

CHAPTER 6

CLOSING CEREMONY

“I want to do things people wouldn’t expect a T-4 para to do. I want them to look inside themselves and say ‘I haven’t done half of the things this guy does.’ Maybe that will push them to make a change in their life.”

Joseph Lowe, 2010 All-Marine Warrior Games Team Member

The inaugural Warrior Games came to a close May 14, 2010 at the Air Force Academy’s Arnold Hall when the Chairman’s Cup was presented to the overall service winner – the Marines! Athletes, coaches, and guests paid tribute to fallen service members and Wounded Warriors across the nation. Following the ceremony, performances included country music band Big and Rich, a frequent performer for the USO tour, and Wounded Warrior musicians from the Musicorps program at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Musicorps is a music rehabilitation program founded and run by composer Arthur Bloom. The final scores placed Air Force second, Army third and a combined Navy-Coast Guard team fourth. The athletes were rightfully proud of their accomplishments, having focused their efforts on their abilities, not their disabilities. Realizing the benefits of the Games, the WWR looks forward to maintaining the momentum of the Warrior Games and will continue to encourage all wounded, ill, and injured Marines, whether active duty, reserve, or veteran, to get involved in sports as a recovery tool.







“The Marine Corps encourages wounded, ill and injured Marines to focus on their abilities and to find new avenues to thrive. The Warrior Games is one key avenue where we can set examples, raise the bar and encourage others.”

- Col. Gregory Boyle, Commanding Officer, Wounded Warrior Regiment

“The most vivid memories I have from the Games was watching the pride and spirit our Wounded, Ill and Injured Marines brought to the events. There’s no doubt, their pride in our Corps runs deep and once again, they are on the field of competition representing our Corps.”

- LtGen. Richard Zilmer, Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs

“It is not the physical limitations of these troops that define the Games – the omission of the word ‘wounded’ in the title is not unintentional. It is the spirit of these warriors that leaders hope to capture. It is the fight that is left that drives them to compete. It is their dreams that keep them alive.”

- Fred W. Baker III, American Forces Press Service

“I’ve seen guys come into our programs, where on day one, they’re on the lowest of lows. And it’s like hitting a good shot in golf – you gain a little confidence. On day two, they’re talking trash.”

- Charlie Huebner, chief of U.S. Paralympics

“This competition is about more than one person’s experiences. There are service members from all over the country competing - of various ages and experience levels. Every single athlete here is a competitor - they fought to be here - physically, emotionally, and psychologically.”

- Col. Jay Krail, Executive Officer, Wounded Warrior Regiment

“Bonded by the brotherhood of war, brought together by the shared pain of fighting for their very lives, only one thing separates them: the color of their uniforms.”

- Fred W. Baker III, American Forces Press Service



CHAPTER 7

RESULTS

“Being able to say that I have won two gold medals in a Paralympic style military game was something that I never expected to achieve. It makes me proud to say I have come so far.”

Brittney Hutchins, 2010 All-Marine Warrior Games Team Member

From start to finish, the All-Marine Warrior Games Team dominated the competition. The Marines showcased exceptional athleticism in team sports winning back-to-back gold medals in sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball. They went on to win a gold and silver medal in archery, the opening Warrior Games event, five out of the nine medals available in cycling, swept the podium in both sitting field and sitting discus, and earned a silver medal on the 200 meter freestyle relay. SSgt Scott Martin earned the top score in the Ultimate Champion category, a five-event competition (100 meter run, 1500 meter run, 50 meter freestyle, air rifle, and shotput), winning the highest individual award at the Games.

It was the Marines individual and team medals that ultimately led to taking home the overall service title, the Chairman’s Cup. The final medal standings were Marines in first with 106 points (53 medals at two points a piece with 50 athletes), the Air Force in second with 80 points (20 medals at 4 points a piece with 25 athletes), the Army in third with 68 points, (68 medals at 1 point a piece with 100 athletes), and the Navy in fourth with 48 points (12 medals at four points a piece with 25 athletes). The Marines won an additional five gold and three silver medals, which did not count toward the final score, due to only two athletes competing in the combined category and event. The final results attest to the Marines’ determination to remain focused on their ability and remain dedicated to each other and their mission to positively represent the Marine Corps.



CHAPTER 7

2010 ALL-MARINE WARRIOR GAMES TEAM RESULTS

Ultimate Warrior
Gold - Scott Martin

Air Rifle Standing, SH1
6th - Matthew Brown

Air Rifle - Standing, SH2
Silver - Matthew Benack
4th - Jeremy Williams
9th - Jack Lowder
10th - Nick Johnson

Air Rifle - Prone, SH1
Silver - Nick Beach
Bronze - Richard Tack
4th - Jon Disbro
71th - Angel Barcenas
10th - Scott Martin

Air Rifle - Prone, SH2
Silver - Matthew Benack
8th - Nick Johnson

Archery-Compound
Gold - Beau Parra
Silver - Matthew Benack
10th - Joey Smith

Archery-Recurve
4th - Dan Govier
8th - William Demers
9th - Justin Knowles

Air Pistol
5th - Beau Parra
10th - Matt Brown

Track 100 Meter UBI
Gold - Scott Martin
Bronze - Chris Trebus

Track 100 Meter BK
4th - Angel Barcenas
5th - Jon Disbro

Track 100 Meter UBI
Gold - Brandon Pelletier
Silver - Michael Pride

Track 100 Meter AK
Silver - William Gibson

Track 200 Meter UBI
Gold - Brandon Pelletier
Silver - Jose Gonzales
Bronze - Michael Pride
5th - Richard Bacchus

