

## US bionic engineer Hugh Herr wins prestigious Spanish prize

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In this image released by Fundacion de Asturias on Wednesday June 1, 2016, Hugh Herr poses in this hand out photo. American bionic limb specialist Hugh Herr won Spain's Princess of Asturias 2016 scientific research prize Wednesday in recognition of his work to improve mobility for people with disabilities. Herr, 51, currently heads the Biomechatronic Group at the MIT Media Lab in Massachusetts, where he developed what has been described as the world's most sophisticated ankle prostheses, prize organizers said. (Fundacion de Asturias via AP)

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Now a renowned expert in bionics and biomechanics, Herr had both legs amputated below the knee at 17 after suffering severe frostbite while mountain climbing. He subsequently directed his talents to developing technology to help people with similar problems, including special legs for himself that allowed him to continue practicing climbing.

The Asturias foundation said Herr's research has resulted in "a class of biohybrid, 'smart' prostheses that are accelerating the merging of body and machine and amplifying endurance and strength."

It said his achievements have had a major impact on people with disabilities, through adaptive knee prostheses for femoral amputees, and ankle-and-foot orthopedic prostheses for those with clubfoot or disabilities caused by cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis.

A mechanical engineer and biophysicist, Herr's life story has been told in "Second Ascent: The Story of Hugh Herr" and in the National Geographic film "Ascent: The Story of Hugh Herr." In 2011, TIME magazine coined him the "Leader of the Bionic Age."

The 50,000-euro (\$56,000) award is one of eight handed out yearly by a foundation named for Crown Princess Leonor. Other prize topics include the arts, sports and social sciences. They are presented each fall in the northern Spanish city of Oviedo, capital of the Asturias region.



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