

# Skier Profile

## Sergeant Heath Calhoun – An Amazing Site to Behold

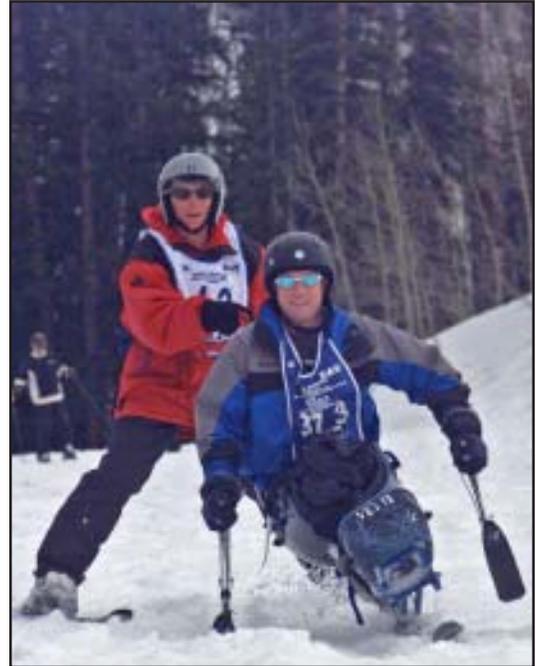
For Sergeant Heath Calhoun, a 25-year-old Army veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, love for the U.S. military came at an early age. A third generation war veteran, Calhoun's father served in Vietnam and his grandfather was a veteran of World War II. In Iraq in November 2003, while serving as part of Ft. Campbell's 101st Airborne Division, Calhoun lost both legs above the knee when a rocket propelled grenade hit his Humvee.

Calhoun, who lives in Clarksville, Tenn., first learned about the Winter Sports Clinic when the program founder, Sandy Trombetta, came to visit him while he was recuperating at Walter Reed Memorial Hospital. "I really appreciate the fact that Sandy did what he did," Calhoun said. "I wanted to get out of the hospital and back into life. This program was a chance to jump back in instead of pausing."

His first trip to the Winter Sports Clinic was in 2004, a mere five months after being injured. Like many first timers, he was initially nervous about the program. "I'm not one of those people who enjoys failing," Calhoun said. "If I do something, I want to do it well. I didn't know what to expect and if I would have a good time." Fortunately, he enjoyed his first Clinic immensely, and because the program offers so many different activities, Calhoun found there was "something to do all day, from the time you wake up until you go to bed."

The support network at the Clinic is extensive, and contributes largely to the participants' self esteem and success. "The volunteers and instructors were all extremely supportive. They did everything they could to make sure I had a good time and didn't fail." At the conclusion of the week of his first Clinic, Heath Calhoun was awarded the 2004 Challenge Aspen Inspiration Award. He was chosen by the program's leaders as "the person who best embodied the spirit of inspiration on and off the snow." Calhoun's athleticism and uplifting attitude motivated everyone who attended the Clinic. His ski instructor, Aurora Kuschner, is in agreement. "This guy's phenomenal!" she said.

Skiing isn't new to Calhoun. "What was new was doing it in a different way. When I first lost my legs, I thought I'd get right up again on prostheses," he recalled. "When I first tried them (the prosthetic legs), I was shocked. No matter how great the prostheses, I had a bad injury and life had drastically changed. Being able to mono-ski and do it well puts anyone in my position back on equal ground with anyone else. You can put on a mono-ski and come down the mountain as well as anyone – it takes you right out of the 'disabled' category and back into regular society. It wasn't so much being up on the slopes, but being able to come down."



Calhoun also travels to help raise money and awareness for The Wounded Warrior Project, an organization that specifically helps severely wounded young soldiers coming back from the war.

At the 2005 Winter Sports Clinic, Calhoun plans to ski, snowboard and scuba dive. "There's no event that takes place on as large a scale," he said about the Clinic. "When you get 350 disabled vets in one building, it's a big deal. The whole sight is just amazing to behold."