

Invictus Games Radio Podcast: Introduction Episode – Invictus Games Toronto 2017 CEO Michael Burns

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PJ: Welcome to Invictus Games Radio. I'm PJ Kwong.

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PJ: Hi everybody and welcome to the Invictus Games Radio Podcast. This is going to be an amazing introduction to what we're doing. I am here with Invictus Games Toronto 2017 CEO Michael Burns. Michael, thank you for talking to me; you're like a moving target trying to get you to sit down but I appreciate it.

Michael: **[Laughs]** It's great to be here.

PJ: So this is the very first podcast, as far as I can tell, that has ever been done from inside a Games. How do you feel about being the *first* with the Invictus Games Radio Podcast?

Michael: Well obviously we're very excited. I mean this is a great way to reach thousands of people who are going to be following these Games as we get closer to September of 2017 and I think for us there's a lot of firsts, that people are going to see or if they haven't already seen, that we're doing is going to be very special to our Games that that wasn't done in Orlando or at the inaugural Games in 2014 in London. So we're obviously very excited and delighted to be here with you today.

PJ: So tell me why people should subscribe to the podcast either on our feed at invictusgames.com, invictusgames2017.com (uh-oh that was a career limiting move right there **[laughs]**) or on iTunes?

Michael: Well I think if people want to up-to-date information, they want an inside look, they want to talk to people like myself, or for those who are actually delivering the Games, or competing in them, or the family and friends who are coming from one of the 17 nations including Canada, I think podcasts are going to be great way to have that insider view as to both how we're delivering these Games and the impact that we're going to hopefully deliver to hundreds, if not thousands, of servicemen and women, veterans and their families across this country and 16 other nations around the globe.

PJ: Well it's my plan to make sure that I interview, as you said, not just the competitors who are coming, but people who have a stake in these Games. Whether it is those of us who are here delivering the Games or whether it's people who are working very hard to sort of help with the rehabilitation and just coming together and helping to support service men and women. So what kinds of stories are your favorite kinds of Invictus stories?

Michael: Well every competitor that's coming, and we'll have more than 550 from 17 nations, they all have unique stories. These are men and women, who as a result of service, largely in combat, have come away from that experience ill and injured. But for me, I think it's going to be, I love the stories of the families, I love to be able to get to know them, to understand better the sacrifices that they've made. But also the sheer joy. . That more than anything that people recognize their service and the things that we're going to do to help promote them and get them on a better trajectory through the power of adaptive sport. But there's going to be moments where when we first assemble Team Canada in April of next year, to be able to be around those men women is going to be special. To watch the parade of nations and to see them come into the Air Canada Centre on the 23rd September is going to be I think very powerful. So, for me it's a lot of it is interacting, but a lot of it's just watching and observing the power that these Games have on the lives of these incredible men and women and their families.

PJ: When you went to one of the Games, can you give us like a little moment that really struck you, that really hit home for you that this was an important thing to do these Games?

Michael: Yeah I think probably the best example was the 100 meter wheelchair race where...

PJ: Is this in Orlando? 2016?

Michael: This is in Orlando...

PJ: 2016?

Colonel Rakesh Jetly : Yeah, 2016. One of the competitors was from Jordan, I believe her name was Ulfat and when the starter pistol went and they were going down the track, it probably took the woman that got the gold medal probably 20 or 25 seconds to go across the line. She was followed by the other competitors and this woman Ulfat, who actually was paralyzed from the waist down as a result of the training

accident, struggled and it literally took her a good ten minutes to get down the track. But what happened and was for me, I was in the grandstand, was that all the attention of the men and women that were there, the fans were on her. . They got up, they were cheering on, they were chanting her nation's name, Jordan. Then what was pretty special was to watch the competitors, who had finished the race, who were congratulating themselves, stop look back and cheer her on. And to watch her struggle, but to make it, I think really, for me anyways, embodied the spirit of these Games, which is Invictus, which is Latin for unconquered. And despite everything that this woman has gone through, all of the obstacles, for her to be there that day and to compete and to do her best, that meant more than anything and it was pretty special to watch. . I don't think you necessarily get that kind of sportsmanship, that kind of reaction from an audience like you do at these Games.

PJ: You know it's so interesting, the beauty of podcasting is hearing a person's first-hand account and you relaying that story leaves me with goosebumps. You know and this is what we're hoping to explore with this podcast is all kinds of different stories. I'd like a quick overview for people who are just brand new to the Invictus Games, please give me an overview of Invictus Games Toronto 2017. What's it all about?

Michael: I think the best way to describe, it it's akin to the Paralympics for servicemen and women veterans, who is a result of training or combat, have come away from their service either severely injured or ill. We will be having the third installment of the Games. The Games will be running from the 23rd September to the 30th of 2017, hosted here in Toronto. We'll have 17 nations, including Canada. What's really exciting is that the 550 competitors, each of them will be bringing two members of their family or friends to join them on the journey. We have a whole lineup of sport activities, about 12, that will be happening in and around the city. We're looking forward to also incorporating some of the great assets that Toronto has, like the island, we'll be doing cycling. We're going to be using the historic site of Fork York for outdoor archery, we're going to be doing a wheelchair tennis and ball hockey at City Hall at the reflective pool there. So lots of great opportunities! But also great opening and closing ceremonies. Lots of events are going to be going on throughout the city to commemorate and celebrate the Invictus Games coming to Canada in our 150th anniversary. So stay tuned, I'm sure a lot of people know. We're tracking the numbers already, already know about the Games, they're interested about the Games. But it's not just all about what's happening in Toronto, but we've already done this year and what we're going to be doing next year to inspire, engage and activate a country and give all Canadians an opportunity, I would describe it a historic opportunity,

to show our support, our gratitude and our love for the contributions that our military families have made 150 years for our country.

PJ: So those of you out there in podcast land, I want you to stay tuned because there's going to be great stories coming all the way along. We're releasing them, as you know Michael, two times a month starting in January and they'll go all the way through to the Games. And I want to thank you for taking the time to sit down and talk to me and for those of you out there, visit our website: www.invictusgames2017.com for more information. Last word to you.

Michael: But, so developing a mental health strategy for mental health in the workplace will take care of the PTSD problem, but developing PTSD strategy isn't going to take care of the mental health in the workplace thing, so we think about it overall. So what we've done is, we recognized how prevalent mental illness is in the Canadian Forces it's, you know, slightly higher than the regular population or depression rates are higher, you know, adverse childhood events are about 30 something percent in society there are about 50% of people that join the military. Well stay tuned everyone. Fasten your seatbelts it's going to be hell of a ride.

PJ: That's great, thank you.

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PJ: Thanks for listening to Invictus Games Radio for more information visit: www.invictusgames2017.com.