

TENNIS

Tennis Magazine Presents...

The



"The definition of the hero in American culture is the one who by accident or destiny gets knocked down, and gets up again." —**JEAN-PIERRE LIMBORG**, Page 18

HEROES

"Our goals were to use tennis as a hook to open doors for underserved children and to help them understand the value of education." —**CHRISTINE BECK**, Page 66

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he•ro noun

A PERSON WHO IS
ADMIRED FOR COURAGE,
OUTSTANDING
ACHIEVEMENTS OR
NOBLE QUALITIES

Band of Brothers

After being honorably discharged, Chris Bustamante (below, left) and Jesse Colby (below, right) gave back by bringing tennis to Fort Drum.

GAME ON

After discovering a love for tennis through the Wounded Warriors program, two army sergeants made it their mission to share the sport with other veterans *by Michael Catarevas*



● When U.S. Army sergeants Chris Bustamante and Jesse Colby each received a diagnosis of diabetes, their military careers came to an end, but it led to a new and unexpected chapter in their lives as avid tennis players.

The two men met for the first time in 2013 at the Warrior Transition Unit at Fort Drum, in upstate New York, in the process of separating from the Army due to their medical condition. Bustamante, 44, had served in Afghanistan. Colby, 32, was stationed in Germany. Before being honorably discharged, both men spent several months at Fort Drum to exercise, take classes, rehab and decompress.

"I saw a flyer on the wall there offering a free one-week tennis camp in

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San Diego to anyone at Fort Drum," Bustamante recalls. "I told Jesse it sounded like fun, so we went."

They arrived at the Tennis Camp for Wounded Warriors, which over the past five years has provided tennis-based rehabilitation to more than 600 ill or injured service members and veterans. The adaptive tennis program was the inspiration of co-founder Steve Kappes,

a 24-year Navy veteran and certified tennis instructor, president of the San Diego District Tennis Association and chairman of its Military Outreach Committee. The two friends were transformed by their experience—and became hooked on tennis.

"I hadn't been an avid player before," says Bustamante. "But I found a lot of healing power in the game. It reminded me of the camaraderie of being in a military unit. I found it inspiring that I could play a game with an amputee."

After returning East, the two men continued to play daily. They also decided to make Fort Drum a tennis haven. They started a Wounded Warrior tennis program there and began working on bringing resources to build new tennis courts. Bustamante, who credits the USTA with supplying funds and equipment to the program at Fort Drum, is now a civilian. He's hoping the courts he envisioned become a reality. "I heard they're working on it," he says. "I'm glad I was able to leave them with the start of something."

Colby has also transitioned back to a non-military life. "Playing tennis is now a regular thing for me, my wife and my kids," he says. "The Wounded Warrior program lit a fire under me and Chris, and we thought getting into the game could help our fellow soldiers take their minds off a blown off leg, or wrecked shoulder. If it's a part of Fort Drum's activities now, then there's a little bit of fruit from our labors."