Track 200 Meter BK+SCI
5th - Richard Bacchus

Track 400 Meter TBI+PTSD
Silver - Chris Trebus

Track 400 Meter UBI
Gold - Jose Gonzales
Bronze - Jack Lowder

Track 1500 Meter TBI + PTSD
Silver - Scott Martin
9th - William (Bill) DeRoche

Track 1500 Meter LBI BK+AK
Gold - Jon Disbro
Silver - Angel Barcenas
7th - William Gibson

Track 1500 Meter SCI
Gold - Nick Beach

Track 1500 Meter UBI
Silver - Jose Gonzales
4th - Jack Lowder

CHAPTER 7

2010 ALL-MARINE WARRIOR GAMES TEAM RESULTS

Swim 50 Meter Freestyle LBI
5th - Matthew Cheramine

Swim 50 Meter Freestyle UBI B/E
Gold - Brandon Pelletier
Bronze - Robert Bridges
5th - Raymond Hennagir

Swim 50 Meter Freestyle TBI
Silver - Justin Wess
Bronze - James Krebs
4th - Alan Kissinger

Swim 50 Meter Freestyle PTSD
Gold - Josh McDaniel
Silver - Christopher Iazzetta
Bronze - Scott Martin

Swim 50 Meter Freestyle UBI A/E and B/E
Gold - Brittney Hutchins

Swim 100 Meter Freestyle LBI
5th - Matthew Cheramine
7th - Chuck Sketch

Swim 100 Meter Freestyle UBI A/E and B/E
Bronze - Nick Johnson

Swim 100 Meter Freestyle TBI/Stroke/CP
Silver - Nick Hafertepen
Bronze - James Krebs
4th - Samuel Schoenheit

Swim 100 Meter Freestyle SCI
Gold - Nick Beach
Silver - Joseph Lowe

Swim 100 Meter Freestyle PTSD
Silver - Josh McDaniel
Bronze - Christopher Iazzetta

Swim 50 Meter Backstroke LBI
Bronze - Jese Schag

Swim 50 Meter Backstroke UBI/SCI A/E
B/E
Silver - Justin Martin
4th - Brittney Hutchins

Swim 50 Meter Backstroke TBI
Silver - James Krebs
Bronze - Samuel Schoenheit

Swim 200 LC Meter Freestyle Relay
Team Relay Prelim Time Finals Time
Points
Silver - Marines
• Nick Hafertepen
• Joshua McDaniel
• Brandon Pelletier
• Justin Wess

CHAPTER 7

2010 ALL-MARINE WARRIOR GAMES TEAM RESULTS

Field Shotput (Standing)

Gold - Joseph Tarkett
7th - Richard Tack
9th - Richard Bacchus

Field Shotput (Seated)

Gold - Dennis Ndaanee
Silver - Travis Greene
Bronze - Marcus Wilson
6th - Bradley Walker

Field Discus (Standing)

Bronze - Ricardo Bengochea
4th - Travis Bartlett
7th - Alan Kissinger
8th - Joseph Tarkett

Field Discus Throw (Seated)

Gold - Dennis Ndaanee
Silver - Michael Blair
Bronze - Marcus Wilson
5th - Raymond Hennagir

Cycling - Reg

Gold - Justin Wess
Silver - Travis Bartlett
Silver - Brittney Hutchins (women's)
5th - Steve Clendenning
8th - Chris Trebus
10th - Kelvin Blanchard

Handcycling

Gold - Michael Blair
Bronze - Travis Greene
4th - Joey Lowe
5th - Kelvin Blanchard
6th - Bradley Walker

Cycling - Recumbent

Silver - Angel Gomez

Sitting Volleyball

Gold - Marines

- Rejy Bacchus
- Ricardo Bengochea
- Matthew Brown
- Travis Greene
- Raymond Hennagir
- Brittney Hutchins
- Kelvin Rosado
- Jese Schag
- Richard Tack
- Bradley Walker
- Marcus Wilson

Wheelchair Basketball

Gold - Marines

- Michael Blair
- Kevin Blanchard
- Travis Greene
- Raymond Hennagir
- Justin Knowles
- Justin Martin
- Kelvin Rosado
- Jese Schag
- Marcus Wilson





CHAPTER 8

LASTING LEGACY

“Initially, you go through that slump where you think you’re worthless and you don’t think you can do anything... Then you see all the guys that are doing stuff like this and it makes you feel like, okay, I can do this too. That’s why I’m here right now, because somebody else pulled me up from the bottom and put me where I am today.”

Marcus D. Wilson, 2010 All-Marine Warrior Games Team Member

Planning is underway for next year’s Warrior Games. The All-Marine Warrior Games Team looks forward to defending their title and competing next year with athletes from the other services. The WWR leadership will work to expand Marine participation at future games and anticipates the Warrior Games will become an annual event to celebrate the achievement of wounded, ill, and injured service members. The Warrior Athlete Reconditioning program will continue to serve as a means of recruiting Marine athletes across the nation. “You’ve just completed a rigorous test of your physical and mental skills, your strength, and endurance. But now is no time to rest. I’d like you to take what you’ve done here, what you’ve learned here and continue to serve as role models for others striving to find the independence they need,” said Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff.













CHAPTER 9

MEDIA ROUNDUP

“Chuck was the Marine team’s inspiration throughout, and he was our captain. To watch him compete when he had all odds against him was something special. It truly embodies the spirit of what these Warrior Games are all about. Chuck is all heart, and I hope to see him along with my other Marine teammates at the 2011 Warrior Games!!”

