

Eric Duda

16-year Team USA Veteran



Eric Duda has been part of the U.S. Paralympic Volleyball Team for 16 years. But he first needed to learn the sport after his high school freshman math teacher suggested he try out for the school's boys' volleyball team.

Eric ended up being a four-year varsity player in high school and went on to play NIRSA men's volleyball at University of Florida where he was captain as a junior and senior. However, his calling was in the Paralympic world.

Eric was born with amniotic band syndrome, causing him to be missing his fingers on his left hand. However, he likes to tell people he lost his fingers while protecting his dog from an alligator. Eric did not allow his disability to stop him – he played eight years of classical piano, seven years of percussion and competed in archery for two years all without fingers on his left hand.

That persistence paid off in 2000 as he joined the Standing Volleyball Paralympic Team and was an alternate for the 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney. While doing an internship with USA Volleyball, Eric joined the U.S. Sitting Volleyball Team in 2004 and was a quick study. In his rookie season, his head coach, Bill Hamiter, pulled him aside in a Cairo hotel room, shook his hand and awarded him the team's captain's bar – though Eric had to iron it on himself. He went on to make the 2004 Paralympic Games roster as the U.S. Men's Sitting Team finished sixth.

Eric's sitting volleyball career will take him back to the Paralympic Games in RIO after Team USA qualified for RIO by finishing second at the 2015 Parapan American Games. His proudest accomplishments have been walking out of the tunnel for the 2004 Paralympic Games opening ceremony, followed by winning match point against Canada in the 2015 Parapan Am Games semifinals to secure a return to the Paralympic Games.



In between, Eric has played in three Sitting Volleyball World Championships. He has won silver in the last three Parapan American Games sitting volleyball competitions in 2007, 2011 and 2015. Eric earned gold at the 2009 Parapan American Championship and silver in the same event in 2013. He was named USA Volleyball's Male Sitting Player of the Year in 2009 and 2014.

Eric has also been active coaching the standing game, including four years as head coach at Redlands Community College and volunteer coach at University of Central Oklahoma at various times during his playing career. At Redlands, he was named NJCAA Region C Coach of the Year. Eric currently coaches club volleyball for Oklahoma Peak Performance.

