



INVICTUS GAMES

EXCITED FOR THE FUTURE

Officer Cadet Rachel Kerrigan served in the Royal Australian Air Force from 1997-2007.

PHOTO: RACHEL KERRIGAN

Boeing engineer and veteran goes from surviving to thriving

BY BELINDA EGAN, BOEING WRITER

Rachel Kerrigan's deployment to Afghanistan changed her life forever.

An engineer with the Royal Australian Air Force, Kerrigan saw active service with the International Coalition Against Terrorism in 2002.

Five years later, a series of life events triggered trauma from her deployment, and she was medically discharged. By 2010, she was diagnosed with severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and chronic-depressive disorder and suffered a stress-induced stroke.

"I couldn't leave the house and was told I would never work again. I went from having everything to having nothing," Kerrigan said.

'I Would Not Be Here Today Without the Invictus Games'

TRUE STRENGTH

Today, Kerrigan looks to the future, using her experience to help others.

PHOTO: INVICTUS AUSTRALIA

“ The real power of Invictus isn’t the competition. It’s being surrounded by people who understand your journey. I didn’t win my events, but the Games helped me to celebrate how far I’d come. I’d found my ‘family’ and my purpose again.”

**RACHEL KERRIGAN,
BOEING DEFENCE AUSTRALIA**



UNCONDITIONAL BOND

Kerrigan says her daughter Kiara always was, and always will be, a bedrock of support, seeing beyond her mom’s illness to the true person within.

PHOTO: RACHEL KERRIGAN

The Journey to Recovery

The turning point for Kerrigan was encouragement from her 8-year-old daughter, Kiara, to apply for the Invictus Games.

With maturity beyond her years, Kiara fashioned gym equipment out of broomsticks and buckets and her mom began to train — slowly reclaiming self-belief and a sense of identity. Rachel lost 60 kilograms (132 pounds) and built the physical and mental strength to represent Australia in powerlifting and indoor rowing at the 2016 Invictus Games in Orlando.

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Kerrigan went on to compete in powerlifting and the National Women’s Wheelchair Basketball League and embarked on a mission to help others, working as a Veteran Engagement Specialist with Invictus Australia.

PUSHING HER LIMITS

Stronger than ever mentally and physically, Kerrigan achieved third place at the 2017 Australian Masters Games. Her personal best is 150 kilograms (330 pounds).

PHOTO: RACHEL KERRIGAN



DAY OF REFLECTION

To observe Australia’s Anzac Day, Kerrigan wore her service medals. Daughter Kiara wore replicas to proudly honour her mother’s and great-grandfather’s military service.

PHOTO: RACHEL KERRIGAN

BACKYARD FRIENDS

At home, Kerrigan enjoys spending time with her beloved horses, Hannah and Summer. She says she's now in a better place than ever.

PHOTO: RACHEL KERRIGAN



Dream Job at Boeing

Today, Kerrigan works as an engineering capability leader in Mission Systems and Ground Systems at Boeing Defence Australia.

“I had always wanted to work at Boeing, but my illness had taken away the part of me that loved engineering, the defence industry and aircraft,” said Kerrigan. “Invictus kick-started a journey of discovery and opportunity for me. Now I work full time in a demanding role, leading a great team — I thought I would never do this again.”

Kerrigan draws on the qualities she learned from her recovery and time as a competitor to support colleagues and veterans in the workplace.

“Everyone has a story. Everyone has stuff going on in their personal lives and in their work lives. Perspective is important, and I’m grateful to be able to give back for all of the support that has been given to me.

“And that’s why sponsorships such as Boeing’s of the Invictus Games are so meaningful. It’s hard to put into words how much it means to be given an opportunity that changes your life. To give someone a chance to find out they’re more powerful than what they’re told — to inspire hope and courage.”

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Looking to the Future

“PTSD never goes away, but it doesn’t define who I am anymore,” said Kerrigan. “My recovery through sport has given me the clarity to focus on what’s important in life — my family, being true to who I am and using my experience to help others.

“It has shown me that no matter what has happened, I am strong, I am where I belong, and I can be who I want to be.

“I would not be here today without the Invictus Games.” **IQ**



INVICTUS INFO
Dive into the Games.

Proud Partnership

Event	Invictus Games Dusseldorf 2023 Presented by Boeing
Dates	Sept. 9-16, 2023
Competitors	500
Nations	22
Sports	10

This year, Boeing expanded its support, serving as Presenting Sponsor of the Invictus Games Dusseldorf 2023.

The Invictus Games use the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding and respect for wounded, injured and sick veterans.