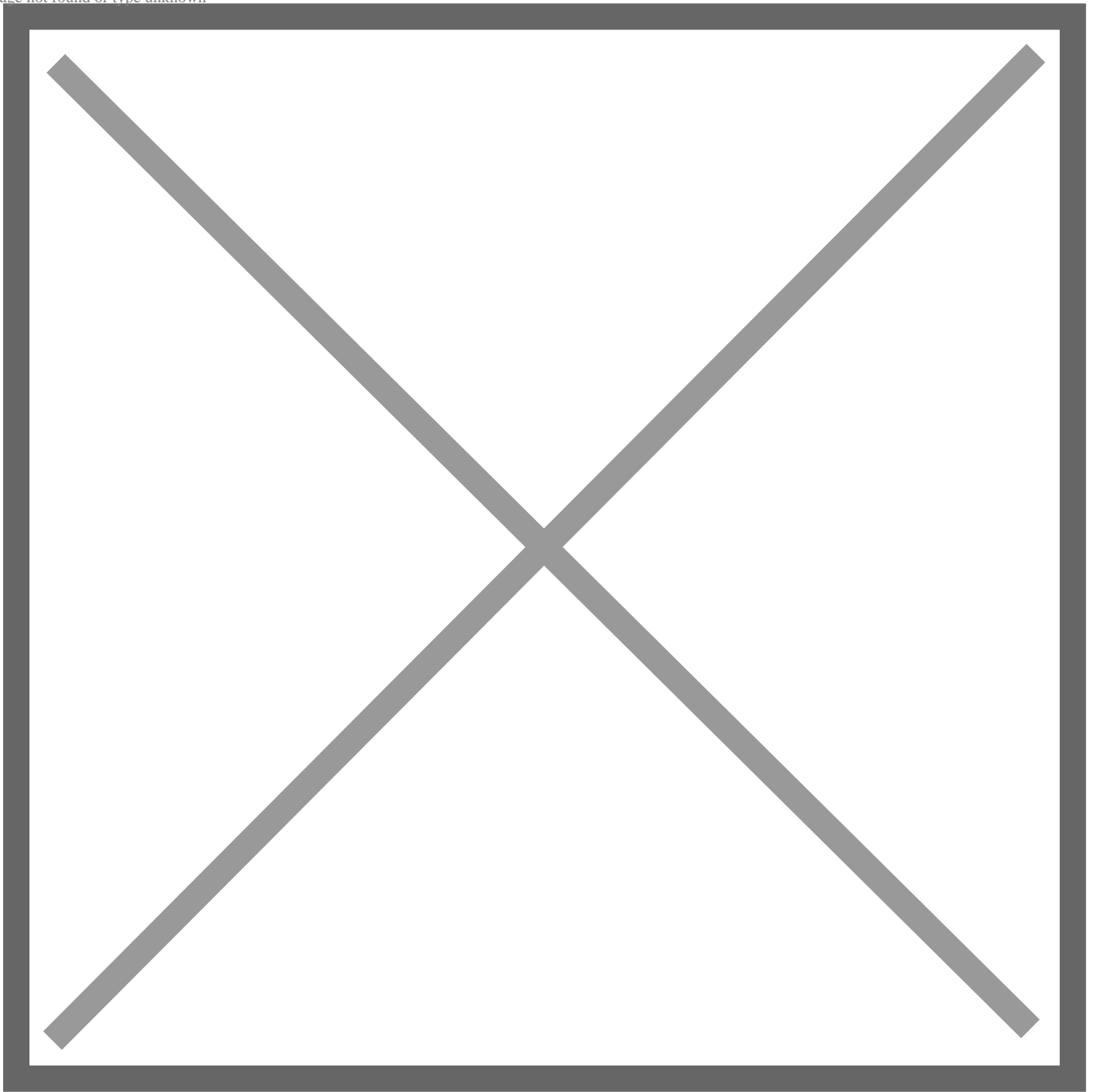
Here are the extraordinary Team Toyota athletes competing in Tokyo at the Paralympic Games, scheduled to take place Aug. 24-Sept. 5, 2021. Follow along as these remarkable competitors make their dreams a reality and inspire everyone to achieve their ambitions.

Bookmark the [Tokyo 2020 page](#) on the Toyota Newsroom, to follow along as the Paralympic Games unfold. For up-to-date athlete news, follow #TeamToyota on Instagram ([@TeamToyota](#)).

Meet the Paralympic Athletes:

Steve Serio: Wheelchair Basketball

Image not found or type unknown

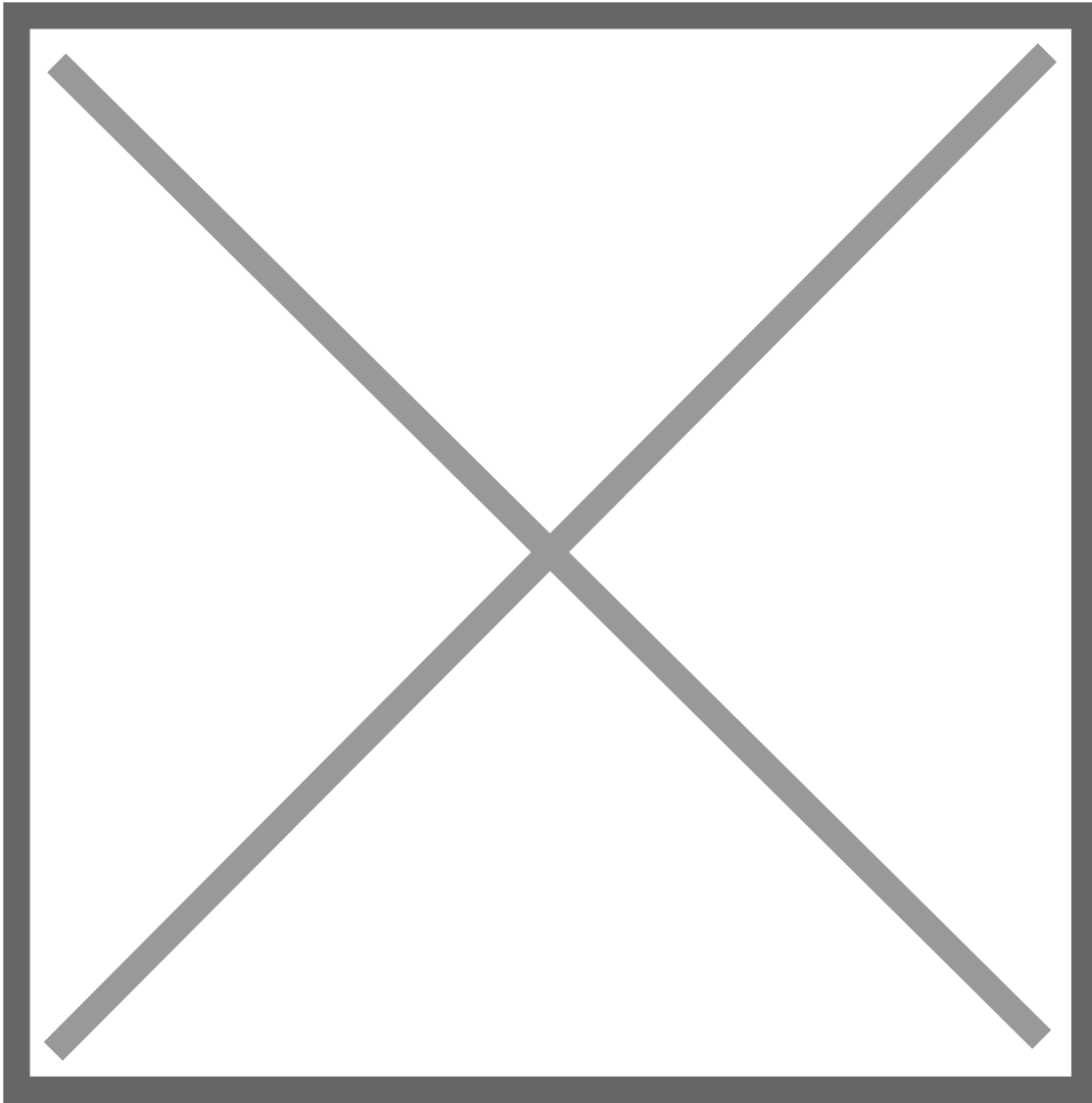


When he was only 11 months old, Westbury, New York-native Steve Serio was diagnosed with a benign spinal tumor. The surgery to remove the mass resulted in the compression of his spinal cord, leaving him paralyzed. Despite the circumstances, Serio has gone on to become a four-time Paralympian and two-time medalist in wheelchair basketball. Serio, who launched his sports career as a sophomore in high school, is also known as a team leader. For the Paralympic Games Rio 2016, he was co-captain and led Team USA to its first gold medal in wheelchair basketball since 1988. But, for him, the biggest honor stemming from his leadership role has been inspiring others to go further together. Together, Serio and his teammates are breaking down barriers, defying odds and overcoming physical limitations.

Quote: “We can inspire people, and not only just with disabilities, but people all across the world to demand more from this life,” Serio says. “And hopefully, it’ll be a better world and a better society for it.”

You can learn more about Steve Serio by exploring his athlete biography page [here](#).