Robert Bridges, 2010 All-Marine Warrior Games Team Member

The Wounded Warrior Regiment applauds every athlete who participated in the inaugural Warrior Games. All of the athletes have amazing stories that will inspire generations. Media, photo and graphic support enabled the All-Marine Warrior Games Team to tell their story to people across the nation. Being able to share the team’s accomplishments and successful journey towards victory inspired Marines and fans alike.



CHAPTER 9

Troops gear up for first Warrior Games

By Hope Hodge

February 04, 2010

A program at Camp Lejeune that combined sports and rehabilitation planted the idea for a nation-wide, inter-service competition that will be held for the first time this year.

The Warrior Games bring injured troops from each military branch to the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. They face each other in eight different sports, including the multi-discipline "Ultimate Warrior" event, similar to a pentathlon. And the team of wounded Marines who will represent the Corps will be finalized this month.

The program manager for the Warrior Games, Ginger Gold, developed the Warrior Athlete Rehabilitation (WAR) program at Camp Lejeune's Wounded Warrior Barracks.

"The Wounded Warrior Regiment thought that it was a pretty cool program and wanted to expand upon that and said, 'Hey, let's do some interservice competitions,'" Gold said.

Each service has a team limit of 50 members. The Marines will be selected from across the country by a three-member committee. Three of the seven coaches who will train Marines in their respective sports are from Camp Lejeune, Gold said. They are cycling coach Brian Grenier, swim coach Stephanie Barnes and archery coach John Fuller.



Stephanie Barnes the swimming coach of the All-Marine Warrior Games Team, instructs Marine Jose Ramos, left Arm amputee, on proper swimming techniques.

Fuller, a 71-year-old retired first sergeant and a USA Archery-certified regional coach, said he is planning to begin training aboard Camp Lejeune four hours per day once his team of eight archers is finalized. Archery, Fuller said, is well-suited to the task of rehabilitation because it requires concentration and mental discipline.

"Archery is a 90-percent mental game; it's not so much a physical game," Fuller said. "Confidence is the big thing. If you're confident you can make the shot, most likely you will."

After his team comes together (if more than eight warriors come to train, he will hold a mini-competition to determine the final competitors), Fuller's archers will travel to Colorado Springs for a two-week training camp right before the games, which run May 10 to 14. There, he said, they will make last-minute technique adjustments and acclimate to the higher altitude and thinner mountain air.

The deadline to apply for a spot on the wounded warrior team is Feb. 15, Gold said; and the competition is open to veterans including wounded active-duty, reserve and retired service members. Information about joining the team is available online here.

In addition to the awards that will be distributed and the pride at stake in competing for a service, Gold said top athletes may also have a chance to compete at the 2012 Paralympics in London.

But the overarching goal of this inaugural competition, Gold said, is to have a good time and help the competitors heal. "Of course it's going to be competitive because we've got Marines involved, and of course we're hoping to win. The athletes are training hard, and the coaches are training them hard," Gold said. But, she said, "It's all part of the healing process, and that's the bottom line."

CHAPTER 9

Getting back in the fight in first Warrior Games

By Lance Cpl. Jahn R. Kuiper, Marine Corps Base Quantico

April 15, 2010

After 7.62 mm ammunition tore up his leg in Iraq, he was taken away from the fight. Now the Marine is getting back into the battle by participating in the first ever Warrior Games, an inter-service competition for wounded veterans.

Sgt. Richard Tack, from the Quantico Wounded Warrior Regiment, will be representing the Marine Corps in the lower body impairment category in the shot put event and the stand and prone air rifle competition.

Tack has recovered from the worst of his injuries, but is still finding out if he will be able to recover from internal nerve and tissue damage in his left calf.

He will be joined by 49 other Marines who will be competing in categories including spinal chord injuries, post traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, upper body impairment and lower body impairment.

From May 10-14 at Colorado Springs, Colo., these Marines will participate in events that include archery, cycling, air pistol and rifle shooting, sitting volleyball, swimming, track and field, basketball and the Ultimate Warrior pentathlon.

For Tack, these games provide a new opportunity for him to give back to the Corps he loves.

"I reenlisted during my second deployment," Tack said. "I feel immense pride in being in this group of athletes who are representing the Corps. I can't wait to go out and beat the Army."

This love for the Corps has not gone untested. It was during Tack's second deployment when he received his injuries. Tack was the company advisor for a company of Iraqis in March of 2007. They had just learned their outpost was going to be hit so they were suiting up to intercept the insurgents.

"I hadn't even gotten on my Kevlar when we received fire," Tack said. "My first instinct was to grab the 240G [machine gun] and go to a predetermined shooting hole. I locked and loaded before I saw a large dump truck coming our way. Then a 7.62 round tore through my leg and, seconds later, I blacked out.

"The truck had exploded less than 100 feet in front of me and threw me back," Tack said. "It left a crater 15 feet deep and 20 feet wide. My buddies dragged me out, gave me first aid and transported me to Al Taqaddum 15 minutes away."

It took Tack a month to walk again and after seeing several orthopedic surgeons he has been told that his left calf will give him pain the rest of his life. Tack expects to be medically discharged later this year.

After being assigned to Wounded Warrior Regiment, Tack first heard about the games when he was assigned to recruit other Marines to join. Wanting to participate himself, Tack's first challenges was finding an event in which he could compete.

"I had no experience in shot put prior to this," Tack said. "Before I was interested in power lifting. When I heard about the games I knew I wanted to do a field event, so I thought I would do shot put because it corresponds most with power lifting."



MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va.-Sgt. Richard Tack, a wounded warrior from Quantico, trains to prepare for the inaugural Warrior Games which is an inter-service competition with a collection of games where wounded vets will compete May 10-14 at Colorado Springs, Colo. Tack is competing in the shot put and air rifle standing and prone competition.. Photo by Lance Cpl. Jahn R. Kuiper

“I was quickly proven wrong because I found out the biggest part of throwing is the technique,” Tack said. “A small guy can out throw a guy twice his size if he has the right technique when throwing the 10 pound shot. It’s really about the footwork and building momentum with it, similar to how an instructor will tell you to twist your ankle when you punch in MCMAP.”

Being a two time expert shooter, Tack is also representing the Marine Corps in the air rifle standing and prone shooting. Tack will shoot .177 caliber pellet pistol at 10 yards. He will have 75 minutes for each event to shoot 40 shots. He will have to load every shot. The games not only provides a way for Tack to help himself, but also for him to help Marines with a common background.

“I’ve always been athletic and this was an opportunity to give me something to work towards and help me with my rehabilitation,” Tack said. “Also, since I’m here at the Wounded Warrior Regiment at Quantico, I’m able to talk to other wounded vets and see if they want to participate in the games. It’s been great meeting new people with similar histories.”

Shared history is what brought these warriors together in the games, and it has also allowed them to bond and grow together through their experiences.

“I love being around other wounded vets,” Tack said. “By talking to them I’ve built friendships. We’ve shared our stories and we can relate to each other. By helping recruit for the games, I’ve connected with more Marines like me then I would have ever before.”

“He has a strong connection with the other wounded vets,” said Maj. Susie Stark, the Marine Corps Warrior Games’ head coach. “When you have wounded warriors serving wounded warriors, it’s a beautiful thing. He can share something intangible the rest of us can’t. He can say ‘Hey I’m going through the same thing and I can help you.’”

But this isn’t all fun and games for these athletes. These Marines are in it to win.

“For training I follow a basic power lifting schedule four days a week and then on Tuesdays and Thursdays I practice at Mountain View High School, in Stafford, with their field team,” Tack said. “They’ve been more than accommodating and have really helped me with my form.

“Mainly we work on my footwork,” Tack said. “We’ve gone with a gliding motion, because I have some balance issues. If I did the spin technique I would probably throw it out of bounds.

“It feels unnatural at first,” Tack said. “It’s very different than throwing a baseball. It can be dangerous if you don’t do it right. You hold the shot in the palm of your hand and press it against your neck with your thumb. The footwork adds momentum which can add a few inches which can be the difference between winning and losing.”

Though winning is always the goal for Tack, it is not everything.

“I can’t fight, but what I can do is represent the Marine Corps with pride and help find other Marines to join the team who have the same goals,” Tack said.



CHAPTER 9

Wheelchair Basketball Team Prepares for the Warrior Games

By Christen McCluney

April 15, 2010

Several Marines from Marine Corps Base Quantico met at Walter Reed Army Medical Center this week for an inter-squad basketball practice in preparation for the inaugural Warrior Games.

The Warrior Games, which are being held May 10-14, 2010, at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, are a sports competition for wounded, ill and injured servicemembers and is a joint effort by the U.S. Olympic Committee and the U.S. Department of Defense.

The Marine Corps will send a team of 50 athletes and 10 alternates that will compete in events including archery, cycling, sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball.

Maj. Susan Stark, head coach for the Marine team, said that these athletes are really inspiring because when most people are injured they don't get into athletics.

"The Marines are going to do great," Stark said. "We make sure it's fun, rewarding and they represent the Marine Corps, they do all three. The bonus is they get to compete."

Billy Demby, a Vietnam Veteran, and Paralympics athlete is coaching the Marine team to success. Demby who is a double-leg amputee himself said one of the biggest challenges he has faced is the varying experience levels. Some members on the squad have been playing basketball all of their lives and others as recent as two weeks.

"Guys that have experience are of course easier to teach," he said. "But these are a great bunch of guys."

One of his proudest moments was recently when the team played against a wheel chair team in San Antonio and only lost by a few points. "Even though we lost it was by a short margin and to a team with two national players," he said. "This shows that we have the talent."

Tim Lang one of the team members who will be playing at the games also expressed his excitement for playing in Colorado Springs.

"I'm very excited. A lot of us were prior athletes before our injuries and this really gives us an outlet and puts us back in the field of sports."



Tim Lang lines up a shot during wheelchair basketball practice at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, April 13, 2010. DoD photo by U.S. Navy MC2 William Selby



CHAPTER 9

Wounded warriors take to hardcourts

By Julia LeDoux, News & Messenger

April 19, 2010

Marine Cpl. Ray Hennagir sized up his shot and aimed at a net on the basketball court of the Karen J. Wagner Sports Center on the grounds of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Shoosh. Score. Similar scenes are played out on hardwoods across the country countless times each day.

But Hennagir wasn't playing a typical basketball game when he made that shot on Wednesday. He was one of more than a dozen wounded Marines and Soldiers who were practicing wheelchair basketball in advance of next month's Warrior Games in Colorado. The Marine Corps is fielding a team of 50 athletes and 10 alternates who will compete in events which include archery, cycling, shooting, sitting volleyball, swimming, track & field, and wheelchair basketball.

Hennagir, who is assigned to the Wounded Warrior Regiment at Quantico Marine Corps Base, will be among those participating in the competition at the Olympic Training Center.

