

Amputees at Walter Reed Army Medical Center Rely on Each Other For Inspiration to Push Themselves to Walk Again

(30.05.2010)

May was a cruel month. The number of servicemen and women who lost an arm or a leg since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began went over 1,000, many of them more than one. They come to the physical therapy room at Walter Reed, reports CBS News correspondent David Martin.

Marine Sgt. Maj. Raymond Mackey stepped on a mine in Afghanistan last Dec. 23 and his goal is to be walking again by next Dec. 23. He lost both legs above the knee.

"I just got my legs, my C-legs, my computer legs and I'm learning how to put them on and how to fire it to where the knee comes forward and everything like that," Mackey said.

A computerized knee is one of the many technological advances spawned by wars which no one at Walter Reed ever thought would last this long, but Mackey will tell you technology is not what gets you walking again.

"It's all about attitude and how much heart you got," Mackey said.

He's 20 years older than everybody else here, but by the time he and his wife Vicky knock off for the day, Mackey has spent five hours in physical therapy and left behind a message for all the younger men.

"Ultimately, I think a lot of us tend to feed off each other," said Josh Tuohy. "How else are you going to get better if you're not pushing yourself at least, I mean, use the other people to measure your success."

Tuohy got hit last September by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan, and has been walking with a vengeance since January.

"I had a level of physical fitness I was at prior to my injury, and it's just imperative for me to get back to that level," Tuohy said. "I'll settle for nothing less."

After trying a number of different legs, he's settled on one without a computerized knee.

"I was never a firm believer in the concept of having to plug a leg in at night like a cell phone," Tuohy said.

Soldiers Remember Fallen in Afghanistan

Dave Flowers, who was injured in a landmine in Afghanistan, has been at Walter Reed for a year but only in the past month has he started walking on his own. The combination of one prosthetic leg and one badly mangled real leg was holding him back, until he started playing Wii.

"It tells you how much you favor one side, like if you're standing too much on your prosthetic and not on your other leg," Flowers said.

It worked for him, he thought it might work for others, so he raised \$10,000, and started buying them for all the guys.

It's not just a physical therapy room. It's a band of brothers wise beyond their years.

"The only person holding you back is yourself," Tuohy said. "So, yes, I could just sit there and complain, but at the end of the day, what's the point?"

What's the hardest part of losing your legs?

"The hardest part is knowing that your unit is there with you," Mackey said. "That's the hardest part for me."

So last week, when Mackey's unit came home from Afghanistan, and guess who was there to meet them.

Von: MMX, CBS Interactive Inc. All Rights Reserved. By David Martin

[<<< zurück zu: News](#)