David Brown: Track & Field

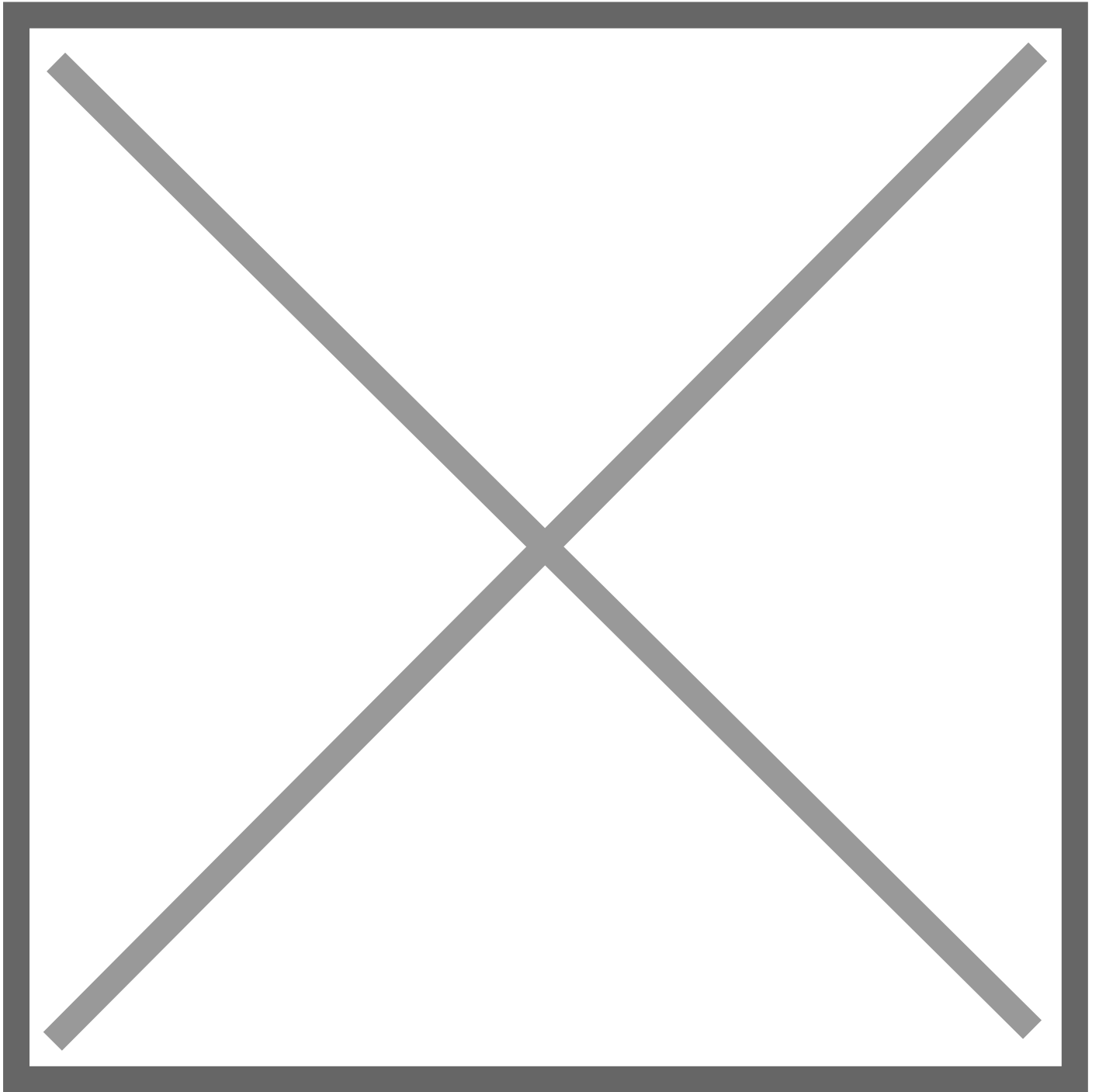


After being diagnosed with Kawasaki disease when he was 15 months old, David Brown began losing his sight to glaucoma and was completely blind by 13 years old. But Brown’s being from an athletic family based out of Kansas City, Missouri, meant there was never a time that he considered quitting sports. He was determined to find a way to adapt so he could stay competitive with his friends. That competitive spirit led Brown to become the first blind athlete to run the 100-meter race in under 11 seconds, a world record that he set in 2014 — and still holds. Bound by a tether, Brown and his guide runner sprint in lanes side by side, communicating by touch and sound with every synched stride. The tether keeps Brown aligned to help him reach the finish line, something he’s looking to be the first at in Tokyo once again.

Quotes: “[I am] accomplishing what people feel is impossible. You know, when people are saying, ‘Oh, yeah, it’s hard to do something with no sight,’ here I am, I’m breaking 11 seconds in a hundred meters where they feel it was impossible.”

You can learn more about David Brown by exploring his athlete biography page [here](#).

Jarryd Wallace: Track & Field



At 18 years old, Jarryd Wallace was diagnosed with compartment syndrome — a serious and painful condition occurring when a large amount of pressure builds up in a muscle compartment. When he was 20, Wallace endured the amputation of his right leg, which his doctor described at the time as the leg of an 80-year-old. But the ordeal, coupled with a deep depression that followed, didn't stop him from