

# 2014 ARMY WARRIOR GAMES ATHLETE

## NAME

Matthew Spang

## RANK

Sergeant

## STATUS

Veteran

## CURRENT OCCUPATION

Training in adaptive sports; Member of Denver Rolling Nuggets wheelchair basketball team

## FORMER WARRIOR TRANSITION UNIT

Warrior Transition Battalion, Fort Sam Houston, Texas

## HOMETOWN

Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin

## CURRENT LOCATION

Colorado Springs, Colorado

## SCHOOL(S)

Lincoln High School, Wisconsin

## INJURY OR ILLNESS

Bilateral below-the-knee amputee, traumatic brain injury (TBI)

## LOCATION AND DATE OF INJURY OR ILLNESS

Afghanistan, 2011

## EVENT(S)

Track and Field, Wheelchair Basketball, Swimming, Sitting Volleyball



“When you first get hurt, you think ‘I can’t do this, I can’t do that,’” said retired Army Sgt. **Matthew Spang**, who now plays wheelchair basketball competitively for the Denver Rolling Nuggets. After two improvised explosive devices struck his vehicle in Afghanistan in December 2011, Spang ultimately lost both of his legs below the knee. A basketball player and golfer since childhood, he was unsure of what sports he would be able to play after the injury.

Spang was introduced to adaptive sports at the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. “I forget about my injuries when I am playing sports. It’s part of my therapy,” said Spang. “Sports help a lot with calming me down and getting my mind off my injuries and my lack of some capabilities.”

“I’m excited to be a part of the whole Warrior Games event. I want to represent the Army and myself,” he said. “I’m doing it for my Family and my kids. I want to give them a good role model and to show them that if you do get injured, you shouldn’t stop what you’re doing because you get a little scratch.”

Spang’s Family supported him throughout his military career. His father in particular, a retired Army National Guard officer, was part of the reason he initially joined the Army, and is a resource to him now. His support system encourages him to reach his long-term goals of participating in the Warrior Games and eventually a Paralympics team. “I definitely feel like I am representing the Army—the wounded Veterans side of it,” said Spang. “I feel like it’s an obligation to push myself because I have a lot of people involved. It’s not just about swimming and being a part of the Army and doing this for myself. It’s a lot bigger than that.”



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