

## Melissa Stockwell

Former US Army 1st Lieutenant, World Champion Triathlete, 2016 Paralympic Bronze Medalist

At first glance Melissa Stockwell may appear to be the quintessential Mid-Western All-American girl, but she is far more. She is an American war hero who has triumphed over personal tragedy to achieve greatness, world champion status, and she has dedicated her life to chasing remarkable accomplishments while giving back to others, particularly those who face challenges similar to her own.

In 2002, Melissa graduated from the University of Colorado and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army. In March 2004, she deployed to Baghdad, Iraq. Just three weeks later, a blast from a roadside bomb struck Melissa's Humvee causing the loss of her left leg above the knee. After enduring numerous infections and surgeries, Melissa was medically retired from the Army. She is the first female soldier to ever lose a limb in active combat and has been awarded both The Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart.

Following her accident, sport became the road to recovery for Melissa. In April of 2008, she became the first Iraqi War Veteran to qualify for the Beijing Paralympics. She competed in three swimming events and was honored by her fellow Team USA athletes to be selected to carry the American flag in the closing ceremony. After Beijing, Melissa turned to the sport of Paratriathlon and is now a three-time World Champion. She was named USA Triathlon's female Paratriathlete of the Year for two consecutive years and was twice nominated for an ESPY award.

On September 11, 2016, at the Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Melissa raced in honor of her fellow soldiers and their families who had given the ultimate sacrifice serving and protecting America. After a grueling race, the day ended on the podium, as the newly crowned Paralympic Bronze Medalist.

Melissa has shared her remarkable story, and the inspiring insights she has uncovered along the way, to standing ovations across the country for Fortune 500 companies, military bases, professional organizations, charities, government events, and countless schools. Earlier this year she was the breakout star of TEDx Vail 2016.