

WARRIOR CHAMPIONS

FROM BAGHDAD TO BEIJING



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Warrior Champions tells the emotional and inspiring story of a group of severely wounded American Soldiers, as they fight to turn injuries of war into Paralympic dreams. Iraq War Veterans Kortney Clemons, Scott Winkler, Melissa Stockwell, and Carlos Leon, as little as a year after losing limbs and suffering paralysis fighting for their country in Iraq, have set out to do what many thought impossible; to compete in the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing. Through failure, pain and triumph Warrior Champions follows these soldier athletes for a full year as they compete for their spot on the US Paralympic team. The film goes inside the famous Ward 57 of Walter Reed Army Medical Center, where Melissa and Scott mentor recently wounded soldiers who are battling depression. 'I was in your shoes not too long ago.' Melissa tells Juan, who lost both of his legs in Iraq. 'But I'm telling you, I've done more in life with one leg than I ever would have done with two.' Doctors at Walter Reed say they never would have dreamed that a wounded soldier could make it to the Paralympics so quickly after sustaining traumatic war injuries, and these athletes give the patients the hope many thought they had lost forever. Though at times heart wrenching, Warrior Champions is not a sad tale of the tragedy of war, but rather an uplifting testament to the human spirit that challenges every notion of what it means to be disabled.



MELISSA STOCKWELL: ARMY

"I've done more in my life with one leg than I would have ever done with two." - Melissa Stockwell

Melissa Stockwell was the first American female soldier in history to lose a limb in active combat. In 2008, she set out to become the first wounded Iraq War Veteran to make the U.S. Paralympic Swim Team. On April 13, 2004, an IED explosion took her left leg, changing her life forever. But Melissa never dwelled on her injury, and was determined to quickly get out of her hospital bed and on with her life. Fifty-two days after losing her leg, Melissa took her first steps. Two months later she snow skied for the first time. Less than a year after losing her leg, she completed the New York City Marathon. And then, despite having never swum competitively in her life, Melissa set her sights on making it to the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing.



SCOTT WINKLER: ARMY

"I want to inspire people not to give up." - Scott Winkler

Scott Winkler became paralyzed from the chest down during his tour in Iraq. He battled depression, went through a divorce and thought that his life would never be the same. Then he was invited to participate in a sports clinic for wounded soldiers, where he threw the shot put for the first time. A natural to say the least, within a year Scott broke the World record in Paralympic shot put, and his life was saved in the process. In 2008, he set out to become one of the first Iraq War Veterans in history to make the Paralympic Games in Beijing.



KORTNEY CLEMONS: ARMY

“Losing my leg was a hard pill to swallow, but I do some things that people with two limbs are not able to do.” - Kortney Clemons

Kortney Clemons was weeks away from finishing his tour in Iraq, when his unit came across a group of wounded soldiers. A combat medic, Kortney rushed to assist, and an IED exploded, killing three and wounding Kortney. His dream of becoming a professional football player was gone, but his love for sports turned his life around. Within two years of being injured, Kortney became the fastest 100 meter runner in the country for his disability category. “I went from being embarrassed to wear shorts, to proudly displaying my injury.” But to get to Beijing for the Paralympic Games, Kortney has to catch up with the world’s fastest amputees who are years ahead of him in training.



CARLOS LEON: MARINES

**“Life presents us with challenges,
it’s up to us how we handle them.” - Carlos Leon**

Carlos Leon managed to survive an entire year in Iraq as a Marine in the Sunni triangle, only to tragically break his neck in a diving accident just weeks after returning home. After meeting five-time Paralympian Gabe Diaz de Leon at a Paralympic Military Sports Camp, Leon discovered a hidden talent and passion for throwing the discus and shot put. He was transformed overnight. “Sports became my addiction. I stopped waking up depressed about my injury, and focused my recovery on a new goal.” Undeterred by an incomplete injury that continues to evolve, Carlos set out to qualify for the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing.