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## WTB Soldiers head to Illinois for DoD Warrior Games

By Jeff Troth, MEDDAC PAO



Three Fort Carson Warrior Transition Battalion Soldiers garnered 13 medals at the Army Trials earning them slots on the Army Team for the upcoming Department of Defense Warrior Games.

Sgt. First Class Richard Hastings, Sgt. First Class Robert G. Roberts III and Spc. Jay Marquiss will join 37 other Soldiers who will represent the Army at the Warrior Games. The games showcase the skills and celebrate the triumphs and personal courage of 270 wounded, ill and injured service members and veterans from all military branches and in the British Armed Forces. The games are being held June 30 to July 8 in Chicago, Illinois.

Hastings won seven gold medals and two bronze medals at the Army Trials, which took place April 2 to 6 at Fort Bliss, Texas. Four of his gold medals came in swim events while his other five came in track and field events and he placed fourth in 6.0 cycling.

Roberts took gold in recurve archery and bronze in shot-put. And fourth place in the air rifle. Marquiss took gold in the 50m breaststroke, bronze in 100m freestyle and just missed getting a bronze in compound archery by .29 inches.

"The Army Trials turned into a big family down there," said Marquiss. "We were all supporting each other, while at the same time having fun."

That support and their road to gold started back at Fort Carson when they were assigned to the WTB. The battalion's mission is to take care of Soldiers who require at least six months of rehabilitative care and complex medical management. While assigned to the WTB these Soldiers are able to concentrate on medical appointments and transitioning to civilian life, or on returning to their original unit.

Adaptive sports are one of the therapeutic approaches the WTB uses to help its Soldiers recover. Adaptive sports often parallel existing sports played by able-bodied athletes, but there may be modifications in the equipment and rules to meet the needs of the participant.

Marquiss' start in adaptive sports came when Roberts invited him to archery practice. This opened the door for him to try the other adaptive sports for the Army Trials.

"I'm an avid outdoors man so all I do is hunt and fish and shoot – that is how I relax," said Roberts. "I tried the shot put and discus and was good at them, so I competed in them also."

Roberts said that he has always shot a compound bow, but two weeks before the Army Trials he picked up a recurve bow and "started to play around with it." Roberts said the week they arrived in Texas for the trials was when the decision was made that he would compete in the recurve bow.

"All the other competitors came to me and said 'you are doing this, you need to try it this way'," said Roberts. "Even though I was going to compete against them they gave me pointers and helped me out. When my bow string started coming apart, one of my competitors gave me one of his spare strings. If it wasn't for him I would have been out of the competition.

"But, although we are competing against each other we are still one big team." Roberts said. "That is the way everyone looks at it, we are one big team – we are a family."

Part of the Army family that got Hastings and Marquiss ready for their time in the pool at the Army Trials was Paralympic Gold Medalist Sgt. Elizabeth Marks.

"She helped me and Jay (Marquiss) practice our swimming and get ready for the trials," said Hastings. "It is always good to have someone look at your stroke and point out things that you never realized you were doing wrong."

"Sgt. Marks helped me with my breast stroke and she pointed out a few things for me to change that helped me increase my power," said Marquiss. "She told me that I needed to calm down, focus on the stroke and told me where to be slower and where to be quicker. She really helped me out a lot."

While the Paralympian helped them improve their times in the pool, the trio agrees that the Warrior Transition Battalion's adaptive sports program has helped them get to a better place.

"The sports have helped me realize that I am not going to be able to recover from my injuries," said Hastings, who slipped a disc and pinched a nerve while deployed. "But they have also shown me that my injury does not have to limit me. In fact it might open up more opportunities down the road."

Roberts said that at the Army Trials a lot of people told him that he was a different person than who they had met at regionals. He said that the sports and team atmosphere has helped him to relax and enjoy life again.

"I know with type II diabetes I do have some limitations," said Marquiss. "But with adaptive sports I can still do a bunch of different things, I can still compete, I can still be active."

All three said they are looking forward to competing at the Warrior Games.

"I am excited for the competition," said Hastings. "There is something about the day of the swim meet, the day of the race and the level of excitement and energy in the air."

"I like it when it is on the line, I go to a different place," said Roberts. "I'm competitive by nature so that is when I am the happiest. Being put to my limits just makes me try that much harder."

To see the limits Roberts and the rest of the Army Team reach at the Warrior Games this summer, follow all the action at [www.dodwarriorgames.com](http://www.dodwarriorgames.com).



Sgt. First Class Richard Hastings sprints for the finish line during the Army Trials last month at Fort Bliss, Texas. He won two gold and a bronze medal on the track, a gold in

the discus and a bronze in the shot-put. Hastings also won four gold medals in swim events. (DoD photo by Roger L. Wollenberg)



Marquiss Swimming -- Spc. Jay Marquiss swims across the pool during the Army Trials last month at Fort Bliss, Texas. Marquiss took gold in the 50m breaststroke and bronze in 100m freestyle. (DoD photo by Roger L. Wollenberg)



Roberts -- Sgt. First Class Robert G. Roberts III takes aim at a gold medal in recurve bow at the Army Trials last month at Fort Bliss, Texas. He also earned a bronze medal in shot-put. (DoD photo by Roger L. Wollenberg)



MEDALS -- Spc. Jay Marquiss (left to right), Sgt. First Class Richard Hastings and Sgt. First Class Robert G. Roberts III pose with the medals they earned at the Army Trials last month at Fort Bliss, Texas. (Courtesy Photo)

