



National Disabled Veterans

Winter Sports Clinic



Skier Profile Andy Hatcher – Keep Driving On!

“People are defined by the obstacles they overcome,” said former reconnaissance Marine Andy Hatcher, 23. “You have the opportunity to show your true quality when you become an amputee, a paraplegic or a blind person. It’s really up to the person. Just keep going and drive on.”

Hatcher lost his right leg below the knee in Iraq after his Humvee hit a roadside bomb during the Second Battle of Fallujah. It was Thanksgiving Day, 2004.

“I was riding shotgun in the front,” he remembered. “The IED [improvised explosive device] hit the tire in front of me. The concussion broke a bunch of bones in my face and tore up both my ears. It knocked me senseless. I came to in a dust cloud, but I was completely dazed. I didn’t feel pain or anything. I was in complete shock.”

Hatcher slipped into a coma, and while his buddies were trying to get him out of the city their convoy was hit two more times by roadside bombs. He awoke two weeks later at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland.

Being an amputee is not the life for which Hatcher trained. Reconnaissance Marines go behind enemy lines to gather intelligence on enemy strongholds and deal with the situation. Becoming a “recon” Marine is as grueling as the path to Navy SEAL or Army Ranger. Before being assigned to the 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Hatcher went through Parris Island boot camp, basic rifleman infantry school, amphibious reconnaissance school, survival evasion resistance and escape training, as well as dive school and jump school.

Now, Hatcher seeks out the company of other veterans with disabilities and good attitudes. That is why he’s going to the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in April 2007, in Snowmass Village, Colorado. “Everybody is being proactive,” he said. “You can’t help but get a positive vibe from the entire event.”

Hatcher seeks similar opportunities throughout the year with the Challenged Athletes Foundation. He is now a sponsored triathlete, competing in events in across the United States.

“It’s rewarding,” Hatcher said. “I compete with nothing but amputees, and being in that type of environment makes you realize that you are not alone. You see all these people doing just as good as or better than you are, and it just keeps your spirits up.”

That confidence remains after each competitive event or the last run on the slopes. Hatcher is currently taking a full load of college courses in addition to a full schedule of competition and his job at the Department of Homeland Security. He plans to get a degree in business and is considering a future in politics or government.

“It’s really not over,” he said about life after a disability. “You’ve got to keep driving on. That’s the big thing.”