



# Rico Roman

2014 Paralympic Gold Medalist  
Retired Staff Sergeant, United States Army



# Rico Roman

*at a glance...*



**Position:** Forward

**Height:** 5-9

**Weight:** 180 lbs

**DOB:** February 4, 1981

**Birthplace:** Portland, Ore.

**Hometown:** Portland, Ore.

**High School:** Alpha High School (Gresham, Ore.)

**Military Service Branch:** United States Army

**Military Rank:** Staff Sergeant



## Points of Interest...

- Gold Medalist – 2014 Sochi Paralympic Games
- As a member of the U.S. Army, Rico served through four tours of duty, one in Kosovo and three in Iraq. He is a Purple Heart recipient.
- Since winning gold in Russia, Rico has become a seasoned motivational speaker, regularly sharing his remarkable story of leadership, resilience and service.
- Born in Portland, Rico is of Hispanic descent. His paternal grandparents are from Puerto Rico. His maternal grandparents are from Mexico.
- Though a lifelong athlete, Rico had never played hockey until 2009.
- In addition to his Paralympic gold medal, Rico is a two-time gold medalist at the World Championships.
- Rico has two children, Juliet, 14 and Raul, 10.



# Rico Roman

*...in depth*

A native of North Portland, Oregon, Rico Roman grew up with no interest, and little knowledge of ice hockey. Basketball, football and wrestling, those were his sports of choice. But no matter what the sport, life can throw curveballs as Roman knows all too well.

In 2001, upon graduating from Alpha High School in Gresham, Roman joined the U.S. Army and left the plush greenery and trademark rains of the Pacific Northwest for the desert and scorching heat of Iraq. A staff sergeant in the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, Roman served three tours in Iraq (and one in Kosovo). On February 22, 2007, with less than a month to go on his last tour, Roman had finished the day working a security checkpoint at Sadar al Yusuf. Returning to base, his vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb, and Roman's life changed forever.

Both of his legs were injured in the explosion, his left severely. The year following the accident was nearly unbearable. Despite best medical efforts, the mobility in his left leg decreased, while the pain increased. A future of limited mobility, endless medication and constant pain was enough motivation for Roman and his family to eventually choose to give up his leg. One year after returning from Iraq his left leg was amputated above the knee.



"Of course it was a hard decision," says Roman, "but I focused on the positives, on the things I'd be able to do afterward. I tried to think about what I was going to get back to rather than what I was losing."

Soon Roman mastered walking on a prosthetic leg, and eventually he took to hand-cycling. He got back to basketball and football, playing in wheelchair leagues, but despite being asked by friends many times to try sled hockey, it's just wasn't his thing.

Finally, he gave in. He showed up at the ice rink, put on pads and sat in the sled's bucket. He quickly learned to balance his weight on the two blades underneath and discovered that he liked speeding around the rink. He tested the sticks another day, using the spikes on the ends to grip the ice and the blade to slap the puck, and realized he enjoyed the fast pace of the competition. He went back another day, then another.

"It was like football in a way," he said. "I was skating around, moving fast, hitting these guys and they were hitting me, and the best part of it was it's all an incredible workout. The intensity of the game was unlike anything I had felt since the accident."

Roman soon took to league play, playing with the San Antonio Sled Rampage, a team made entirely of veterans. He loved it, and despite having only been on the ice for less than a year, he narrowly missed making the 2010 U.S. Paralympic Team. By then he was hooked on hockey and he committed himself to earning a spot on the 2014 Team. Not only did he do so, becoming the first war wounded vet to earn a spot on the U.S. National Team, but he became a key member of Team USA's power line, comprised of fellow veteran's Paul Schaus and Josh Sweeney. This 'Bravo Delta' line led Team USA to gold in dramatic fashion vs. the Russian's on the final day in Sochi.

"I joined the Army to serve our country", said Roman. "It was a privilege and an honor to wear the uniform. The accident took my ability to serve away and that was tough to deal with. Being part of Team USA on the ice, pulling on the red, white and blue...it's a similar kind of proud feeling. That too is an honor and a privilege, and the memories my teammates and I created in Sochi will last forever. Now I'm looking to relive all of that in PyeongChang!"



Photo: Mitchell Haaseh / NBC Olympics



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Rico Roman**

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