running. Today, he's one of the greatest Paralympic runners of all time. For Wallace, Tokyo will be his third Paralympic Games, he has set four world records, and is a three-time World Championship gold medalist. But, as Wallace gears up for the Paralympic Games in Tokyo, he's vying for more than a gold. He's running to be a powerful example for people and to motivate, encourage and inspire.

Quote: “Growing up, my dad always said that a good goal was 60% achievable. Anything higher than 60% needs to go on the to-do list. Anything lower, you should figure out the next steps that can get you closer to that goal.”

You can learn more about Jarryd Wallace by exploring his athlete biography page [here](#).

Jessica Long: Swimming



Jessica Long, a double amputee since infancy, was adopted into an American family from a Russian orphanage when she was 13 months old. Hailing today from Baltimore, Maryland, she was born with fibular hemimelia — a rare condition where the fibulas, ankles, heels and most bones in the feet are missing. She has undergone more than 25 surgeries, with the first taking place when she was only 18 months old. Her legs were amputated below the knees to fit her with prosthetics. But being a double amputee didn't stop her from pursuing her athletic aspirations. At only 12, she competed at the Paralympic Games Athens 2004 and earned three gold medals. Today, she is the second most-decorated U.S. Paralympian in history, with 23 Paralympic medals and four Paralympic Games under her belt. Now, the 29-year-old is training for her

fifth consecutive Paralympic Games and paving the way for para-athletes across the globe.

