

INVICTUS GAMES

THE HAGUE 2020

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Competitors



He had followed the first days of the Invictus Games via the website, the daily broadcasted program on Dutch Television NOS and an endless series of apps, videos and calls with his teammates. "But I had to and would go to The Hague", says Jelle van der Steen. That, of course, was quite a challenge. Because how do you get someone who is in a hospital bed at an event? The Wish Ambulance brought a solution. Van der Steen can thus follow the matches of the wheelchair basketball team, his team, from the sidelines. In a bed.

Jelle van der Steen has been in hospital for the past 22 days. And soon, after the Invictus Games, he has to go back. He's had two surgeries recently, has pressure ulcers, bedsores. "I have been in incredible pain since October. I've been on a lot of antibiotics, I'm in a special bed, but it just didn't want to get better. So at some point I had to have surgery and admit I wasn't going to make it to the Invictus Games.

"Although.... "I had a consultation with the doctor last week. I said: if you can put plasters on it, then I'm going to join. But it turned out to be impossible.

"The reception at the Invictus Games Park on Wednesday afternoon was incredible. When Van der Steen arrived with the Wish Ambulance, a hedge of participants was ready. Everyone came to greet him personally afterwards, there was crying and laughing. Interviews, photos, Jelle made everything happen. Enjoyed visibly. Princely in his bed. On Thursday and Friday, he was down the line at his team's wheelchair competitions. As part of the team he was part of until recently. "It almost felt like I was participating." A meeting with the Duke of Sussex and a photo shoot with Invictus Games competitor Fenna completed the story. Jelle is the donor father of Liva, the daughter of Fenna and her partner Bertine. "That too is of course a very special story."



Siraj Muneer at his third Invictus Games: “I had to be here.”

For Siraj Muneer (34) the Invictus Games as a competitor are already over. The last day of the event he spends cheering for other athletes.

For the Iraqi competitor, who lost his legs fifteen years ago, it's the third time he is competing. “It doesn't matter how many times you take part in the Invictus Games. I just had the feeling I had to compete again.” Muneer meets other veterans here with whom he can identify, something that is quite difficult in other places: “To be able to compete against others who are the same as me makes me want to be here.”

Besides for himself, it is of importance to the Iraqi that he can be an example to other people who suffered injuries. He does not only refer to veterans. “I am able to give support to people who need it,” he explains. It is the same support he himself experienced during his first Invictus Games. “This whole community at the Games is very close. That helped me a lot with recovering.”

By participating, Siraj wants to show that anything is possible. With resolution he tells us: “Suffering injury does not mean your life has ended.” The moment this became extra clear, was during the Invictus Games in Sydney (2018). Here he won a bronze medal in archery. “Winning this medal made a big impression on me.”

Because the members of the Iraqi Team are not accompanied by their family and friends in The Hague, the mutual bond may be even stronger. “Still, we hope to enjoy these moments with our families next time.” Muneer talks a lot to people who visit the Zuiderpark, people who didn't know anything beforehand about the Invictus Games. In these conversations he takes the opportunity to explain the idea behind the Games and who are competing. “I tell people what I am experiencing here and how it feels to be here,” he tells us. His eyes follow a group of supporters with different flags tied to their bag packs. “I try to create awareness about the importance of the Invictus Games.”

Friends and family



They have many similarities, Tarmo Lepik and Madis Pori. They are both 34 years old and live in the Estonian capital Tallinn. Both are missing their legs. Tarmo is in a wheelchair, Madis is walking on artificial legs. Much to their dismay, their active participation in the Invictus Games has now come to an end. Under the then rules, Tarmo was allowed to participate three more times. For Madis, The Hague is his second and last Invictus Games.

So the division of roles is that Tarmo as Madis's friend (since 2011) went along to support him. In London Tarmo was already there as a swimmer, in Toronto he took part in sitting volleyball and he repeated that in Sydney, but then he also did indoor rowing. The friends have been on the sitting volleyball team together in Sydney. That is for both (another similarity) their favorite sport. Madis also competed in shot put, discus throw and indoor rowing in Sydney.

He praises the support Tarmo has given him in The Hague in both indoor rowing and shot put. The fact that Madis finished fourth in his discipline (standing shot put) also has to do with that choice, he says. “I wouldn’t have finished fourth in a sitting shot put”, he says honestly. The six Estonian athletes were allowed to bring two friends each. Some allowed more to travel at their own expense. That is why the total accompanying (friends) group is between 15 and 20 people for the smallest participating country.

Both love the Invictus Games. They had a good time in The Hague. They would also like to be there again in Düsseldorf. Also to support. In The Hague they also feel a kindred spirit with the Ukrainian team. Madis says that he also received Ukrainian soldiers in his work after the Crimean War. “We’ve been more concerned with them these Invictus Games because of the war. That’s something we actually have to do with everyone all year round.”

At the park

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John op ’t Roodt, bike mechanic at “Wounded Warriors”

Close to the start and finish of the track where the cycle races will take place today John op ’t Roodt (51) from Thorn is busy preparing the bikes for the competition. He’s expecting things to get busy. Besides the Dutch, he already was helpful to the Polish and Canadian competitors.

