



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Veteran comes full circle as sitting volleyball coach**

**West Point, New York** — J.D. Malone corrects athletes' techniques as he watches them play sitting volleyball in a gym at West Point, New York, encouraging ball control and making sure the athletes are ready to move across the court.

As the head coach for the Army's sitting volleyball team, Malone instructs wounded, ill and injured Soldiers and Army Veterans on how to play the sport that levels the playing field for players who can't easily run, stand or jump, allowing them to play competitively alongside more able-bodied players.

He may be at the 2014 Army Warrior Trials as a coach, but he can also relate to his athletes as a fellow Veteran, one who went through his own struggles transitioning out of the Army in 2003.

"I had some struggles when I first got back, nothing like some of these guys have, just a few struggles... trying to find a direction, that was the biggest one," said Malone, who served as a cavalry scout with the 101st Airborne Division. After he tore a rotator cuff in Afghanistan, he found himself as a Veteran with no real idea of what to do next.

"It was difficult to start. The Army was my plan for life," said Malone.

He went through dozens of jobs over the next few years, dabbling in retail, security, a lumber mill and more.

"It was difficult for me to find a job that kind of fulfilled what I was looking for," said Malone, who added that he was looking for a purpose.

That motivation entered his life through the sport of volleyball, a game he played in high school and kept involved in afterwards through open gyms and grass tournaments, but not one he envisioned ever coaching.

"I thought there's no way I was going to coach. I'm still young; I've still got a lot of fire and drive and I want to play," said Malone.

A move to Colorado Springs in 2007, though, morphed into his first coaching job as a club volleyball coach as he worked a day job in security. A moment of inspiration struck him at a high performance coaches' clinic the next year when he realized he wanted to coach full time.

"I'm looking out over the auditorium, and that's when it hit me. It's like, I want to coach volleyball... being in sport is the thing I wanted to do. That started the path," said Malone, who went on to get involved with a Paralympics' sitting volleyball team and starting his own volleyball training company.

That brought him full circle to helping out the sitting volleyball team at the Joint Services Sitting Volleyball Tournament at the Pentagon in 2013, and this year with the Department of Defense's Warrior Games competition to be held at Colorado Springs, Colorado, Sept. 29-Oct. 4. The Warrior Trials, June 15-19 at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y., are the Army's vetting competitions to see which athletes will represent Team Army at the Warrior Games.

"It's humbling to me as an athlete to work with these guys and to help them transition. It's inspiring and it helps me as a coach," said Malone, who's played volleyball for 18 years.



“I want these guys to kind of take and realize that they can do more than they probably think they can, or if they know what they can do, this kind of solidifies it for them,” he said.

Malone sees his work with Soldiers and Veterans as a chance to them transition from being a Soldier to an athlete; he also hopes to find some athletes who can compete at the Paralympic level.

“That’s something that I’m really hoping for -- that we build a bigger connection between this and the Paralympic bodies because I think this is ... great for the guys mentally to have these goals. We can actually help them achieve that next level, where they’re competing for gold medals against people all over the world,” he said.

Malone is looking forward to the idea of his athletes competing in the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

“It would be awesome to see some of these guys there,” he said.

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**CUTLINE:** Coach J.D. Malone gives advice to Soldiers and Veterans at sitting volleyball practice at the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y. Malone is an Army Veteran from Colorado Springs, Colo. More than 100 Army, Marine and Air Force athletes are competing in archery, cycling, shooting, sitting volleyball, swimming, track and field and wheelchair basketball June 15-19. The Army Warrior Trials, hosted by the U.S. Army Warrior Transition Command, help determine which Army athletes will compete at the 2014 Warrior Games this fall in Colorado Springs, Colo. (Photo by Spc. James McCann, Combat Camera, 55th Signal Company)

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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](http://www.WTC.army.mil), follow on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/armyWTC> or join Facebook at <http://facebook.com/armyWTC>.

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