



Quadruple amputee uses wheelchair rugby to help others

By Annette Coward, Warrior Transition Command

Joint Base Andrews, Maryland

The Maryland Mayhem and the National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) Punishers put on a show, with the Mayhem winning a nail-biter 25-24 during the U.S. Department of Defense Warrior Care Month Wheelchair Rugby Exhibition matchup at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, November 16, 2015. Many of the players suffer from spinal cord, shoulder and arm injuries, but these injuries didn't stop them as they battled across the court in oversized aluminum wheel chairs.



*U.S. Quad Rugby Association President Bob Lujano, discusses play by play action with announcer Jennifer Stone during the U.S. Department of Defense Warrior Care Month Wheelchair Rugby Exhibition matchup on Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, November 16, 2015.*

The exhibition game is part of a series of activities taking place during Warrior Care Month; demonstrating the Army's commitment to wounded, ill and injured Soldiers, their Families and caregivers.

This year's theme is Show of Strength with the subthemes: recovery, reconditioning, reintegration and remaining strong being highlighted during the month of November.

True to the Warrior Care Month theme, show of strength, is Bob Lujano, a quadruple amputee and former wheelchair rugby player, served as the commentator for the exhibition game. "I love to see more and more veterans play and lead an active lifestyle. That's extremely important to me," Lujano said.

Lujano has spent his life working to see events like this. The Kansas native lost both his legs and a portion of his arms due to a rare form of meningitis at the age of nine.

“Life could be challenging, but I found physical education was a very positive outlet for me,” he added.

A strong family support group and loyal childhood friends helped Lujano focus while developing a fierce determination to succeed.

“My father didn't limit me in anything I wanted [to do],” said Lujano. “If I wanted to swim, he let me swim. Whatever my friends did, I did and that was the blessing.”

Lujano went on to earn an undergraduate degree in pre-law with a minor in history from the University of Texas, Arlington and a master of science degree in recreational management from the University of Tennessee. He is currently serving as President of the U.S. Quad Rugby Association.

“It was really about developing programs for athletes who were dealing with limitations. I wanted them to have access to a competitive sport and basically, at the end of the day, it's providing a sense of normalcy to their lives,” said Lujano.

“Hands down Bob's an ambassador to us players. He gives back to so many that are transitioning after a physical setback,” said Punisher player Robby Beckham.

Lujano says it's important to offer sports like rugby as a strong component to adaptive reconditioning. Adaptive reconditioning includes any physical activities that wounded, ill and injured Soldiers participate in regularly to support their physical and emotional well-being. These activities contribute to a successful recovery for Soldiers whether they are transitioning back to active duty or into civilian life.

“It's very simple, you can wish to die or choose to live. I chose to live and I want others to feel the same way,” Lujano concluded.

Lujano is currently working as an information specialist with the National Center on Health Physical Activity and Disability in Birmingham, Alabama. He published his autobiography “No Arms, No Legs, No problem: When life happens, you can wish to die or choose to live” in December of 2014.