"The first couple of times playing, it was a lot harder than playing standing up," Hennagir, who lost both his legs to an improvised explosive device in Iraq a couple of years ago, said. "After a while, you get the hang of it. It becomes easier and easier. Then, you just have to learn the different plays."

Hennagir, 23, who played basketball for a year when he was in middle school, was at first reluctant to pick up the sport again following his injury. "I was not that good at basketball," he said with a laugh. "I didn't want to play at first because I was afraid I was going to be just as bad back when I played standing up. Somehow after I dropped down from standing on my feet to the wheelchair, my skill level went up a little bit."

Hennagir joined the Corps shortly after graduating high school and has been a Marine for six years. He said being able to play sports was something he thought he would never do again after the loss of his legs.

"Having the competition is huge," he acknowledged. "It's something that a lot of us didn't think we could do ever again. In the military there's always a competitive spirit between each other. This is just a good way to get out there, have some fun, and compete at the same time."

Sgt. Michael Blair will also compete on the Marine team during the Warrior Games. He played basketball while in high school and is learning how to play from a wheelchair. "I kind of missed the sport," he said. "I still knew the basic concepts. If somebody says 'pick,' I know what 'pick' is. I don't necessarily know how to do it in a wheelchair, but I can learn it."

Blair, 35, was injured May 7, 2006 by an IED blast that he said basically gouged out both his knees plus the femur bone of one of his legs. Those injuries keep Blair from running and from walking long distances without sitting down, but have not dampened his competitive spirit. He has learned to fly a plane, kayaked the Grand Canyon, completed and won a kayak marathon around Manhattan, and finished the Marine Corps Marathon twice on a handcycle since being injured.

It's that kind of spirit that Coach Brian Demby loves to see on the court. "They just love the game, love the game," he said. The smile rarely left Marine Col. Jay Krail's face as he watched the warriors race from one end of the court to another during their more than two-hour practice session.

"Our Marines, they're still in the fight, they're still competing," Krail, who is the WWR's executive officer, said. "They're doing wheelchair basketball, they're doing bicycling, shot put, swimming. They're doing everything they can to compete."

Krail said watching the warriors practice was motivational. "I can't tell you how motivating it is to watch these guys just go after it. Their warrior spirit has not changed. They're Marines through and through."

CHAPTER 9

Marine Competes in Warrior Games

By Ashlea Sigman, KBTX

April 19, 2010

Rejy Bacchus can't run, so he rides.

"I like to think about more of what I can than what I can't," said Bacchus.

This former Marine uses his arms to power his hand cycle 12 to 18 miles a day. He's training for the first ever Warrior Games as a part of team Semper Fi. Bacchus is one of 50 Marines picked to compete at the Olympic training center in Colorado Springs and one of nearly 9,000 wounded warriors.

"I didn't know what to expect when I joined the Marine Corps. I didn't know how long I would be in and where it would go. I didn't expect this, I didn't expect to get out medically," said Bacchus.

Corporal Bacchus was a machine gunner.

"We were on a hike, a 15 kilometer hike and I was carrying a machine gun and I just stepped in some holes and it started with my left ankle, tore up my left ankle really bad. A week later I did the same thing to my right," said Bacchus.

He kept training. It would be another two years before doctors would perform several reconstructive surgeries using cadaver bones and ligaments. Injuries that prevented him from deploying with his unit to the middle east.

"Probably the worst time in my Marine Corps experience was that time right there," said Bacchus.

Surgeries that meant he shouldn't run again.

"I thought it sucked because at the time, I was 25 I think and saying I should never run again, that's pretty crappy," said Bacchus.

Seven months into civilian life, Bacchus hasn't lost his Marine drive.

"You keep going you know, you don't quit," said Bacchus.

If you see this Marine in your mirror, share the road; he'd gladly defend your right to use it.



CHAPTER 9

Marine preps for Warrior Games

By Lance Cpl. Lucas G. Lowe, Marine Corps Base Quantico

April 23, 2010

With the inaugural Wounded Warrior Games a mere weeks away, service members from every branch of the armed forces who have suffered injuries in battle, both seen and unseen, are preparing themselves.

The Wounded Warrior Regiment here is sending two of its own to Colorado Springs, Colo., from May 10 through 14 to compete: Maj. Christopher Iazzetta and Sgt. Richard Tack.

Iazzetta, the operations officer for the Marine For Life program at the WWR, has been a triathlon swimmer since the late-90s. Although he never swam as a kid, he discovered competitive swimming while in the Marine Corps.

“It was a challenge, which is something all Marines like,” said the Holland Township, N.J., native, whose first triathlon was at Naval Hospital Bethesda, Md.

He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1993 and went into the infantry field. Later, he answered the call to become an officer and was commissioned in 1996 with the military occupational specialty of military police officer. Iazzetta went to Iraq in 2004, where he participated in the first and second battles of Fallujah as a military police company commander with Regimental Combat Team 1. He was subsequently diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

After this diagnosis, swimming began to take on a new meaning for Iazzetta. It became a part of the healing process. “I’ve attended triathlons where wounded service members were involved,” said Iazzetta. “It’s always really inspiring to see them taking advantage of the abilities they have, which is a good way to heal.”

Healing through athleticism is the Wounded Warrior Games in a nutshell. Instead of dwelling on what was taken away from them in the line of duty, injured service members find themselves all over again by participating in sports. The games will include a wide variety of athletic events, from track and field to seated basketball to wheelchair races.

“For me, sports, whether competitive or not, is a great stress reliever,” said Iazzetta. “Swimming makes me very tired, which is useful since I have trouble sleeping. It helps me find balance in my life and feel more like normal.”