John is a veteran, and he was deployed to Bosnia for four times between 1994 and 1999. “I was lucky to stay healthy over there,” he says, although he is connected to the ‘I CAN Wounded Warriors Cycle Team’. He is actively involved at the stand which is dominated by the bus of bicycle manufacturer GIANT. “They planted the bus here, being a partner of our team, as long as we do the promotion and repairs.”

John did different things to evolve after his service. Being a former mountain biker and cyclist, he signed up for the education to become a bike mechanic. After two months of training, he was ready to help the 'Wounded Warrior' cyclists at about ten tours a year, like the tour version of the Amstel Gold-race, the Freedom Ride, and the cycling tour from Cape North back to the Centre for Veterans in Doorn. So far, he did not work on hand bikes. Yesterday he had the chance, but he was too busy with other things. He hopes he will get another chance to work on them.

Despite the expected busyness he wants to see parts of the races. "Especially the bikes I worked on." This shows his involvement and commitment. His commitment is even more visible when he talks about the impact the Invictus Games have on him. It brings tears to his eyes. He still must process the impressions the event made on him.

Next year Düsseldorf? He would love to be added to the team as a mechanic, "but I hope then I will be able to inspect the bikes better beforehand. That's not only more satisfying to me, but also reassuring to, and strengthening the confidence of the competitors."



If the Invictus Games Den Haag 2020, presented by Jaguar Land Rover have taught us one thing, it is that we still must even look closer after each other. And the environment. The organization of these Games anticipated on that by addressing themes like sustainability. It's important to leave a legacy. Some examples.

220 bikes

The past weeks, more specifically during the tournament week from April 15th until April 22nd, the organizing committee moved around the city of The Hague not by car, but by bike. The orange bikes, no less than 220 and very eye-catching, could hardly be missed. Many people who still took their car even for short drives, discovered the huge benefits of using a bike to move around town and will continue to take the bike after the Invictus Games.

Electric cars

If cars were needed, one could fall back to electric cars from Jaguar Land Rover. The presenting partner used multiple plug-in hybrids (PHEV's), that while in electric EV-mode emit zero emission which makes them exceptionally useful for travel from home to work and short drives through town. With this they contributed to the ambition of the Invictus Games to minimize the ecological footprint.

Sustainable power

Shell supported the Invictus Games The Hague 2020 so that the event could be organized using sustainable and clean energy. The supply came from green energy generated in The Netherlands. The City of The Hague and Stedin realized permanent power connectors at the Zuiderpark for future events to use. Eneco supplied the green energy based on their contract with the City of The Hague. To use the power connectors as efficiently as possible six Battery Box systems from Bredenoord were installed especially for the Invictus Games. Given the scale of the event, generators were also needed as a back-up and for peak moments. These generators worked on GtL (Gas to Liquid) fuel. This version of diesel consists of natural gas and gives locally the lowest emission. The CO2 footprint of this fuel was compensated.

Johan Cruyff Court

Especially for the Invictus Games a mobile Johan Cruyff Court was realized in the Zuiderpark. At that field demonstrations of numerous different adapted sports were given. The public could participate as well. In the nearby district Escamp there has been a Cruyff Court for several years now. Good chance that visitors of the Invictus Games from the neighborhood will be using their Cruyff Court for even more sportive purposes.

Schoolprogram

Thousands of schoolkids paid a visit to the Invictus Games last week, and thousands more reflected on the games with a special educational package. The Respect Foundation, which has the mission to make society a better place by working with the youngsters on self-respect, respecting each other, and respect the world around them, developed two lessons specifically for the Invictus Games. Those lessons were developed for children in the Upper Elementary classes and first year of secondary school in both regular and special education. These lessons address themes like 'what does it mean to be in the military fighting for peace?' Another topic is the invincibility of humanity, own powers, cooperation and the importance of sport. 'To be invincible you need a super team.'

Recycling

Unsurprisingly the organization worked among other things with recyclable glasses during the event. Volunteers sewed bags using some of the banners and flags in the park, which were then handed out to international guests as a gift.



A short conversation with two of the organizers of the upcoming Invictus Games in Düsseldorf (2023) would almost make you proud or embarrassed as an organizer from The Hague. Both deputy program leader Martin Ammermann and press officer Lars Koch of the German project team have only nice words for the current version. Both are very impressed, have an excellent feeling about it and praise the excellent organisation. In two German words "Ganz Toll". They are extra motivated and have respect for everything that is to come.

German veterans have been taking part in the event since the first version in London. In Sydney, the then Federal Minister for Defence, Dr. Ursula von der Leyen already decided during her visit to bring the Invictus Games to Germany. After a successful 'bidding' procedure, it was scheduled for this year, until Covid-19 forced the Invictus Games in The Hague to be postponed twice. The event in Germany will now be on September 9-16, 2023.

Since 2018, when it became concrete, the project team has started. Before that, the Ministry of Defense had been mainly active. Now it is the turn of the two parties in the team, the “Bundeswehr” and “D-live”, an organization that organizes all major (sports) events in Düsseldorf. The team is led by Brigadier General Alfred Marstaller.

When asked what will be different in Düsseldorf, one sport clearly emerges: table tennis. After all, the city can call itself the European capital of this sport. For the rest, they look forward to the 16/17 months they have left. If you want to follow everything, you can visit their website in German and English: www.invictusgames23.de

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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