Quotes: “Every day, I walk with two heavy prosthetics. I may be a Paralympic athlete, but that doesn’t take away [from] the fact that walking is hard,” says Long. “The water has always given me so much freedom. Since I was a little girl, the water has been this place in my life where I just didn’t feel the weight.”

You can learn more about Jessica Long by exploring her athlete biography page [here](#).

Melissa Stockwell: Paratriathlon



U.S. Army veteran and paratriathlete Melissa Stockwell lost her leg to a roadside bomb while serving in Iraq. Stockwell turned to sport to stay active during her recovery, something she believes helped get her life back. Injured in 2004, Stockwell was the first female American soldier in history to lose a limb in active combat. Four years later, she became the first Iraq War veteran to qualify for the Paralympic Games, competing in swimming at the Paralympic Games Beijing 2008. The veteran shifted to training for paratriathlon back in 2009 and went on to win bronze in the sport's debut at the Paralympic Games Rio 2016. And, in what seemed like a symbolic moment, the race day happened to fall on the anniversary of September 11. Adding to the momentous day, Stockwell was joined by two of her U.S. teammates on the podium, making for an emotional Team USA

medal sweep. Stockwell looks forward to making more memories with her fellow Team USA athletes in Tokyo this summer.

Quote: “Sports changed the trajectory of my life, 110%,” Stockwell says. “Not only did it show me what I could still do, but it helped my confidence and self-worth. I think it’s so important for veterans to be active. Obviously, not everyone is going to be a Paralympic athlete, but just signing up for a race or training with your family can be so powerful.”

You can learn more about Melissa Stockwell by exploring her athlete biography page [here](#).