Iazzetta’s current billet with the Marine For Life program allows him to assist other veterans in finding employment or mentorship after they leave active duty.

He found out only two weeks ago that he would be going to Colorado, at the behest of Maj. Susan Stark, his coach at the regiment. But Iazzetta is still somewhat hesitant to go. He’s still uncomfortable being anywhere near the center of attention. “I’d rather people focus on other athletes instead of me,” said Iazzetta.

Nevertheless, he is hopeful the games will help build confidence in others like him. “For the wounded warriors themselves, I hope it reinforces the mindset that, although they may be wounded, sports is a great way to recover,” he said.

But even a guy as levelheaded as Iazzetta can’t escape his own innate Marine Corps bias. “I hope the Marine Corps team wins, of course,” he said. “I hope they understand that, even though they’re wounded, they are still a valuable part of the organization.”

Iazzetta wants to be a source of encouragement for other Marines on his team. “I’ll take any chance I get to represent the Corps,” said Iazzetta. “It’s about the opportunity to compete alongside other Marines and seeing them succeed — that’s what I look forward to the most.”

He ended on a broader point, saying that any active-duty, reserve or former Marine can contact the Wounded Warrior Regiment Call Center at 877-487-6299.



Maj. Christopher Iazzetta, the operations officer for the Marine For Life program at the Wounded Warrior Regiment and competitor in the inaugural Wounded Warrior Games on May 10 – 14 at Colorado Springs, Colo., swims a few laps at Woodland Pool in Stafford on April 23. Photographer: LCpl. Lucas G. Lowe

CHAPTER 9

Adaptive Sports Give Wounded Warriors Confidence

By Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Carden, Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs

April 22, 2010

At next month's inaugural Warrior Games, retired Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Tim Lang plans to showcase more than his shooting skills and athletic ability on the wheelchair basketball court.

Lang said he also wants to show other disabled veterans -- and the nation, for that matter -- the importance of keeping a good, positive attitude, finding things to enjoy and moving on with your life.

The 24-year-old native of Ann Arbor, Mich., said those with physical disabilities can be their own worst enemies. The sooner they can accept their disabilities, he said, the sooner they can realize their potential.



"It's easy to get down on yourself," said Lang, who lost a portion of his right leg to a roadside bomb in Iraq in 2006. "Bad things have happened, but you have to get over that and learn that you're capable of doing anything you want -- just maybe in a different way."

Lang is one of some 200 wounded active-duty members and military veterans selected to represent the disabled veteran community at the Warrior Games May 10-14 at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The games will feature Paralympic-style competition for some of the most athletic and optimistic disabled veterans the services have to offer. Events will include shooting, swimming, archery, track, discus, shot put, cycling, sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball.

"The Warrior Games are going to help build confidence for us competitors," Lang said in an interview with American Forces Press Service after a recent wheelchair basketball practice here. "I think it will also impact disabled veterans who aren't competing by giving them something to work for and by showing them what they could be capable of."

"The games will give those who aren't participating something to work towards," he added. "If these games take off and are a big hit, there could be programs developed that could include the masses, influencing less-motivated wounded veterans to take part."

But coming to grips with a physical disability can be a daunting challenge, he acknowledged, noting that for many combat-wounded veterans, confronting the mental aspect of recovery is the biggest challenge of all.

Just as it has been for many other injured service members, Lang's recovery was a long, difficult road, he said. He spent nearly two years at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., before moving back to his hometown to continue rehabilitation for about a year. He recently returned to Walter Reed for a special surgery.

The year in Michigan was one of the hardest of his life, Lang said. After taking advantage of the care and adaptive sports programs at Walter Reed, Lang said he became idle and somewhat depressed at home.

"It was bad when I was home for that year," he said. "Being here spoils you, because they take such good care of us. I'm so excited that I'm here, because I get to take advantage of the prosthetics and therapy and the programs."

The twice-weekly wheelchair basketball practices are his favorite, Lang said. "I love and look so forward to Tuesdays and Thursdays here," he added.

Sports and athletics have been a large part of Lang's life, he said. He played quarterback on his high school football team. He also became the go-to guy on the Marine Corps wheelchair basketball team participating in the Warrior Games, as one of the faster players and more-consistent shooters on the squad, he said.

"My strong suit has always been athletics and I think the Warrior Games are going to be amazing," Lang said. "I'm an athlete. I love playing sports. Whether I'm good at a particular sport, or not, I still consider myself an athlete, because sports are what I've always loved to do."

Lang also is set to compete in archery and marksman events at the games.

Through adaptive sports, Lang and others found a second chance at life. Lang said he is proof that adaptive sports have the power to reconnect wounded veterans with their roots as service members, restoring the confidence and passion many thought was lost when they were injured on the battlefield.

"I think one of the most-significant injuries that occur when anybody is injured is to your self-image and confidence," he said. "That's what makes it so hard to come to terms with your injuries."

"But games like [the Warrior Games] are going to give everybody a chance to compete on an even level. That's going to be a great confidence builder. With the confidence you gain through adaptive sports, not everyone, but a lot of guys when they leave the hospital, will carry that mood into the rest of their lives."



CHAPTER 9

U.S. Flags Salute Wounded Warrior Athletes

By Samantha L. Quigley, USO

April 29, 2010

The American flags raised over five military installations don't look any different from the one raised over the U.S. Capitol on any given day, but there is one distinct difference.

These flags will bear the well-wishes of servicemembers stationed around the world for injured soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines and veterans competing in the inaugural Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, Colo., next month.

