

# Curtis McGrath OAM, OLY

---

***Paracanoeist, Former Combat Engineer,  
Broadcaster & Keynote Speaker***

Twenty minutes after losing both his legs in an horrific blast in Afghanistan, in those traumatic moments as he was being stretchered from the bomb site, Curtis was already thinking about pursuing a career as an amputee athlete. Fully aware of his grim situation and partly to maintain consciousness as a survival mechanism, he joked with those helping him about becoming a Paralympian. He didn't know what sport he was going to do, but his positive outlook and determination to rebound and get on with achieving his driving ambitions is what has made this man get to where he is today.



He tried his hand at a few sports but settled on canoeing, an activity he'd dabbled in at school.

Not even two years after tragically becoming a bilateral amputee, Curtis was competing at a National level against other Para-athletes in the physically demanding sport of Sprint Canoe. Already breaking world records, his ability to adapt to his disability has amazed many people and now he's well on his way to glory.

Curtis has dominated all the local, national and international meets he's competed in, including the Oceania Sprint Canoe Championships, World Cups, World Championships and the Paralympic Games. The ongoing success is not an easy task to maintain. Curtis is the defending Paralympic Champion and has set his sights on the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games where he will attempt to maintain his hold on the top step of the podium.

Sport has been an integral part of Curtis' rehabilitation. The Invictus Games is exactly that. A sporting event for wounded, injured and ill servicemen and women and veterans. The event brings together servicemen and women, veterans to participate in sporting events to inspire those around them by using the power of sport to heal the wounds of their service. Curtis captained the inaugural Australia team that went to London in 2014. Since then Curtis has been apart of the Invictus movement, participating in 2016, 2017 and he was an ambassador for the Sydney 2018 Invictus Games.

He believes that sport is a medicine that can help heal and motivate people to live a healthy active lifestyle.

Hard working yet humble, Curtis McGrath has spoken at many public and private events about his life, inspiring people, companies and teams to work towards their own goals. He enjoys talking

about how the power of sport is a powerful tool that can be used for rehabilitation and motivation. Curtis gave the 2017 ANZAC Day National Address at the Australian War Memorial in front of 38,000 people.

In 2024, he was appointed to the Paralympics Australia Board.

At the 2024 Paris Paralympics Curtis won the men's kayak single 200m KL2 event for the third straight Paralympics.

### ***More about Curtis McGrath:***

Curtis enlisted into the Australian Army on the 12th June 2006, at the age of 18. His focus immediately turned to Combat Engineering, a role that's main aim is to "Provide mobility whilst denying the enemy mobility". Duties range from building structures and converting seawater into drinking water for both the Army and the local populous, to destroying bridges and clearing mines and booby traps.

However, on 23rd August 2012, Curtis's life changed forever when he stepped on a homemade landmine, otherwise known as an IED (Improvised Explosive Device). The then 24-year-old tragically lost both his legs in the blast.

Thirty minutes after losing both his legs in an horrific blast in Afghanistan, in those traumatic moments as he was being stretchered from the bomb site, Curtis was already thinking about pursuing a career as an amputee athlete. Fully aware of his grim situation and partly to maintain consciousness as a survival mechanism, he joked with those helping him about becoming a Paralympian. He didn't know what sport he was going to do, but his positive outlook and determination to rebound and get on with achieving his driving ambitions is what has made this man get to where he is today.

Curtis had lost his right leg above the knee and the left leg just below the knee. After a miraculously speedy recovery and rehabilitation process, Curtis was fitted with legs made by Otto Bock, a German company first started after World War I.

Following rehabilitation, Curtis tried his hand at a few sports but settled on canoeing, an activity he'd dabbled in at school. He took up outrigger canoeing in January 2014 and made it all the way to be one of the fastest sprint canoeist in the world. In 2015 the International Paralympic Committee made the decision to replace the outrigger canoe with the sprint kayak. Curtis had to quickly adapt to the kayak to be eligible for the Paralympics. He trained 12 times a week during the build-up to the competition. This training was given by an elite kayaker and now Australian Paracanoe Coach Guy Powers. He had Curtis working hard right from the word go.

Curtis has been recognised with gold medals at the ICF Paracanoe World Championships from 2016 to 2019 and a Paralympic gold medal in the Men's 200m KL2 kayak event at the 2016 Rio Paralympics.

In February 2017 he became the first Paralympic athlete to be honoured by being named 'Sportsman of the Year' at the World Paddle Awards and Australian Canoeing Paracanoeist of the Year. That same year he was honoured with an Order of Australia Medal.

In 2018, Curtis was on the side lines of the Commonwealth Games to bring all the action to homes across Australia working with Channel 7 Sport broadcasting crew, along side some of Australia's most recognised sports presenters.

Curtis was also an ambassador for the Invictus Games 2018 in Sydney, where he helped build the profile of the games and worked for the ABC on the broadcasting team with Chris Bath, Anthony 'Lehmo' Lehman and Dylan Alcott OAM.

## Client testimonials

---

“ Curtis was sensational speaker, and a really nice guy to deal with. We had a small room of professional athletes who've 'seen it all before' and you could have heard a pin drop (in fact, you could hear the aircon buzzing). Our audience was highly engaged, hanging on every word, with lots of questions which Curtis answered very honestly. Highly recommended.

- **Brand Faction**

“ To hear this guy speak is one of the most amazing things I have ever heard and when he finished there were 250 people giving him a standing ovation and he brought me and a few others to tears. He is an awesome individual and I felt very privileged to hear his story, I would definitely recommend Curtis for events such as these as he will and has left a lasting impression on those that witness his presentation.

- **General Manager, Alex Surf Club**

“ Curtis' story is an inspirational one which had a big impact on our audience (comprising Chairmen, CEOs and CFOs). I wouldn't hesitate recommending Curtis to other companies looking for someone who can truly speak to adversity, resilience and the importance of goal setting in life as well as sport.

- **Large Australian Fund Manager 2017**

“ Curtis was the perfect speaker for our event. He was professional, relaxed and his presentation resonated with the audience. He was able to link his involvement directly back to the focus of our event and bring everything together perfectly. What a wonderful person - it was a pleasure to have Curtis join us for this night.

- **Harvest PR**

“ We have received the results of our survey and it was another gold medal winning performance from yourself. Your session rated the highest 4.82/5.00 , of all our sessions. Well done and thanks again for having a positive impact on the team.

- *Aon Leadership and Growth Conference*

[VIEW SPEAKER'S BIO ONLINE !\[\]\(dfbd6b3763a6d1d9afaa974f64e2e4b5\_img.jpg\)](#)