



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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By Caitlin Morrison
Warrior Transition Command

Wounded, ill and injured Soldiers shoot for a spot on the Army Warrior Games teams

West Point, New York — A group of 20 athletes gathered in the air rifle room of Tronsrue Marksmanship Center at West Point to listen to their mental conditioning coach prepare them for the day's training. "Every practice you should have a process goal," said Lisa Hutchison, mental conditioning coach, Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness. "Focus on learning a specific technique. Apply something from yesterday's lesson."

More than 100 wounded, ill and injured service members and Veterans from across the United States joined together at West Point to train and compete in the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials, June 15-20. The event is hosted by Warrior Transition Command, and the Army Warrior Trials include athletes from the Army, Marines and Air Force who will face off in archery, basketball, cycling, track and field, swimming, shooting, sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball. Participants in the trials include athletes with spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, visual impairment, serious illnesses and amputations. The Army athletes are preparing to compete for a slot on the Team Army to go to the Warrior Games in Colorado this fall.

For the competition, each shooter will take 40 shots, scored 0.0-10.9, and the top eight scorers will compete in the finals. The final round has added pressure, as each shooter takes one shot at a time and their score is announced each time. "It's nerve-wracking," explained marksmanship coach and technical staff member Sarah Hall. "If you shoot a bad shot, everyone hears your score."

The athletes are given a specific category based on their physical abilities. Soldiers can shoot standing or prone. There are many devices and modifications that allow athletes with all types of physical limitations to participate.

Master Sgt. Rhoden Galloway, athlete and Cadre member at Brook Army Medical Center, also helps coach his teammates. "Don't rush it," he advised Staff Sgt. Brian Boone. "Slow it down, and take a few breaths. Think about the hand and where the hand is." The two were standing side by side with their rifles working on muscle relaxation.

Staff Sgt. Boone was strapped into very elaborate shooting jacket, with his arm in a sling attached to a large buckle at the shoulder. "Everyone from Fort Sam uses the jackets," Staff Sgt. Boone explained. "But halfway into practice today I took it off and have been shooting better without it." Although his arm may wobble more without the support of the sling, the freedom of motion helps him relax, which is the key to shooting. "Once you start thinking about it, that's when it gets difficult."

Staff Sgt. Boone is assigned to the Bravo 187th Medical Battalion at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas as a Continuation on Active Duty (COAD) Soldier. He was assigned to the Warrior Transition Unit (WTU) there after sustaining an injury in Afghanistan in 2011. The team had to switch to a smaller truck due to mechanical issues that day, so Boone was harnessed in the back of the new, overloaded truck with his left leg over the wheel well when they drove over an improvised explosive device (IED). The wheel under his left leg blew up, taking the bottom portion of his leg with it. The harness dug into his right shoulder, damaging the nerves so severely he could not use the arm for months. Staff Sgt. Boone was fitted for a prosthetic upon his return to the United States, and was walking within a month. He calls his amputation a "golden injury," because he was able to return to his normal routines fairly quickly, unlike many of his fellow WTU Soldiers. Today is only the third time Staff Sgt. Boone has ever shot an air rifle, having only started a week ago. "This experience is amazing, it is all new to me," he said. "Sports really help me get out of myself." Staff Sgt. Boone is preparing to transition out of the Army and hopes to pursue a degree in biology.



CUTLINE: Staff Sgt. Brian Boone of Fort Sam Houston, Texas trains for the 2014 Army Warrior Trials air rifle competition at West Point. The event is hosted by Warrior Transition Command, and the Army Warrior Trials include athletes from the Army, Marines and Air Force who will face off in archery, basketball, cycling, track and field, swimming, shooting, sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball. Participants in the trials include athletes with spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, visual impairment, serious illnesses and amputations. (U.S. Army Photo)

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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, follow on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/armyWTC> or join Facebook at <http://facebook.com/armyWTC>.

200 Stovall Street - #7S05 - Alexandria, VA 22332