With the help of the Defense Media Activity and the USO, five American flags found their way to Afghanistan, Germany, Hawaii, Iraq and South Korea, where they were raised over military points of interest. One flew above the USS Arizona in Hawaii, and another over Korea's demilitarized zone. A third was raised above Germany's Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. Flags flew over Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, and Joint Base Balad, Iraq, as well.

Each flag-raising was filmed and will be broadcast with special messages from deployed servicemembers during the Warrior Games opening ceremonies.

For one recipient of a flag, what began as a routine assignment to organize and film the flag-raising turned into much more, especially after he called the Landstuhl public affairs office and explained the project.

"Their response was overwhelming," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Leigh Bellinger, who serves with Detachment 4, Air Force News Agency, at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

The public affairs team in Germany organized a joint-service detail to raise and lower the flag. The detail practiced for more than an hour the day before the actual flag-raising, Bellinger said.

Troops injured in overseas combat zones receive treatment at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center before transport to stateside medical facilities. Landstuhl, therefore, "has special significance for every single wounded warrior taking part in the games," Bellinger said. "More than likely, they passed through on their way back home from Iraq or Afghanistan."

Army Staff Sgt. Clinton Carroll, the operations noncommissioned officer in charge for American Forces Network Afghanistan, said the request to fly an American flag wasn't so unusual.

"Because we are in a combat zone, we are asked to fly lots of American flags for different reasons," he said. "Each of them has meaning and importance for someone we don't usually know. This one is unique, because it's flown specifically for our brothers and sisters in arms and in honor of the sacrifice they have made, some of them here in Afghanistan."

Carroll asked soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Division if they'd be willing to participate in the ceremony to raise this special flag. "Not only did they want to do it, but because they are the 82nd, they wanted to do it big," Carroll said. "They had no issue finding servicemembers to help out with the flag raising ... because of the significance of the event. They also wanted to have a formation spelling out 'USO' to thank everyone for their dedication to the Warrior Games."

Carroll had a message for the athletes participating in the Warrior Games, as well. "I would say to them, regardless of what branch of service they are in, they are heroes to us all," he said. "I want to wish all the warriors good luck, but I want to especially say, 'Go Army!'"

Bellinger offered the warrior athletes his best wishes, in the form of "a slow, sharp salute for all my brothers and sisters taking part." Nicholas Tovo, DMA's Hawaii bureau chief, enlisted the help of two wounded warriors who will participate in the Warrior Games to raise the flag over the USS Arizona. Tovo offered a special thanks to everyone who made the flag-raising a success.

“I especially want to thank the servicemembers for participating and everything they have done, and will do, to support our country,” he said.

Once the five flags are back in the United States, members of the Rolling Thunder motorcyclist’s organization will transport them to the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs in time for the Warrior Games opening ceremonies, scheduled for May 10.

Rolling Thunder works to draw attention to prisoner-of-war and missing-in-action issues and veterans causes. The ride will begin May 5 at the site of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack in New York City, with stops at the Pentagon and Shanksville, Pa., to honor all 9/11 victims.

The Warrior Games begin May 10 and continue through May 14.



CHAPTER 9

Warrior Games Marines Take Aim in First Archery Practice of Training Camp

By Lance Cpl. Graham Benson

April 28, 2010

In the shadows of Colorado Spring's legendary Pike's Peak on Fort Carson, Colo., Marines competing in the inaugural Warrior Games took first aims at their targets during archery practice here April 28.

The eight-man archery team wasted no time in getting to work on their skills, despite battling wind gusts of up to 50 mph throughout much of the day.

The competition is scheduled for May 10-14, at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo. The event is offering more than 200 recovering, wounded active duty and medically retired veterans from all military branches the opportunity to compete against one another while representing their respective services in a variety of Olympic-style events.

"Although the conditions obviously weren't ideal, it's probably a good thing that we've got them to practice in," said U.S. Marine Sgt. Dan Govier, who was recently medically retired. "If it's like this come competition day, we'll be much better prepared to shoot well than the other teams who haven't been out here shooting in this kind of weather."

The majority of the team has some past archery experience, but few have competed at this level before. Many of the participants have suffered life-altering injuries while serving in combat.

"They all come from different backgrounds. Some have been predominantly indoor shooters and others have hunting backgrounds," said retired Marine first sergeant and Vietnam veteran John Fuller, head archery coach. "A couple of the guys just picked up a bow for the first time recently."

Helping these specialized athletes improve their skills requires some adjustments by the coaching staff to each individual's physical limitations.

