



NEWS RELEASE

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By Suzanne Ovel

Joint Base Lewis-McChord Public Affairs Office

Soldier rebuilds self-worth through adaptive reconditioning

West Point, NY — Two years ago, Isaac Rios found himself isolating from everyone, cocooning in his room with just his couch, his television and his thoughts.

“I didn’t want to talk to anyone,” said Rios, a staff sergeant and a career infantryman who was wounded multiple times in combat. He went into a negative place “because I pretty much lost my career, something I worked hard for; I was fast-tracking (before my injuries).”

But a fellow Soldier at his Warrior Transition Unit at U.S. Army Garrison Baumholder, Germany, kept talking up adaptive sports, so eventually Rios agreed to get out of his room and give archery a try.

“Then I found out all the different ones we could play, and I just got wrapped up in it,” he said.

Now, he’s one of more than 60 Soldiers and Army Veterans competing at the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York, vying for a spot on the Army’s team at the annual Department of Defense Warrior Games this fall. Rios is trying out for sitting volleyball, cycling, archery, discus, shot put and air rifle—hoping to get on a team or two for Warrior Games.

The Army Warrior Transition Command is hosting the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials June 15-19 at West Point where more than 100 wounded, ill and injured Soldiers, Marines, Airmen and Veterans from across the country will face off in archery, shooting, cycling, track and field, swimming, sitting volleyball, and wheelchair basketball. The Army Warrior Trials will help determine the athletes who will represent Team Army in the 2014 Warrior Games slated for Sep. 28-Oct. 4, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

“I’ve met so many people here, and the atmosphere that it brings is just a good vibe. It makes you feel good to be a part of it,” said Rios.

“When I’m playing the sports, it’s like everyone is the same as me,” he said. He used to fear that his days of being physically active were behind him.

“When I started doing the sports I realized I could still do things, just in a different way; that’s the best part,” said Rios, who is now assigned to the Warrior Transition Battalion at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

He said that adaptive reconditioning “got me out of my shell, and helped out a lot.”

Just what has it done for him? “Everything. Anything that you can think of.”

Rios said that mentally he’s in a much better place these days and that his social skills have improved as well. Physically, “it helps me build muscles that I was afraid to use.” After multiple injuries from explosives, mortars



and small arms fire on deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan in 2005 and 2009, Rios is still experiencing difficulties with his knees, which he expects will need to be replaced someday.

His concerns about falling and reinjuring himself also factored into his initial reclusiveness.

“Just that fear, that physical fear, that was the main reason that I stayed in my room,” Rios said. But adaptive reconditioning offers him a safe environment to push himself physically. “And yeah you hurt... but you still want to do it again, ‘cause it gives you that sense of achievement, that sense of self-worth. It makes you feel good,” he said.

While at the Warrior Trials this month, Rios hopes to make the Army’s Warrior Games team; his long-term goal, though, is to join the adaptive reconditioning world in a job that helps other Soldiers like him. In fact, he’s already started taking classes at the Institute of Sports Science to that end.

“I want to be one of the people who work with wounded Soldiers, ‘cause it’s made such a difference for me,” Rios said. “I want to do something along those lines to help Soldiers who are in the same spot that I used to be.”

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-U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Arthur Ruepong



Cutline: Staff Sgt. Isaac Rios practices sitting volleyball during the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York, June 9, 2014. Rios is assigned to the Joint Base Lewis-McChord Warrior Transition Battalion and is from Coney Island, New York. The Army Warrior Transition Command is hosting the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials June 15-19 at the U.S. Army Military Academy, West Point, New York. More than 100 wounded, ill and injured Soldiers, Marines, Airmen and Veterans from across the country will face off in archery, shooting, cycling, track and field, swimming, sitting volleyball, and wheelchair basketball. The Army Warrior Trials will help determine the athletes who will represent Team Army in the 2014 Warrior Games slated for Sep. 28-Oct. 4, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

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Warrior Transition Command (WTC) is a major subordinate command under the U.S. Army Medical Command (MEDCOM). WTC's mission is to develop, coordinate and integrate the Army's Warrior Care and Transition Program (WCTP) for wounded, ill and injured soldiers, veterans and their families. For more information on WTC, visit the new WTC website, www.WTC.army.mil, follow on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/armyWTC> or join Facebook at <http://facebook.com/armyWTC>.

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