



From: HOPE FOR THE WARRIORS™

Contact: Carole Turner, (910) 546-0044 or carole@hopeforthewarriors.org

Blind, double amputee completes Marine Corps Marathon

Three adaptive athletes guided injured hero on hand cycle through 26.2 mile course

WASHINGTON, D.C., October 25, 2009— Lcpl. Matt Bradford, a 22-year old Marine, completed the Marine Corps Marathon on a hand cycle despite Iraq war injuries that include blindness and the loss of both legs. Bradford was escorted through the course by five other Hope For The Warriors™ team members on hand cycles, four of whom are also USMC wounded warriors. The marathon was held Sunday, October 25 in Washington, DC and Virginia.

Bradford's travel and expenses, along with those of eight other injured heroes, were funded by Hope For The Warriors™, a national non profit dedicated to ensuring that no sacrifice is forgotten, nor need unmet for injured service members and the families of the injured and fallen.

Although the team originally planned on guiding Bradford via headset, that plan changed when they realized that Bradford uses his hearing to compensate for vision loss. "Putting headsets on Matt would be like blindfolding him," says team leader Chris Ayres, USMC (ret), an injured Marine Captain who lost his hamstring muscle in the First Battle of Fallujah.

Bradford's training mostly revolved around weekly rides at Brooke Army Medical Center in Houston, TX with a squad leader on the Marine Patient Affairs Team, Marine John Reyna. As the team's only non-injured team member, Reyna gets his inspiration from Bradford. "He really captured me with his attitude and motivation," says Reyna. "Those things coming from someone in his situation, it's amazing. He is so willing to do what it takes. We've had our bumps and bruises. I've made bad calls and he's wrecked, but he just gets back on."

Rick Leipold, an avid hand cyclist of 15 years and regular competitor, provided guidance and acted as equipment specialist for the team. Other injured heroes and amputees from Brooke Army Medical Center escorted Bradford on the course including Marine Cpl. Eric Morante, Army Major AJ Tong and retired Marine Zack Briseno.

Bradford and his teammates faced many difficulties on the marathon course, particularly where the course was crowded and loud. They finished in just under five hours. "You believe, you can achieve," says Bradford. "It's about how far I've come. It's another way to prove to people that anyone can do it."

Bradford's hand cycle was donated by the New York City Fire Department this past spring [file://localhost/\(http://www.hopeforthewarriors.org/pdfs:mattbradford.pdf\)](http://localhost/(http://www.hopeforthewarriors.org/pdfs:mattbradford.pdf)). Bradford and four

teammates recently participated in The Firefighter Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Run race in New York City, a run that follows the route of off-duty FDNY fireman Stephen Siller on 9/11.

More than 100 other members of Team Hope For The Warriors™--including 4 additional wounded heroes--completed the Marine Corps Marathon. Funds raised by Team Hope For The Warriors™ support Hope For The Warriors™ programs, which enhance the quality of life for U.S. service members and their families who have been adversely affected by injuries or death in the line of duty. For more information, check out their website at www.hopeforthewarriors.org.

Hope For The Warriors™ joins our Marine Corps Marathon team sponsors' Textron and Potomac Field Gear in the mission to ensure that no sacrifice is forgotten, nor need unmet for those that have sacrificed in defense of our freedom. Additional sponsors include VT Group and National Security Association Worldwide who funded food and refreshments for the team on race day.

The 2009 Marine Corps Marathon continues a 34-year tradition of running through our nation's Capitol. Known as the People's Marathon, the Marine Corps Marathon sells out annually and is the 10th largest marathon in the world.

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Hope For The Warriors™ is a civilian organization, with 501(c)(3) non-profit status, is not a government agency and is solely supported by the generosity of individuals, corporations, and foundations in support and appreciation of those who have sacrificed in the name of freedom. Federal Tax Id#20-5182295. Hope For The Warriors™ is a recipient of the Combined Federal Campaign, CFC #27800.