



National Disabled Veterans

Winter Sports Clinic



Skier Profile

David Vidana – Coming Full-Circle

David Vidana, a combat Marine Corps veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, is thankful to be alive. Pronounced dead twice after being shot in the head by a sniper in Baghdad in April 2003, Vidana's desire to live triumphed over his life threatening injury. As a field radio operator, Vidana's helmet was pierced while he relayed orders from his commander. After being thought dead for some 12 hours, a faint pulse was detected.

It was then that CNN medical correspondent and neurosurgeon Sanjay Gupta, M.D., who was embedded with Vidana's unit covering the war, performed impromptu surgery that saved the wounded soldier. "I owe Dr. Gupta my life," said Vidana, who is now 28. "I know it's a miracle that I'm alive and a miracle to have made such progress in my physical and occupational therapy."

Only one year from the date of his injury, Vidana found himself at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Snowmass Village, Colorado. "At my first Clinic, I expected to perform well," Vidana recalls. "I snowboarded and went cross-country skiing. I had the time of my life!" Now attending the event for the fourth time, Vidana has progressed to being an intermediate level snowboarder. At the 2008 Winter Sports Clinic, he is looking back at how far he has come in this sport from that first experience four years ago.

Vidana credits the Winter Sports Clinic for giving him support during those early difficult months. "At previous Clinics, I met other Marines from other conflicts with different types of injuries, who shared great insight and perspective," he said. "It helps meeting people who understand your injury. For a while, I didn't think I was going to be able to walk – and then a year later there I was snowboarding!"

Since his first Clinic, Vidana has skied on his own, has seen improvement with his balance and gone on to trying surfing. At past Clinics, whether it was scaling the climbing wall or diving into the pool for scuba lessons, Vidana has consistently embodied the spirit of the event. "Participating in the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic has helped me see past my disability or view it as an obstacle," Vidana said. "I look forward to attending this event each year."

A college graduate from Los Angeles who holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Southern California, Vidana is now a registered occupational therapist and is studying for the GMAT so he can start a dual degree program for his Masters in both business administration and public health. "I want to reform healthcare," he said. From the looks of it, Vidana has shown the heart and determination to accomplish just about anything.

