



San Diego Hosts Wounded Warrior Camp

By Steve Kappes, special to USTA.com.



The 2nd Annual National Wounded Warrior Tennis Camp was held in San Diego in June, 2013.



Forty wounded, ill, and injured service members and veterans from all of the military branches, along with caregivers, participated in the camp.



16 hours of tennis instruction and friendly competitions were designed to improve the physical and emotional well-being of the participants.



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The San Diego District Tennis Association (SDDTA) and Balboa Tennis Club, in partnership with Naval Medical Center San Diego, hosted the 2nd Annual National Military Tennis Camp for Wounded, Ill, and Injured Service Members and Veterans from June 11-16, 2013.

The camp was an outgrowth of an ongoing local program established in 2009 that has provided over 100 free tennis-based rehabilitation clinics to over 500 wounded, ill, and injured service members from across the country who have received care at Naval Medical Center San Diego. It has been recognized at the highest levels of the Department of Defense for its excellence and impact, and has become the model for similar adaptive tennis programs that have been established at other military medical centers and warrior transition units across the country.

During the camp, 40 wounded, ill, and injured service members and veterans from all the military branches, along with caregivers, participated in 16 hours of tennis instruction and friendly competitions designed to improve their physical and emotional well-being. Group evening activities provided additional opportunities for socializing, camaraderie, and re-integration into the community.

The participants came from 18 states, as far away as New York and Florida, and ranged in age from 22 to 65. Over 70% had served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan, and a few had served in Vietnam. Their injuries were diverse, from double amputees to those which are invisible.

The positive feedback from the participants has been overwhelming, many commenting that tennis is changing their lives for the better, and in some cases, has saved their lives. In addition, Rear Admiral Forrest Faizon, the Commander of Naval Medical Center San Diego, received a report on the camp, and responded,

"Thank you for the truly outstanding support you provide our Wounded Warriors and their families. I'm so pleased the camp was a success and greatly appreciate all the hard work and effort your team put into making that happen. Again, thank you so very much."

Grant funding for this program was awarded by U.S. Paralympics, a division of the U.S. Olympic Committee, through funding provided by Veterans Affairs. The grants are provided to facilitate the growth of Paralympic-sport programming for disabled Veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces. The United States Tennis Association's national charitable foundation, USTA Serves, also awarded a grant of \$10,000. Dozens of local businesses, community support organizations and recreational tennis players provided additional financial and in-kind donations. As a result, all the participants' costs were covered, including airfare, lodging, meals, local transportation, tennis equipment, social events, and incidentals.

The San Diego District Tennis Association and Balboa Tennis Club are grateful for the opportunity to support our nation's heroes and their families through tennis, and sincerely appreciate the many contributions that make it possible.