

WCAP NCO Asks Prince Harry to Give Her Invictus Gold Medal to Hospital That Saved Her Life

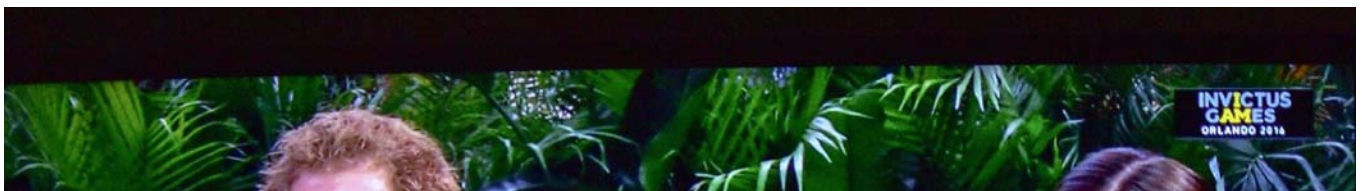
NCO Journal Staff Report

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U.S. Army Sgt. Elizabeth Marks won four gold medals in the swimming competition during the third day of the 2016 Invictus Games on Wednesday.

Her final medal was presented by Prince Harry, the British royal who created the competition, an international Paralympic-style, multi-sport event, which allows wounded, injured or sick armed services personnel and veterans to compete. After he placed the medal around Marks' neck, the 25-year-old combat medic and member of the U.S. World Class Athlete Program of Fort Carson, Colorado, did something unprecedented — she tried to give the award back.





U.S. Army Sgt. Elizabeth Marks, right, appears with Prince Harry on an ESPN broadcast discussing the 2016 Invictus Games. Marks made international headlines Wednesday after asking the British royal to give one of her gold medals to the English hospital staff that saved her life two years ago. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program)

Marks wanted Prince Harry to give the medal to Papworth Hospital in Cambridge, England, where she spent the duration of the inaugural Invictus Games in 2014. Marks traveled to London in the fall of that year to compete in the Games when she collapsed with respiratory distress syndrome. Her condition worsened and she was eventually hospitalized and placed on extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, or ECMO, life support to help her breathe. She missed the Games, but Marks said she was fortunate to come back alive. She said donating one of her medals was the only way she could think of to repay the hospital staff.

“It’s the only thing I could give to thank them for saving my life,” Marks said before sending a message to the hospital. “I will never be able to repay you, but what you are doing is wonderful. I gave one of my medals to Prince Harry and hope it will find its way back to them.”

After her harrowing ordeal Marks immediately went back to work to reclaim her form. Two months after leaving the hospital she broke an American record in the SB9, a disability swimming classification, 200-meter breaststroke. Earlier this year she set a new world record in the 50-meter breaststroke in the SB7 division during the first day of the Jimi Flowers Classic in Colorado Springs, Colorado, serving notice to the world that she will be a force at this year’s Summer Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

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marks joined the Army at age 17 in July 2000 in the Prescott Valley, Arizona. Her goal was to care for injured Soldiers as a combat medic, a role she carried out until she was injured. Despite her altered path in the Army, Marks hopes her efforts continue to help and motivate Soldiers.

“I don’t step onto a block or go into a pool without thinking of all my battle buddies from all around the world who suffer every day,” she said Wednesday. “I never go into a pool to win a medal, just to do them proud.”

The Invictus Games conclude today with various events broadcast live from Orlando, Florida, on ESPN2 and online at ESPN3.com. The United States team included 26 NCOs on its roster.