

# NEWS OF SPORTS

## Adaptive Sports Change Lives For Wounded Warriors

(NAPSA)—American soldiers are athletic—they competed in school sports and maintained the Army’s standards of physical fitness. For the thousands who become wounded, ill or injured on active duty, sports are also an important part of recovery.

Capt. Ivan Castro is a soldier who didn’t let an injury slow him down. After more than 20 years in the Army, Castro was blinded after a 2006 mortar blast while deployed to Iraq.

“Working out is a stress relief for me,” said Castro. “Last year, I ran a 50-miler, and I plan to do it again this year.”

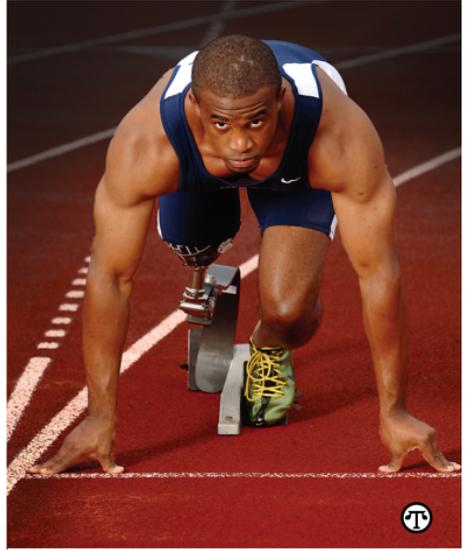
Castro applied the persistence from his distance running to his passion for returning to active duty and became the first blind soldier to graduate from the Maneuver Captain’s Career Course, a challenging program that prepares officers for the battlefield.

“Wounded warriors frequently tell me how amazing it feels to accomplish the impossible,” said Brig. Gen. Gary Cheek, Commander of the Army Warrior Transition Command, which oversees warrior care. “Sports test their limits and amplify their self-image.”

Many private organizations support adaptive sports programs for wounded warriors. Lakeshore Foundation has hosted retreats for more than 800 wounded warriors and family members throughout the country from all branches of the military, at no cost to the service members.

“These programs are about more than sports and recreation,” said Mandy Goff of Lakeshore Foundation. “The confidence they gain spills into all aspects of their lives—home life, marriage, job search and aspirations for school.”

Wounded soldiers also succeed at the highest level of competition.



**Sports provide an excellent opportunity for wounded soldiers such as veteran Kortney Clemons to test their limits and really restore and amplify their self-image.**

Veteran Kortney Clemons, a former Army medic, lost his leg when an improvised explosive device exploded as he evacuated a soldier from the battlefield. Seeing another veteran run on a prosthetic inspired Clemons to become an athlete, going on to win Silver and Bronze medals at the 2009 Paralympic World Cup.

“Running is fantastic for me,” said Clemons. “When I’m sprinting around the track, I’m focused on my abilities—how much I’ve trained and how badly I want to win.”

The Department of Defense and the U.S. Olympic Committee Paralympic Military Program recently created “Warrior Games” for athletes across the military to demonstrate their resilience after life-altering injuries.

For more about wounded warriors participating in adaptive sports, visit the Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2) blog at <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/>.