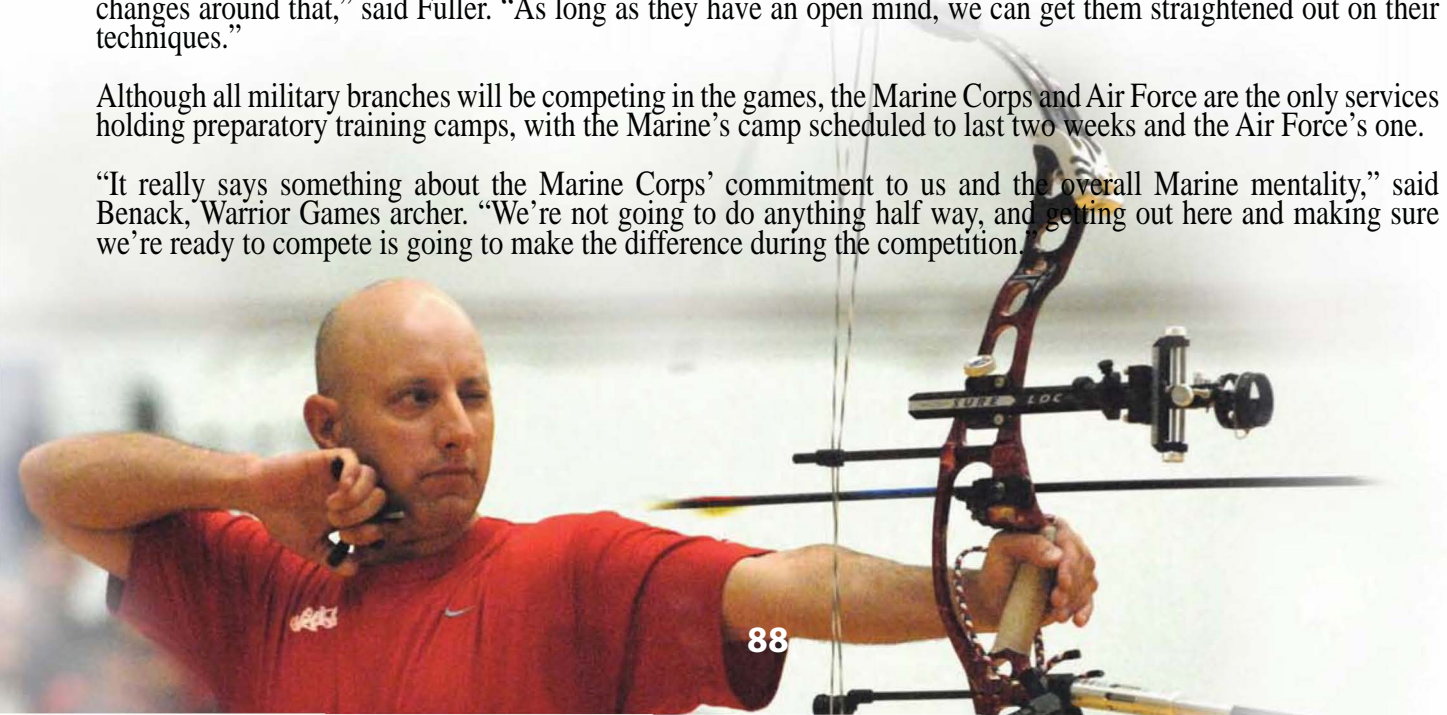
"Some of the guys have some shoulder issues, which is a crucial area when in shooting, so we have to learn to make changes around that," said Fuller. "As long as they have an open mind, we can get them straightened out on their techniques."

Although all military branches will be competing in the games, the Marine Corps and Air Force are the only services holding preparatory training camps, with the Marine's camp scheduled to last two weeks and the Air Force's one.

"It really says something about the Marine Corps' commitment to us and the overall Marine mentality," said Benack, Warrior Games archer. "We're not going to do anything half way, and getting out here and making sure we're ready to compete is going to make the difference during the competition."



Matthew Bennack lines up a shot during the inaugural Warrior Games Training Camp. *Photo by Lance Cpl. Graham Benson*



CHAPTER 9

All-Marine Warriors Practice for Competition on the Court Training Camp

By Cpl. Achilles Tsantarliotis
May 02, 2010

The All-Marine Warrior Games Floor-Volleyball Team focused on playing as a team, continuing to learn each others strengths, April 28, at the base gym as they prepare for the inaugural Warrior Games, May 10.

Floor volleyball is one of the few sports in the Warrior Games largely dependent on teamwork and cohesiveness.

All-Marine Warrior Games sitting volleyball coach LCDR. Sam Tickle, said this event is unique because it's one of the only sports featuring athletes with a variety of disabilities working together.

Tickle played volleyball for three years as a college student the University of South Carolina and coached various leagues throughout his career in the U.S. Navy. He is currently assigned to Commander Strike Froce Training, Pacific at North Island, Calif.



All-Marine Warrior Games Team Athletes and staff meet all hands in at the beginning of a practice, April 28, at the base gym. *Photo by Cpl. Achilles Tsantarliotis*

“The key to sitting volleyball is speed,” the 34-year-old New London Pa., native said “But it’s something that takes a lot of learning.”

The sitting volleyball in the Warrior Games features five players per side. Each player must maintain contact with the ground and serves are allowed to be blocked are some of the differences between sitting volleyball and its traditional offering.

Tickle said maintaining ground contact is one of the largest obstacles in sitting volleyball. Athletes who’ve retained their walking ability have it the hardest because the instinct to go for the ball, instead of moving – setting up and then hitting the ball, he said.

Those kinds of difficulties really distinguish sitting volleyball as a team sport, Tickle said. Not only do they have to overcome their own physical barriers, they have to overcome the teams to play as one and succeed.

Tickle said the Air Force might give the All-Marine team a challenge, but he’s not too worried about the other competitors getting in their way for winning gold medals.

“One advantage we really have going for us is we have a lot of big guys with huge arms,” he said. “I have no doubt that we’ll have a team together running offense – ready to win.”

Cpl. Ray Hennagir, an athlete with the All-Marine Warrior Games Team, said sitting volleyball was one of the few sports he immediately liked when he tried it. “It’s a great outlet to come out here and get that competitive experience,” he said. “I’m trying to get gold though, so I’m practicing to win here.”

Although winning is one of the end states, the training and camaraderie developed is a win in itself for these athletes, Tickle added. “This is an excellent tool in their recovery,” he said. “It really has blown me away seeing these guys give it their all.”