

INVICTUS GAMES

THE HAGUE 2020

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Competitors



Martin and Jan are part of Team Denmark and have been joined by their families to The Hague. We sat down with them and chatted about their experiences thus far and what The Games have meant to them.

Martin has been a part of Team Denmark since 2017 after suffering from great mental pain being deployed to Afghanistan. He witnessed the most terrible things. By psychically working out he was able to find the strength to shake everything off but more importantly found like-minded people who understood what he was going through. He joined the athletics and indoor rowing team as his forte to thrive. Sadly, he could not participate in the Toronto Invictus Games while he and his wife suffered the loss of their child who lived for 33 minutes. Luckily he was able to make a fresh start with his new teammates. Throughout COVID they were able to keep in contact with each other to check if everything was alright. Martin and his roommate even have developed a secret code namely: 'Let's have a smoke.' Funny thing is, neither of them smoke. To them it is a way of telling each other that they are not doing well and they need to talk without anyone knowing. This sense of community, being able to talk, and to psychically be active is what the Invictus Games is all about. Whether The Invictus Games are in Sydney, The Hague or Düsseldorf, with his teammates and other veterans, he feels at home. Martin is now competing not only for himself, but for his wife and two kids at home, who can be very proud of their husband and father for being here.

Jan is a proud dad of two sons who has been in the military for 15 years in different positions. His favorite part of those 15 years have definitely been the friendships that he has built defending his country. After he got back from being deployed he got mentally unwell. He did not feel like he was himself anymore. Jan spent his days in darkness, drinking and sleeping, not being able to cope with his mental pain. He could not make sense over what had happened, what their leaders have told them and what he has seen. He dropped out of the military and promised his ex-wife he would not return. However, he always kept in contact with his buddies. Through talking with his buddies, picking up sports and simply getting up, he has conquered and became the captain of his soul. By flipping the script of his life through sports and communicating with others on what he is going through and being a better father to his children. Now he has picked up archery and rowing as a sport to compete during the games but also as a hobby.

Communicating by asking ‘how are you doing today’ does not really happen during the games, but after a while you are trained to see the pain in people’s eyes that you have suffered, so you just start a conversation about that. He even has a tattoo that says ‘not all war scars are visible’, because they really aren’t. When he talks about his issues to people who do not have a connection to the army, he feels misunderstood and not accepted. Most civilians believe it is their own choice to join the army and they just have to get on with the consequences of their chosen path. In response to those unsympathetic people, he can only say that even though he has made certain choices, he is still a human being with feelings that needs to be respected.

Both Martin and Jan are really proud and excited to be back in a military environment since they have both dropped out of the army a while ago. Being at the Invictus Games gives them the feeling of belonging and reunited with their past lives. Once a soldier always a soldier.



'Proud of the team achievements

During these Invictus Games he only entered one competition. But in that competition, he managed to claim a podium place right away. Saif Ali won a silver medal in the discus throwing event. In his own country the 35-year-old Saif Ali plays regularly for the Iraqi military team; at the Invictus Games in The Hague he makes his debut at an international event. Just like the other fourteen Iraqi contestants, Saif was selected to take part. "Maybe I'll win the gold medal next time," Saif says. Saif and his teammates attend the weightlifting competition this morning to support and cheer for one of their team members. "It's a beautiful event", coach Saad Mohammed tells us. He is proud of the performance of his team. "The first day was the best one for our team: we immediately won two silver medals and one bronze medal.

"The Iraqi delegation is very happy to be able to attend this event and they take participation very seriously. Saad Mohammed doesn't only coach this team, but he is also the coach of the Iraqi Paralympic team. According to him, both events are of great value for this group of sportsmen. If it's up to him, the team will be present in Germany next year, with even more contestants.

Volunteers



Chloe Andrews-Jones from East Anglia in England speaks to us about her motivations for volunteering at the Invictus Games, her highlights so far, and why she would encourage anyone to volunteer in future Games.

What was your driving motivation to volunteer at the Invictus Games?

Chloe: "I love volunteering as a whole, I've been doing it since the Rugby World Cup in 2015. But I think this is a unique opportunity to give something back to the people that have given so much for us, for our country, and for countries all over the world. And who are quite underappreciated I think in many societies."

What has been your role at the Games?

"On a day-to-day basis I've been working pretty much at the stadium the whole time. This is the only venue I've worked at, but there are others across the park obviously. I've been primarily scanning tickets and scanning accreditation for people coming in and out of the venue."

Do you have a highlight so far?

"It's difficult to say because it's just all pretty good fun really. But it's also very rewarding. I was fortunate enough to talk to some of the UK wheelchair rugby athletes the other day. I wished them good luck and they engaged in conversation. They were very welcoming and we had quite a good chat. I was fascinated to hear their stories in terms of how wheelchair rugby gives them the same buzz, the same team ethos as rugby they played beforehand."

Do you have any personal connection to the military or to the Netherlands?

