



Face of Defense: Soldier Prepares for Warrior Games

By Benny Ontiveros — U.S. Army Warrior Transition Command

Army Sgt. 1st Class Katie Kuiper is using adaptive sports as a bridge for her transition to civilian life.

Kuiper, assigned to the Warrior Transition Battalion, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, suffered a head injury that proved to be challenging, but through the Army physical fitness and adaptive sports program, her goals are quickly being reached. She'll be involved in the Army trials being held March 30 through April 3 at Fort Bliss, Texas, in preparation for the 2015 Warrior Games slated June 19-28 at Quantico Marine Corps Base, Virginia.

The trials are conducted by the U.S. Army Warrior Transition Command, based in Alexandria, Virginia. Kuiper is one of about 80 wounded, ill and injured Soldiers and veterans from across the country participating in events including shooting, swimming, archery, sitting volleyball, wheelchair basketball, track and field, and Kuiper's favorite, cycling.

Kuiper is involved in two scheduled training events, but she participated in cycling practice March 24 to "relax my head injury," she said.

"Cycling is relaxing to me," Kuiper added, "and I can forget about everything else."

Focusing Her Energy

Finding ways to recover from injuries can be difficult for wounded service members, but Kuiper focused her energy on cycling, which will prepare her for her other training events such as track and field. She quickly acclimated to cycling and safely stretched her muscles before taking a cycle ride on the approved tank trail.

The challenging part was learning new cycling techniques from the cycling coach. "The cycling lessons are new and insightful," she said.

Cycling coach Jim Pensereyes, from San Diego, taught Kuiper and other wounded warriors to ride their cycles correctly through the turns on the practice trail.

Better With Each Practice Run

"It's an honor and absolutely amazing to see these brave individuals cycle through the course and even better to see when they take my advice," he said.

“They just get better and better with each practice run.”

Kuiper and other wounded warriors adjusted to this new method despite the challenges it presented. By the end of the practice, they cycled with ease. Several cycling coaches were on hand to help them learn proper riding techniques.

“Being here is instrumental to my well-being,” Kuiper said, “and by interacting with other wounded warriors, it brings great joy to me and puts a huge smile to my face.” ■

Army Sgt. 1st Class Katie Kuiper takes a moment to study the practice track before an Army Trials cycling practice event at Fort Bliss, Texas, March 24, 2015. About 80 seriously wounded ill and injured service members and veterans from across the country are competing for Army team spots in the 2015 Department of Defense Warrior Games. (U.S. Army photo by Benny Ontiveros)



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