

# Invictus Games a life-changing experience for double gold medalist

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INDEPENDENT STAFF

There is a cliché that says showing up is not good enough.

But for Alaina Mundy and others who competed in the Invictus Games in the fall, showing up was everything.

"You need to be brave enough to stand up in front of the world and just show up," said the local woman who was a double gold medalist at the Invictus Games.

Mundy is a self-described third generation Army Brat. She followed the footsteps of her father and grandfather and joined the Canadian military, and her husband is in the Canadian military. Her father served as a combat engineer, which led to her family moving around throughout her childhood.

As a child, she joined Girl Guides.

"A huge part of my life is that I have been a Girl Guide since 1987 - this is a source of personal pride and accomplishment," she said. "Guiding was my anchor. I knew where ever we landed, there would be room for me. I would have friends on Tuesday nights, and I would get to do all the things that I enjoyed."

While Mundy's career was successful and she climbed up the professional ladder, there were some setbacks.

The first happened in 2005,

when she was cycling on a training run for a cross base challenge and suffered a significant injury.

The second setback was more serious.

In 2020, Mundy was going through a very stressful and demanding time at work.

"My body was not feeling like it normally did," she said. "Something was different. My running slowed down. My walking slowed down. I knew something wasn't right."

Mundy was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. While Mundy had spent her life meeting challenges head on, the diagnosis left her as a proverbial deer looking into life's oncoming headlights.

"I had never even known anyone with MS, I had no idea how it would impact my life and I certainly was not ready for the changes," she said. "It was a very dark time for me and I wallowed in my diagnosis for a few months. I would later realize that this was very reasonable behavior and my feelings about my diagnosis were valid. I learned that I did not have to like having MS - no one does - but I just need to learn how to live well despite it."

For the next two years, Mundy had to learn to slow down. She had to adjust to a geared-down pace with fewer responsibilities on her plate.

"After struggling with this slow-down phase for a long

time, I have finally learned to embrace it," she said. "I realized that having less on my plate makes me a better person."

While life takes some bad turns, it also takes good turns.

Mundy met two people she calls "MS Champions".

Stacey Mousseau-Trottier and Levi Bradley had both competed in the Invictus Games, and they shared their experiences with Mundy.

"These two beautiful humans encouraged me to apply," she said.

Mundy said she did not look sick, but she faked being well.

In November, 2022, she received a letter informing her that she had been accepted to compete. Her journey with her team, her peers and the coaches started right away. The team met for the first time in person in Victoria, British Columbia for a training camp in February 2023. Mundy described the camp as exciting and terrifying at the same time.

Each athlete would choose three sports to participate in. She chose discus, seated volleyball, and cycling.

"The Athletes had chosen their sports and the sports I chose would push me out of my comfort zone," she said. Cycling was the one event that would force her to knock down a mental barrier.

"On a downhill stretch, my bike flipped and I landed on



Alaina Mundy and Bernard Caissie accepted the Invictus Games flag to bring to Canada in a special ceremony that celebrated Canada's Indigenous community.

my head, shoulder and tumbled for some time," she said of her 2005 crash. "After a visit to the hospital, it was discovered that I had fractured my left collarbone, right radial head (elbow) and had a neck injury. It took eight weeks to heal enough to return to work and over the next year I would need to work hard to regain full mobility and strength."

"This was my mountain to climb - getting back on the bike. I now believe this was not a push outside my comfort zone but rather a jump from cliff called comfort zone."

Mundy found another mental hurdle in writing her biography, which was a requirement for the Canadian team.

"I had not been public about my diagnosis," she said. "I wasn't brave enough yet and I was worried that others would think differently about me. The truth is that I was very wrong. My diagnosis is not a failure, it is not my fault and I was thankful to be surrounded by amazing humans as I put pen to paper and finished that biography."

Under careful supervision from the coaches at Triple Shot Cycling, Mundy got back on the bike and "peddled my heart out." She thrived from the encouragement given to her by her coaches.

"I trained hard," she said. "I borrowed a Peleton from a friend and I peddled whenever

I could. I fell in love with great virtual instructors. As soon as the cycling season opened, I got outdoors and embraced my fears of cycling in traffic. At our second camp in May 2023 in Winnipeg, we cycled through Birds Hill Park and the feeling of freedom and bliss increased. I learned how to cycle one handed - that was a big deal. My coached adjusted my training programs and I joined the Ottawa Bike Club (OBC) so that I could meet more local cyclists. OBC offered Time Trials every week and they became my benchmark in my weekly schedule."

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