"I don't. I do support in the UK, I'm a trustee of a sea cadet unit, that's my quasi link. My father served in the navy in the Second World War. But other than that no direct experience or relationship with the military or the Netherlands. I have worked with people from the Netherlands before."

Would you encourage anyone to volunteer at the Dusseldorf Invictus Games?

“I would definitely encourage them. I think it’s interesting to visit different places. Every organising committee has a different way of doing things. It’s always a fresh opportunity to do something in a similar environment, especially since I understand now that the Invictus athletes only do two Games. So it’s quite likely that you would have the opportunity to admire and be inspired by a different generation of athletes at successive Invictus Games.”



Miranda and Americo are two of the many volunteers who are working during the Invictus Games. Despite the fact that their last shift is over, the two volunteers are still enjoying the Invictus Games. The two can't forget the Invictus Games. Below you can read the story of Miranda and Americo.

What's the reason you signed up as a volunteer?

Americo: "For me, it actually originated from my military period. During this period, I also suffered some injuries. Because of the injuries I can't work. I've been sitting at home for a few years now without work. When I heard about the Invictus Games I thought that I, I want to be among like-minded people. I want to know how they experienced their injuries and PTSD. I want to see if I feel at home at the Invictus Games. From that starting point, the idea of becoming a volunteer arose. In the meantime, I have also applied to the Ministry of Defense to train with them. For me, the Invictus Games are really an eye opener! I didn't know that there were sports that I could do with my injuries. I think it's wonderful to see what many veterans can still do. The resilience here has really inspired me to be a volunteer."

Miranda: "I applied to become a volunteer two and a half years ago. At the time I saw on television that the Invictus Games would come here to the Netherlands. I didn't know the event at the time. I saw on television what the Invictus Games was and what it conveyed. Then I thought: wow, I want to be at the Invictus Games and I want to help the organization with this wonderful event."

What have you done as a volunteer this week?

Americo: "At the beginning of the Invictus Games I indicated that I have some injuries myself. This has been accommodated by the organization. I started this week with helping the ticketing team. Later this week, I helped with archery. And I stood as a steward at the Hofbad. I enjoyed this so much that I extended my shift."

Miranda: "I helped with the Opening Ceremony. I also worked as an allrounder at the park. With this position I have been able to watch a lot of sports and really enjoyed all the matches and performances I have seen."

How have you experienced the Invictus Games so far?

Americo: "Yesterday was my last shift at the swimming competitions in the Hofbad. Today I don't have a shift planned. I can't get the Invictus Games out of my head. The Games have inspired me a lot and I hope that after visiting the Invictus Games everyone goes home inspired. I also hope that people with a disability can see that there are a lot of opportunities in life to participate. That's really the feeling I got from the Invictus Games."

Miranda: "I agree with Americo. Monday night I got injured here myself. My tailbone badly bruised. Then I went home, I didn't really want that. Yesterday I was at home too, but I missed the Invictus Games and the wonderful atmosphere that is here. That is why I am here again today to end the event well for myself."

De Invictus Games is een internationaal sportevenement voor fysiek en/of mentaal gewonde militairen. De Invictus Games gebruikt de kracht van sport om herstel te stimuleren, revalidatie te ondersteunen en breder begrip en respect te genereren voor hen die hun land dienen of gediend hebben.

'Invictus' staat voor 'onoverwonnen'. Het symboliseert de vechtlustige geest, van fysiek en/of mentaal gewonde militairen. Het laat zien wat je, ondanks je verwondingen, kunt bereiken.

Aan de Invictus Games, die in het voorjaar van 2022 in Den Haag worden gehouden, doen 500 deelnemers mee, uit 20 verschillende landen. Zij zullen actief zijn in tien verschillende sporten.

Alle deelnemers mogen, op uitnodiging en kosten van de organisatie, twee vrienden of familieleden die hebben geholpen tijdens het revalidatieproces meenemen naar het evenement.

Iedere deelnemer aan de Invictus Games heeft zijn eigen verhaal, maar allen hebben ze de innerlijke kracht gevonden om door te gaan en zichzelf op te richten. Alleen, met hulp van familie en vrienden, maar altijd mede dankzij de kracht van sport.

The Invictus Games is an international adaptive sporting event for Wounded, Injured and Sick Servicemen and women, both serving and veteran. The Games use the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding and respect of all those who serve their country.

The word 'Invictus' means 'unconquered'. It embodies the fighting spirit of wounded, injured and sick Service personnel and personifies what these tenacious men and women can achieve post injury.

The Invictus Games is about much more than just sport – it captures hearts, challenges minds and changes lives.

The Invictus Games 2020 will be held in The Hague in the spring of 2022 and invites 500 competitors, from 19 different countries. They will participate in 10 different sports.

All competitors may bring two friends or family members who have helped during the rehabilitation process, at the invitation and expense of the organization.

The participants all have their own story of physical and/or psychological injury or illness. But all of them have found the inner strength to go on and reinvent themselves. Sometimes alone, often with the help of family and friends, but always through the power of sport. The Invictus Games The Hague 2020 is *the* platform to share their stories and add another chapter to their book of life.

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