



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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By Ron Wolf

U.S. Army Medical Command

Vision impairment won't stop wounded vet at Warrior Trials

West Point, New York — Retired Staff Sgt. Sean Johnson, from Aberdeen, South Dakota, is planning on competing in cycling, 100- and 200-meter dashes, shot put, and discus at the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials at West Point, New York, June 15-19. Pretty remarkable, you would say, for a Soldier who sustained vision loss and traumatic brain injury (TBI) in a blast in March 2006, while deployed to Iraq.

More than 100 wounded, ill and injured service members and Veterans from across the United States joined together at West Point to train and compete in the Army Warrior Trials, June 15-20. The event is hosted by Warrior Transition Command, and the Army Warrior Trials include athletes from the Army, Marines and Air Force who will face off in archery, basketball, cycling, track and field, swimming, shooting, sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball. Participants in the trials include athletes with spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, visual impairment, serious illnesses and amputations.

At the Army Trials, Soldiers participate in a wide range of competition training, under the eyes of experienced coaches. The training and competition support their physical and emotional well-being and contribute to a successful recovery.

Staff Sgt. Johnson has been relearning following his brain injury and successes, such as here at the Warrior Trials, are critical to overall health for him. In fact he stresses that success is important for both mental and physical well-being.

Johnson is pleased to be able to compete. He added, however, "Competition is the best thing for them," he said, referring to injured service men and women. "You can't have a positive outcome lying in bed."

The goal of recovery, Johnson pointed out, is to complete a turnaround.

He described adaptive reconditioning as giving you something to work toward. It keeps up his spirits and keeps him in shape.

"Sports and competition mean a lot. It gives me some direction and some purpose—a goal to achieve—and it keeps me in shape. It keeps me out of mischief," said Johnson. "It is critical to my recovery and health. It improves my outlook on life and future and gives me a way to give back to the Army and military."

He currently trains in tandem cycling, and one of his goals is to compete in the Paralympics in tandem cycling.

He commented on the time and effort that goes into training and the rewards that come from it. The mental training learned as part of the Army Warrior Trials applies to everything. Sports in particular help you to overcome "the ups and downs" while recovering from injury.

Johnson sees lots of friendships being formed and thanked his coaches for the support he receives from them; they help him with everything from training to nutrition.

The Army Warrior Trials, Johnson said, are making competitors turn outward, rather than inward. Warriors are returning to normal, he said, it's a "new normal."

Referring to his fellow competitors, he said "Everyone is a world-class athlete at some level."

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CAPTION: Cyclist Sean Johnson and Brian Mathis (left to right)

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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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