



Army Cpl. Perry Price III wrestles the ball way from Marine Cpl. Jorge Salazar during the championship wheelchair basketball match at the 2013 Warrior Games presented by Deloitte in Colorado Springs, Colo. Price, who lost most of his right leg to bone cancer, helped Army win the gold medal for the third year in a row.

Warrior Games Close With Strong Showing from Army

NCO Journal Wire Reports

The Marine Corps won its fourth Chairman's Cup at the 2013 Warrior Games, but each one of the 260 wounded, ill and injured service members who competed are champions.

"Congratulations to all of the 2013 Warrior Games competitors," said Charlie Huebner, chief of Paralympics for the United States Olympic Committee. "While we celebrate medals, this competition is really an example of how sport can change lives. We hope these service members and veterans don't stop here. The goal is for them to return home and get involved in sport programs in their communities."

The fourth annual Warrior Games, presented by Deloitte, took place last week at the U.S. Olympic Training Center and the U.S. Air Force Academy, both in Colorado Springs, Colo. The competition features five U.S. teams — Army, Marine Corps, Navy/Coast Guard, Air Force and Special Operations — and the British Armed Forces team. In addition to Deloitte, the presenting sponsor, the fourth annual competition is also supported by the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, USO, Fisher House Foundation, AT&T, BP, Bud-

weiser, Semper Fi Fund and Daniels Fund.

For the fourth year in a row, the Marine Corps took the top award for top-performing service, based on each team's top finishes in individual events, as well as sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball, the two team sports contested at the Warrior Games. The Marines claimed another Chairman's Cup with 100 points, topping Army, which finished with 85 points. Navy finished third while Air Force and Special Operations took fourth and fifth.

Highlighted by a 2-0 (25-21, 25-21) victory over defending champion Army in the sitting volleyball gold medal game, Marines won 34 gold medals, 33 silver medals and 26 bronze medals throughout the competition, leading the medal count in shooting, swimming and track and field. Marines won 93 medals of the 264 awarded at the Warrior Games. Army earned 81 medals.

Among Army's medals, though, were golds for its wheelchair-basketball team, which took top honors in that event for the third year in a row.

This year's title was Army's toughest. Two years ago, Army ran away with the championship game, defeating the Marine Corps, 44-19. Last year, Army once again

conquered the Marines, 54-34. This year, despite beating the Marines handily in an earlier round, 49-28, Army just eked out the win in the final minute of the championship game, ending the night with a score of 34-32.

"I had no idea this game was going to be that close, I'm not gonna lie," said Army veteran Anthony Pone, whose right leg was amputated after a car accident. "But I wasn't unsure about the victory."

This was Pone's third Warrior Games and third wheelchair basketball gold medal, although he noted it "feels like the first time I won a gold medal."

Pone was the leading scorer for the second night in a row, claiming 12 of Army's 34 points. Four of his points came from free throws. Veteran Blake McMinn was a close second to Pone, scoring 11 points. Five Army players scored during the game.

Pone attributes his three Warrior Games gold medals to Army's strong team bond.

"Besides all the rigorous training that we do year-round, it's definitely the family cohesion," Pone said. "We hang out together; if there's a problem, we all talk about it together. We've got that family cohesion. It's tight; keeps us focused."

Air Force Cpt. Kieffer, who has a traumatic brain injury from injuries sustained when his convoy was attacked in Baghdad, was the 2013 Warrior Games' Ultimate Champion. The title is based on five competitions: 50-meter freestyle in swimming; 10-meter prone air rifle in shooting; 100-meter sprint in track; a race based on disability category, in Kieffer's case, cycling; and shot put in the field events.

Kieffer's performance at the Warrior Games was highlighted by the silver medal in the prone air rifle competition. He finished fourth in the men's bicycle open event and the 50-meter freestyle. In track and field, he finished seventh in the men's 100-meter and eighth in the shot put.

Marine Sgt. Jorge Toledo finished second in the Ultimate Champion competition with veteran Marine Sgt. Brian Riley taking third. Other competitors were Army Staff Sgt. Krisell Creager-Lumpkins, Air Force Captain Sarah Evans, retired Navy Operations Specialist 2nd Class Joe Frank, veteran Army Staff Sgt. Seth Jahn of Special Operations, veteran Senior Airman Kendall Madden of Special Operations and Navy Chief Gunner's Mate Jeannette Tarqueno.

Warrior Games and similar activities are "testaments to the nation's support for our wounded warriors, honoring their service and sacrifices," said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III. He and his wife, Jeanne, attended the 2013 Warrior Games and visited with wounded warriors.

"It's always an uplifting experience to hear the Soldiers' stories and their families' stories and how they're continuing to deal and grow stronger," he said. He also attended last year's games.

Jeanne added that "it helps to also hear the family's point of view," meaning that families are an integral part of a Soldier's efforts at recovery, both mental and physical.

Chandler said many wounded warriors he's served with in Iraq are using sports as part of their therapy and healing process.

Besides the physical aspect, he believes the competitive spirit does a lot for the mind and soul.

Although there's a good spirit of camaraderie between each of the services as well as the British team, "it's still about competing," he said. "They all want to win. And that's a good, healthy thing."

Chandler was "looking forward to seeing the Army raise the gold again as they have over the past several years in many of the different events."

He is also looking forward to seeing more wounded warriors getting back to as normal a life as possible.

"The Army is committed to helping its wounded warriors heal and transition back into the service if at all possible or going on to the next phase of their life," he said. "That's our commitment. That's who we are. That's what we do."

Huebner summed up the 2013 Warrior Games by saying, "This week started with a Missy, a Brad, a torch and a prince. It ends with champions."

The Warrior Games kicked off with Navy Lt. and three-time Paralympic medalist Brad Snyder, five-time Olympic medalist Missy Franklin and Prince Harry lighting the cauldron, but the games' closing ceremony proved to be a night to celebrate the champions of the past six days. Several hundred athletes, families and friends gathered at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., for the Warrior Games closing ceremony.

As Mark Goulart, principal and lead client service provider for Deloitte's Veterans Affairs, stated during the closing ceremony, "The Warrior Games is not the end point, but it's a beginning."

Huebner said, "Millions got to see the importance of sport in the rehabilitation process."

One of the millions was Herschel Walker, winner of the 1982 Heisman Trophy and 1992 Olympic bobsledder. Walker attended several events throughout the week, to meet and support athletes from all six teams. He said he was "totally impressed" with his first Warrior Games experience and wished more people could see the event.

"The Warrior Games is important because it shows they're still soldiers; they're still guys who can get it done, and that's what they did," Walker said. "They did things a lot of people can't do, a lot of people are not doing, and that's very important."

— Reporting from teamusa.org. Read more about the Warrior Games. ■



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