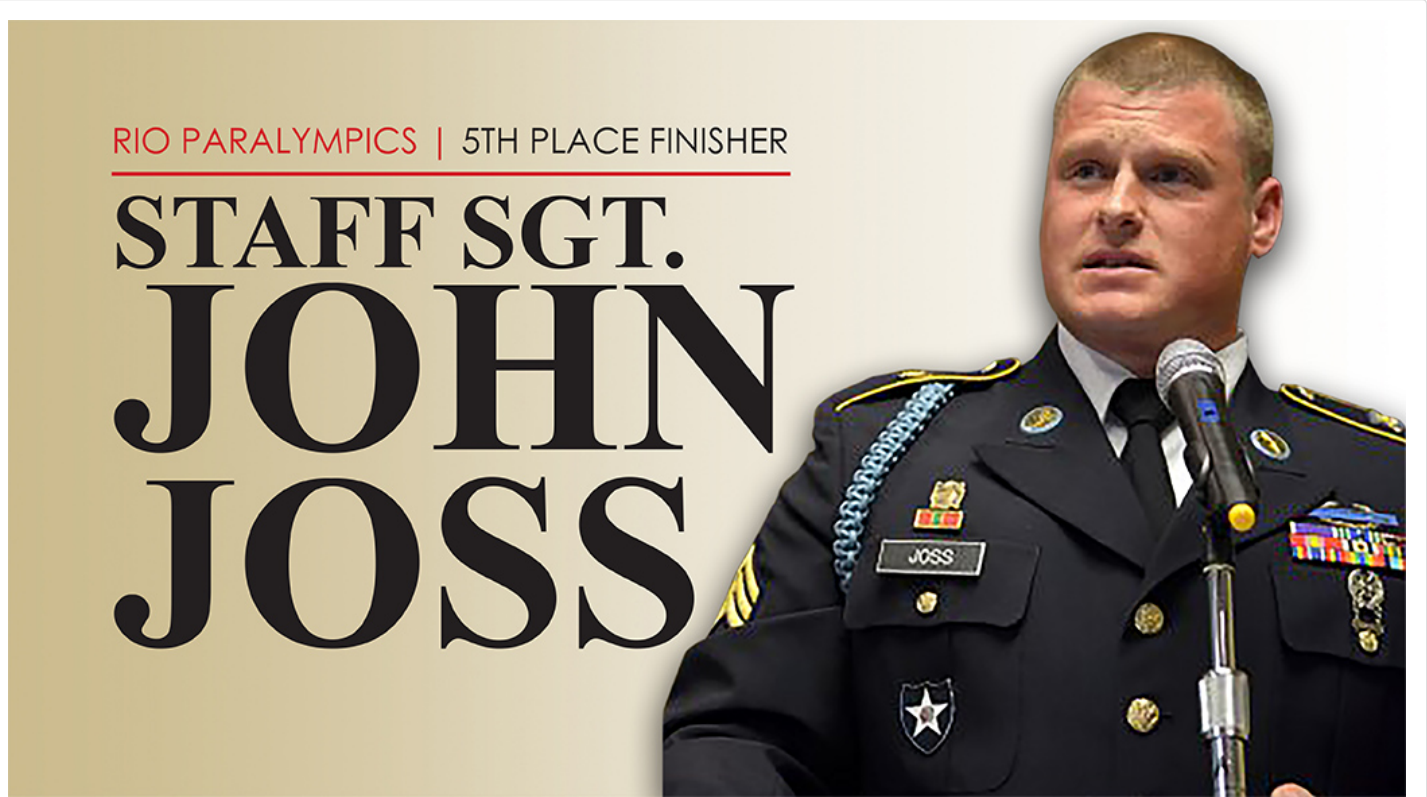


NCO posts highest finish for American man in rifle prone at Rio Paralympics

By Pablo Villa
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Staff Sgt. John Joss. (U.S. Army photo)

Staff Sgt. John Joss may not have reached the medal stand Wednesday, Sept. 14, at the 2016 Paralympic Games, but the four-year member of the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit certainly proved his name belongs alongside the shooting world's elite.

Joss started the day next to 40 of the world's best shooters in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, competing in the mixed R6-50-meter rifle prone competition. By day's end, his scores netted him a fifth-place finish. It was the highest finish for an American man at the competition.

While not bringing home any hardware is certainly disappointing, the top-five finish showcased Joss' deftness with the rifle in his first Paralympics. He qualified for the medal round after a sixth-place finish in outdoor qualification amid blustery conditions. National Paralympic Coach Bob Foth said Joss made smart decisions throughout qualification in reading wind speed and movement. Once action moved indoors for the finals, Joss improved his standing by one position.





Staff Sgt. John Joss placed fifth in the mixed R6 50-meter rifle prone event Sept. 14 at the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. (File photo courtesy of U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit)

"This is totally different than anything I've ever done before," Joss told USA Shooting after the competition. "I felt calm and on fire at the same time. I know I was working with a kind of shaky hold. I was making smart decisions, but there isn't much I could do at the end. I did the best I could, and I really took a lot out of it. It's hard to hit a target that small alone, then when you have an elevated heart rate, a pulse in your hand and your front sight starts moving around, it makes it a lot harder."

Joss' performance is also testament to how far he has come since sustaining both physical injuries and emotional hardship in 2007. Joss had both of his legs seriously injured in an improvised explosive device attack while deployed north of Baghdad, Iraq. He returned to the United States to undergo multiple surgeries and begin a grueling rehabilitation process before he was dealt another blow — Joss' father was killed in a vehicle accident two months after his arrival at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

Joss subsequently made the difficult decision to amputate his right leg. He began shooting competitively at Fort Benning, Georgia, to supplement his rehabilitation. Joss soon found success. He joined the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit in 2012. In 2013 and 2014, he won gold at the USA Shooting National Championships. Two years later, he has served notice to the rest of the shooting world that he will be a force in the coming years.



Sgt. Elizabeth Marks broke a Paralympic swimming world record in winning her first gold medal at the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Marks won the women's 100-meter breaststroke with a time of 1:28:13. (Photo courtesy U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program)