



United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School
INSIDE SWCS

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INJURIES ARE NO LIMITS TO SPECIAL OPERATIONS SOLDIERS

By Staff Sgt. Marshall Pesta

For the past year, Maj. Kent Solheim has been training for an ultra-endurance mountain bike race; a challenge of a lifetime for anyone, but for Solheim, this race was even more challenging.

When Solheim, executive officer of 4th Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group (Airborne), was deployed to Karbala, Iraq, he was shot four times. He had to make some very difficult decisions. Solheim, a native of Oregon City, Ore., had always been an intense athlete – an avid runner and cyclist. After being wounded in combat, he had more than a dozen surgeries on his right leg to try to regain its full use. The surgeries failed to give Solheim the results he desired. When he looked at his fellow wounded warriors, and some of the great progress they were making with prosthetics, he elected to amputate his leg.

On March 2, 2009, Solheim had the surgery to remove his injured leg. He sought inspiration from others who had similar surgeries. He said they gave him hope that he could return to his active lifestyle.

“I looked at the guys who were three months, six months, a year ahead of where I was. They were my inspiration to get out of bed and get back on track,” said Solheim. “Within a month I was back out competing in the Boston Marathon with a hand-crank bike.”

As Solheim continued to get back in shape, he became involved in mountain biking and road cycling. During his first mountain bike race he met his current training partner, Maj. Will Cotty, operations officer, 1st Battalion, 1st SWTG(A). While talking, they discovered that Cotty had knee-replacement surgery two days after Solheim’s amputation.

“I actually got heavy into biking after my surgery, when the doctors told me I had to stop running,” said Cotty. “When I saw Kent riding with his leg, I wanted to talk to him about his story.”

From that point on, they began training on a daily basis. They decided they wanted to make a difference and used racing as a way to raise support for

“SWICK” HITS

SPECIAL OPERATIONS WARRIOR FUND

For more information about the Special Operations Warrior Fund please visit their Web site at <http://www.specialops.org>

WARRANT OFFICER COURSE

The Army G-3/5/7 has authorized the Special Forces’ Warrant Officer Technical and Tactical Course as a permanent program. This makes SWCS the only entity authorized to appoint Warrant Officers outside of Ft. Rucker, the National Guard, and the U.S. Army Reserve.

GREEN TO GOLD

The Commanding General’s Hip Pocket ROTC Green to Gold Program for School Year 2010-2011 has been announced.

Applications must be received at U. S. Army Cadet Command by April 1.

All interested Soldiers should see their unit Career Counselor.

For instructions and application packets, [click here](#).

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the Special Operations Warrior Foundation – a very personal cause for Solheim.

“In addition to providing a scholarship to Family Members of our fallen Special Operations Soldiers, they also assist families of guys who get banged up over there,” said Solheim. “People don’t think about the expenses that are incurred when you get injured – for your family to just drop everything, and come out to Walter Reed because you’ve been shot up ... they were there for my family in that time.”

To raise awareness of their cause, Cotty and Solheim decided to take on an adventure race called the Pisgah 36, in the Asheville, N.C. area. The race, formerly known as “The Most Horrible Thing Ever,” consists of multiple stages over a 36-hour period, with more than 70 miles of riding that climb more than 12,000 feet per day. After months of training for hours a day, they were disappointed when the race was postponed due to safety considerations.

“We had spent too much time and effort getting trained to that level to let it go to waste,” explained Cotty. “So I scrambled and came up with the “12 Hours of Santos” in Ocala, Fla. We figured it should be a bit easier, being that it was only 12 hours and not 36. I was wrong!”

The course they took on was called the Vortex, a granite quarry in Ocala, Fla., with steep cliffs and narrow passes that made these combat veterans stop and do a safety assessment.

“It was without a doubt the hardest thing I could have imagined,” said Cotty. “By the end of my sixth lap (8.6 miles per lap), I couldn’t feel my hands anymore.”

But the unrelenting drive of Solheim continued to inspire not only his partner, but the other racers as well. He finished 10 laps with a total time of just under 13 hours. Many call Solheim a hero, and people have even compared him to Marvel hero Captain America, but he remains humble. He says he just hopes to help others, not just by raising support for charity, but also by inspiring his fellow wounded warriors.

“It’s not about me,” said Solheim. “It’s about that guy who just got hurt, and is thinking ‘What now?’ I hope that I can help him know that it’s going to be OK, that he can continue to live a normal life. There is hope.”

While Cotty agrees that it’s about inspiring those troops, he insists that Solheim is really worthy of that title.

“Kent truly is an American hero,” Cotty said. “I’ve learned so much from him. He’s taught me that you can never be limited by an injury. He is so much more than a Soldier who lost his leg; he’s an inspiration to us all.”



Photo by Staff Sgt. Marshall Pesta

Maj. Kent Solheim, right, and Maj. Will Cotty ride through the trails of Smith Lake at Fort Bragg, N.C. The team has been training and riding to support charities despite Solheim losing a leg to battle injuries and Cotty having a knee replacement.