

Alex Zanardi Wins Gold Medal on eve of 15-year Anniversary Crash

Ghelli Federico (September 14, 2016)



The former Indy Car racer claimed another gold medal in this year's Paralympics game. It's his third overall, after the two of London 2012.

[Alex Zanardi](#) [2], 49, former 1997 and 1998 CART champion, won gold in the H5 handcycling time trial, just a day before the horrific car accident in which he lost both legs.

Zanardi completed the course 20k course in 26 minutes 36.81 seconds. Australian Stuart Tripp was second, just three seconds behind Zanardi. This is Zanardi's third Paralympic gold and fourth overall. Zanardi is also an eight-time handcycling world champion.



"Normally I don't thank God for these types of things as I believe God has more important stuff to worry about. But today is too much, I had to raise my eyes and thank him," Zanardi said.

15 years ago Zanardi suffered one of the most tragic accidents in auto racing history. On Sept. 15, 2001; at the [American Memorial](#) [3] in Lausitz, Germany, Zanardi lost control of his car after a pit stop, sliding onto the track, and was hit at over 200 mph by Canadian driver Alex Tagliani.

Despite all odds; Zanardi survived. He said he went for almost an hour with less than a liter of blood in his body. He underwent 16 surgeries and spent a year regaining confidence and strength.

"At the time I was asked if I would ever step back in a race car, but what was very important for me was to go into the bathroom and pee on my own, but I could not do that," Zanardi said. "Day by day I managed to regain control and strength, regain some confidence and concentrate on different things and here I am now."

The land used to build the Olympic Stadium was the home of an Indy Car circuit, where Zanardi secured his very first pole position in 1996. "For a romantic guy like me this is quite special," he said.

Zanardi, who will now compete in the road race on Thursday, asserted that is story is no more remarkable than the ones of the other 4,300 athletes competing in the Paralympics.

"Even my accident, what happened to me, became the biggest opportunity of my life. "When you find yourself in a certain situation you have to identify where you want to go and focus on what you can achieve on that given day," he said.

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