Brad Snyder: Paratriathlon

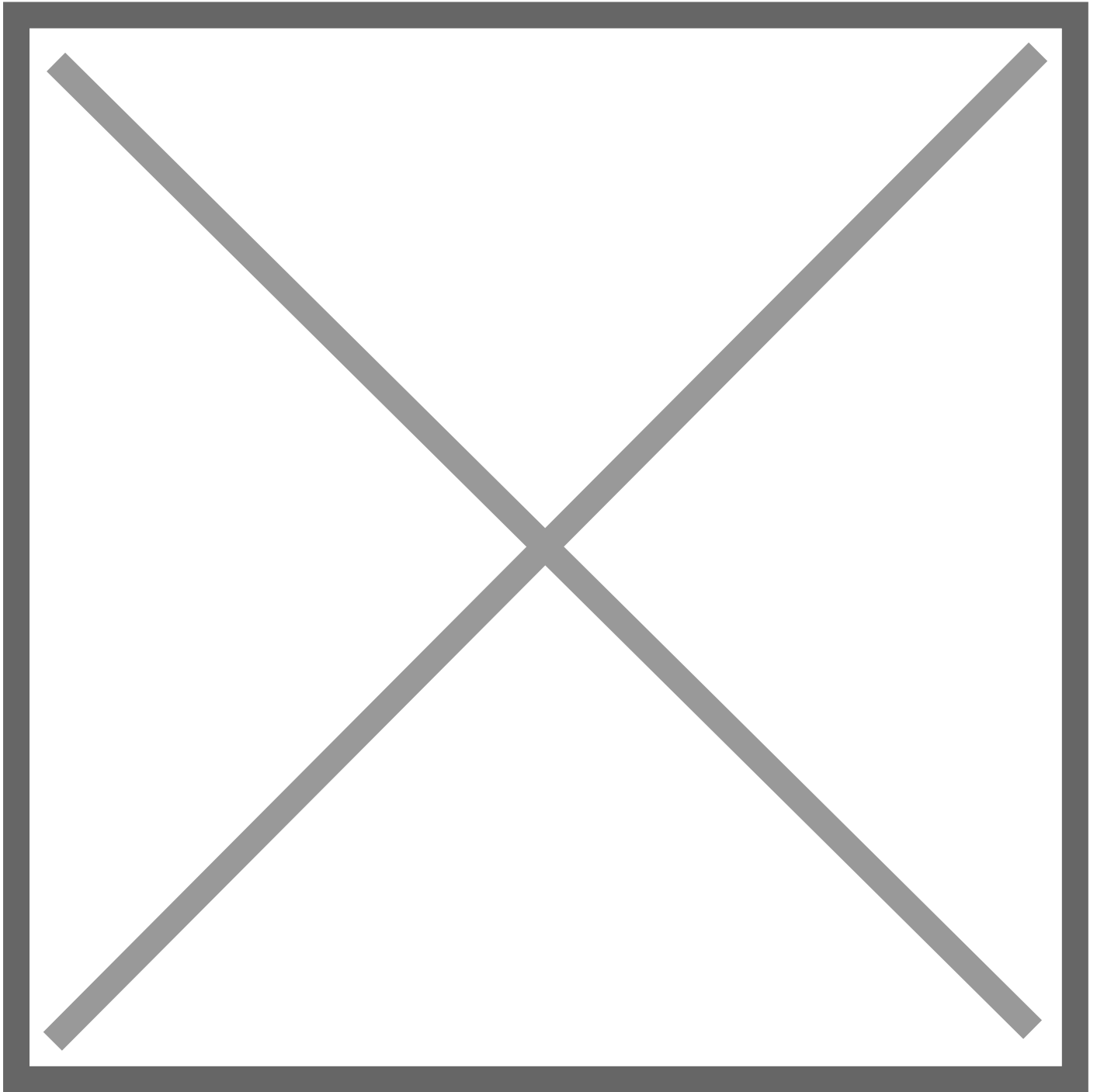


After Brad Snyder lost his eyesight when he stepped on an improvised explosive device while serving a second deployment in Afghanistan, the Navy veteran returned to the pool as part of his recovery. Exactly a year to the date of his accident, he won his first gold medal at the Paralympic Games London 2012 in the 400-meter freestyle. Snyder, who swam competitively at the United States Naval Academy, also won gold at the London Games in the 100-meter freestyle and silver in the 50-meter freestyle. Now, training for his third consecutive Paralympic Games, the Baltimore, Maryland, native is ready to level up yet again. This time, he's competing in paratriathlon. Snyder hopes his story will inspire others to take on challenges that may seem impossible from the outside and experience the emotional growth within physical tests.

Quote: “It’s important to me to carry a positive message,” Snyder says. “To inspire people to push past their boundaries, to inspire people to say, ‘You know what? Adversity is going to happen, no matter what, so I have to get good at navigating that adversity.’”

You can learn more about Brad Snyder by exploring his athlete biography page [here](#).

Oksana Masters: Road Cycling



Masters was born in Ukraine and experienced several radiation-related birth defects from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. She was ultimately diagnosed with Tibial Hemimelia — a condition where the tibia (shinbone) is shorter than normal or missing altogether. Over the course of seven years, she would have both legs amputated above the knee and be fitted for prosthetics. Her athletic career began when she was 13 and took up rowing. Masters says the day she walked down the dock and sat in a boat for the first time changed her life forever. Feeling the boat sway beneath her — and having the ability to control it — gave her the freedom of movement. In the Paralympic Games London 2012, Masters won bronze for that very sport, specifically in trunk and arms mixed double sculls — the first-ever U.S. medal in that event. Masters has competed in four Paralympic Games in four different sports across summer and winter: rowing, Nordic skiing, biathlon and cycling. With eight Paralympic medals under her belt, she’s challenging herself to make the podium for the first time in cycling at the Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020.

Quote: “Your mind is the only thing that can ever put doubt and limitations on your dreams; your heart and will feed and guide your dreams.”

You can learn more about Oksana Masters by exploring her athlete biography page [here](#).