



## **MELISSA STOCKWELL**

At first glance, Melissa Stockwell may appear to be the quintessential Mid-western All-American mom, 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.

Melissa graduated from the University of Colorado and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army. She deployed to Baghdad, Iraq where a blast from a roadside bomb struck her 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, sports become the road to recovery for Melissa. In 2008, she became the first Iraqi War Veteran to qualify for the Beijing Paralympics where she was honored by her fellow Team USA athletes to be the flag bearer in the Closing Ceremony. After Beijing, Melissa turned to the sport of Paratriathlon and is now a three-time World Champion. 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.

Six weeks before the 2021 Paralympics, Melissa broke her back in a training accident, derailing her hopes of winning a gold medal. Nevertheless, despite the pain, she managed to compete at the Paralympic Games, finishing 5th. She is currently training for one more shot at a Paralympic Gold Medal at the Paris Games in 2024.

Melissa has shared her remarkable story, and the inspiring insights she has uncovered along the way, to standing ovations across the country for Fortune 500s, military bases, professional organizations, charities, government events and countless schools