

Athlete Profile (National)

Brent Garlic – Reaching for New Dreams

If you don't believe that life can change in an instant, you need to talk with Brent Garlic, a combat-wounded Army veteran of Bosnia and a 28-year-old paraplegic. One moment he was walking tall, and now he calls his wheelchair his legs.

"Living in a chair isn't the worst thing in life," says Garlic, who lives in Atlanta, Georgia. "Really, the only challenges I have are with stairs and hills – they do give me a bit of a challenge." Facing life's challenges, however, is what Garlic thrives on. "Being in the military was the hardest work I've ever done, but I loved it. I would take it all back to go in again and serve," he says.

These days, the challenges Garlic has his mind on most often involve sports competition at the 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. At the event, taking place June 19-23, he is signed up already to compete in basketball, softball, weightlifting, track and nine-ball. He attended the Games once before, in Minneapolis in 2005, where he won a silver medal in weightlifting. For Garlic, however, it's not all about the medals. "My advice, especially for the first timers, is not to take it too seriously," he says. "If you win a medal, fine, but if you win new friendships that's much more powerful. I wasn't really sure what the Games would be like. I'll tell you that the experience really turned my expectations around. It was great."

The time that's passed since his injury and discharge from the Army have given Brent Garlic a newfound realization that perhaps it wasn't such a bad thing to have been injured. "I'd love to have my legs, back – don't get me wrong," he says. "However, the doors that have opened for me to work on classic cars which I love, and partner in an airport taxi service business, are things that I don't think I would have been able to do [before the injury]. I was going to retire from the Army. Now, my goals are to own my own garage to continue working on classic cars, and to help my family by buying them a home. That's really what I want to do."

Watch Garlic in Milwaukee this June as he tears down the basketball courts and, at the same time, tears down the barriers that lead to his dreams.

