



National Disabled Veterans

# Winter Sports Clinic

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## Skier Profile

### David Bronson – Determined to be Normal

For David Bronson, life is finally getting back to normal. For him, normal means shredding slopes, riding motorcycles and challenging himself each day, so he can continue to lead the active life he once took for granted.

“I’ll be snowboarding [at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic] in Snowmass and I can’t wait to do it,” Bronson said. “I want to stay active and do something that I once thought I would never be able to do again. I actually bought a motorcycle this past fall and surprised a lot of people by being able to ride one again. It’s even a conventional shift bike. It’s not the easiest thing in the world for me to do, but it’s doable and I want to do everything I could before.”

In this case, “before” refers to the time prior to the injury he received while serving in Iraq. An Army sergeant, Bronson spent his active duty days as an M1-A1 Tank crewman. “We didn’t all roll tanks in my unit,” Bronson explained. “We only rolled two tanks and two humvees per platoon. I was the unlucky one in the humvee that day.” He is referring to the fateful day that he lost his left leg below the knee. A roadside bomb peppered his entire left side with shrapnel and also wounded his right knee.

If Bronson seems to speak without any trace of bitterness, it’s because there isn’t any. The soldier has been in rehabilitation at Walter Reed Army Medical Center since September 2005, and has learned to see any limitations as temporary and worth the risk in order to have the life he wants. “It’s been more than a year and I’m still adjusting to my prosthesis,” he said. “So far so good, but there are good days and bad days. The weather kind of plays a role in it—the colder it is, the worse it is.”

Despite complications from the cold, Bronson is determined to be out on the fallen powder at Colorado’s Snowmass Village, re-learning the sport he had once enjoyed so effortlessly. “It is definitely worth it,” Bronson said. “I snowboarded before. I own my own snowboard now that I’ve realized I can do it again, so I’m not giving up. When I get to the Winter Sports Clinic, I’ll be looking to learn how to adjust to different techniques for my leg and any tips and pointers I can get for fine tuning, whether it’s from the instructors or other veterans like me.” The opportunity to find other veterans like him is one of the reasons Bronson gives for his excitement about the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, co-sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

“When it comes to VA, I’ve only touched the tip of the iceberg as far as the services they provide,” Bronson said. “This will be my first VA sports event, and it took me by surprise that they had them. It’s incredible that they would bring us all together and do this for us. There are friends from my unit who were also injured, so I will get to see them there. I could snowboard decently on my own, but I would still rather ride with somebody else – especially someone who’s been through what I have.”

Life is getting back to normal for David Bronson. He is looking forward to going to college on the GI Bill, staying as active as ever, and supporting his fellow veterans just like he once did his fellow tank crewmen. “I want to tell every veteran like me who doesn’t go to these events that you don’t know that you can’t do something until you try,” Bronson said. “A lot of people would be surprised about how capable they actually are. Our wounds are not so much a disability as they are a motivation to prove to people that you can still do the things you loved to do and remain the person you always were.”

*Miracles on a Mountainside!*

