

# Athlete Profile

## Dana Bowman — A Real Golden Knight!

Dana Bowman, a 42-year-old Army veteran who resides in Willow Park, Texas, is one person who confronts life's challenges head-on and then does everything he can to conquer them. Only a year after being involved in a terrifying sky diving accident which resulted in the loss of both legs and the death of his close friend, Bowman attended and skied at his first Winter Sports Clinic. He's been a frequent participant at the national event ever since.

On February 6, 1994, as members of the U.S. Army's prestigious Golden Knights parachute team, Bowman and another team member, Sergeant Jose Aguillon, were practicing the "diamond-track" maneuver. They collided in mid-air at a combined speed of 300 miles per hour. The force of the collision severed Bowman's legs on impact, his right leg above the knee and his left leg below. His parachute deployed automatically when they hit, but Aguillon, his good friend and team member, died instantly.

Bowman began his road to recovery and rehabilitation at a neurological center in Phoenix, Arizona, where the process took 111 days. At the 1995 National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, less than a year after Dana Bowman completed his rehabilitation, he skied for the first time as a double amputee.

He also made his first parachute jump as an amputee only six short months after being injured. In November 1994, Bowman became the first double amputee to reenlist with the United States Army. Following the reenlistment ceremony he parachuted onto the main post parade field, along with his team commander and others. In the years since, he has continued his interest in skydiving and has made a number of spectacular dives for fellow participants and guests at the Winter Sports Clinic, and at many other events and programs.

Bowman, who served his country in Grenada and Panama, learned how to ski using adaptive equipment at the National Disabled Winter Sports Clinic. Now he is an advanced skier. "If you never quit, you can do anything," he said when he first learned to ski. "It's all about perseverance. The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will."



Bowman has adjusted to life with an injury. Since his injury, Bowman has married, has five children and is frequently asked to serve as a motivational speaker. "I honestly believe this happened for a reason and that has made me a stronger individual. There is a reason for me to be like I am now, and I think that is to help other people." Bowman credits the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic with giving him and other veterans a platform from which to demonstrate their strength and their ability to work as a team. "Participating in the Winter Sports Clinic has made a difference in my life. Once a year I get to spend a week with my friends, skiing and having fun. This is a fun-filled week of exercise and reunions, and I would encourage all disabled veterans to attend."