

Breaking Barriers: A Paralympic Journey



CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

The 2024 Paralympic Games were exciting. Among the more than 4,400 athletes competing, Leader Dog Client Joan Munar Martinez took home a bronze medal in the long jump.

Joan's path to the Paralympic Games began unexpectedly. "After only two seasons of athletics, I qualified for the 2012 London Paralympic Games," he recalls. "At 16, I was the youngest Spanish athlete." This early success was just the beginning of a remarkable journey leading him to the bronze medal in Paris.

But every athlete has their challenges. "I had quite a few problems with my jumping knee," Joan shares. "I had to do a lot of work to strengthen the muscles in that leg and endured weeks of training with quite a lot of pain."

The road to Paris was paved with intense preparation. "I was training six days a week and competing all over Europe looking for that mark to qualify for the Games," Martinez explains.

As the Paris Games approached, the bond between the athlete and his Leader Dog, Cayden, proved invaluable. "Being with Cayden everywhere is fantastic," Joan says. "His work is impeccable and always gives me extra freedom to disconnect on my own before important competitions, without depending on anyone."

On the day of the competition, Leader Dog Cayden watched from the stands with Martinez's family. When Joan clinched the bronze medal, the emotion was overwhelming. "What I felt was a brutal emotion, and I assure you that I had never cried so much," he confesses. "It came to my mind that all the hours dedicated to pursuing this dream had been worth it."

The celebration that followed was enhanced by Leader Dog Cayden's reaction. "After the competition, I approached the stands very excited, to greet all my family and friends who had come," Martinez remembers. "And when Cayden saw me, he threw himself towards me and kept giving me kisses, as if we had not seen each other for two years, and only six hours had passed."

Reflecting on his journey, Martinez is filled with gratitude. "Leader Dog has made me a completely independent person," he states. "I knew that my life would change after going there, but I did not imagine it would change in such a wonderful way."



JOAN LANDING HIS LONG JUMP (TOP). JOAN AND LD CAYDEN AT PARIS PARALYMPICS (BOTTOM).