

Army and Navy Fans Enjoy ESPN College GameDay with Wounded Warrior Project

BALTIMORE, Dec. 27, 2016 [/PRNewswire-USNewswire/](#) -- At the recent Army vs.Navy

football game, a group of warriors served by Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) toured the ESPN College GameDay set. The gathering was part of WWP's connection program, which provides opportunities for injured veterans to form bonds in settings that accommodate physical injuries and social anxieties.

"Events like this are a chance to get off the couch and put yourself out there," said Navy veteran Damian Smith. "For me, these gatherings are about connecting with other veterans who likely have shared experiences and shared values. It's laughing about the funny stuff that happened to us and reminiscing about our service. Those are moments that I need in my life."

Immediately upon arriving at Baltimore's Inner Harbor, Damian said the mood was electric, with a competitive tension in the air.

"The whole area was packed with people," Damian said. "There were midshipmen and cadets everywhere. Lots of taunting and signs that poked fun at one another's branch of service – I knew I was in for a fun day. The other warriors around me felt it too, I think. There wasn't an empty seat in the house."

Social activities that connect veterans with one another and their communities can help them cope with stress and emotional concerns. In a [WWP survey](#) of the injured warriors it serves, more than half of survey respondents (51.7 percent) talked with fellow Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation New Dawn veterans to address their mental health issues.

After the game was over, Damian felt like the highs and lows of the game were a close second to his best experience of the day.

"The game was super competitive and a nail-biter down to the end," Damian said. "It was honestly one of the best games I have ever seen. But I've always just enjoyed the chance to meet new warriors and build that community around me. I didn't know anyone coming into this event, but that changed when I left. And yes, as a Navy veteran I was disappointed by the outcome, but Army played well and deserved it this year. I'm glad Wounded Warrior Project