



## **RICO ROMAN**

**Country:** USA

**Date of Birth:** 2/4/1981

**Sport:** Para Ice Hockey



### **Sports Career**

**Paralympic Games:** Gold in Para Ice Hockey at Sochi 2014 and Pyeongchang 2018

**World Championships:** Gold in Para Ice Hockey in 2012, 2019 and 2021 | Silver in Para Ice Hockey in 2013 and 2017

As a two-time Paralympic Champion and three-time World Champion in the sport of Para ice hockey, I am proud to play for Team USA.

I have skated with Team USA since 2010. However, before my professional hockey career began, I served in the US Army which saw me take on four overseas tours, three of which were in Iraq. It was during my third tour of Iraq that I was involved in a roadside bombing, which ultimately led to an above the knee amputation of my left leg.

It was during my rehab that I was introduced to Para Ice Hockey, and subsequently that led to my second career with Team USA.

I am running as a candidate for the IPC AAC as I would like to do my part to further the Paralympic Movement in the future, and to ensure that all voices are fairly represented.

When I was injured in the military, I chose to not view it as a setback, but rather as a springboard to something new. Now, I'm a Paralympic athlete who travels the country sharing my story to encourage others to dig deep, and push through adversity with determination and grit.

However, my most rewarding moments are when I can encourage a young child with a disability to give sport a try because I know how important it is not only for physical health, but mental health too.

As a result, I am passionate about ensuring those with disabilities have equal access to sports just as their able-bodied counterparts - especially in youth sport, as I believe this is where the future growth of Paralympic sport begins.

It would be an honour and privilege to represent you on the IPC AAC, and I pledge to build on the incredible work done by the previous position holders. It is my intention to magnify the voices and needs of current and past Paralympic athletes whilst also working hard to maximize the positive impact of Paralympic sport in communities around the world.

### **Why do you wish to run for the IPC Athletes' Council?**

I am running for the IPC Athlete's Council as I would like to do my part to further the Paralympic Movement in the future, and to ensure that all athlete voices are fairly represented. Additionally, I am passionate about ensuring those with disabilities have equal access to sport as their able-bodied counterparts with a focus on youth sport, as I believe this is where the future growth of Paralympic sport lies.

It would be an honour and privilege to serve on the IPC AAC, and I pledge to build on the incredible work done by the previous position holders. It is my intention to magnify the voices and needs of current and past Paralympic athletes whilst also working hard to maximize the positive impact of Paralympic sport in communities around the world.

### **What special skills, background and expertise will you bring to the IPC Athletes' Council?**

In my military and hockey careers, there has been a tremendous emphasis on teamwork, which means I bring a 'team first' mentality to all I do. I believe communication and respect are vital parts of working effectively in a team and these are also qualities that should be present in a great leader.

I am currently part of Team USA's Para Ice Hockey leadership team with additional leadership experience from the military. I try to lead from the front and set an example for my team. Additionally, I do my best to be encouraging and offer motivation and support.

Furthermore, I have spent more than eight years as a public speaker which I do in addition to Para Ice Hockey. I share my story primarily with the intent of furthering Paralympic sport and raising awareness of my sport but also to show people that adversity can be overcome and there is life beyond injury.

Finally, there are many skills that I learned in the military, during rehab, and in my professional careers that I believe would be of benefit to the IPC AAC. This skillset includes problem solving, mental toughness, multi-tasking, strength under pressure and a refusal to give up!

**How has sport impacted your life?**

Sport has always been a huge part of my life. Beginning from when I was a child playing basketball on the local park court to competing on the international stage. However, the biggest impact sport has had on my life is how it helped me heal from my amputation. I was in the early stages of rehab when I was invited to try adaptive hand-cycling. This led to an invite to try wheelchair basketball, then wheelchair softball and finally Para ice hockey.

From the first moment my blades touched the ice, I was hooked. It was like playing American football on ice, and I loved it - all the adrenalin and physical exertion I had been missing since my injury was right there waiting for me. From that moment on, sport has taken me on a wonderful journey, including five world championships and two Paralympic Games. But no matter how great the accolades and medals have been, the very best part of sport is undoubtedly my teammates - they are more than my team, they are my brothers and doing this journey with them over the past decade has been a privilege and joy.

**What is your vision for the IPC Athletes' Council?**

I believe that the 2028 Games will be pivotal for the growth of the Paralympic Movement in the U.S. and globally. It will be an amazing opportunity to show the world the Paralympics and Para athletes since there is ample time to ensure we maximize exposure. Making strides in the social sphere is vital to communicating the Paralympic message, especially on platforms that resonate with younger audiences. We can achieve this through both user generated content, and by utilizing celebrities/influencers to maximize reach. The benefit of being at home is that there will be a fantastic opportunity to create a wave of support throughout the country.

Furthermore, there is a great opportunity over the coming years to better unite the work of the IPC and the IOC - using Olympians to amplify their Paralympic counterparts. There is also value in encouraging the other professional leagues and celebrities to lift up the stories of Paralympians. Finally, I would suggest ensuring sufficient investment in grassroots level sport so that those who learn about Para sport have ample opportunity to try and develop their talent. I would also ensure community sponsorship for all to take up sport regardless of income, background and access limitations.

**What is the biggest challenge you have experienced as an athlete? How did you overcome it?**

Personally, I feel the biggest challenge I've faced as an athlete has been the level of sacrifice required to remain competitive at the elite level for more than a decade. One of my favorite sayings is - 'If you stay ready, you don't have to get ready,' and staying ready for hockey means sacrifices in many areas of my life. The

most obvious is time. Time in the gym, time on the ice, time in my garage shooting on goal and time in the air traveling to competitions to name a few. Hockey time requires sacrificing time in other areas of my life, such as birthdays, dinners, and holidays. Then there's the less obvious sacrifices, such as sleep - 6 am workouts and leaving for the airport at 4 am are just a few examples. Ego is another - teamwork means always putting the needs of the team before the needs of yourself. Sacrifice even includes cutting back on comfort foods - I can't eat donuts every day after all! The constant grind and sacrifice can be tough, but the moment you achieve what you've been working towards make sense, and they are worth it.