



Until Every One Comes Home®

Pro vs. GI Joe

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DOIN' A LITTLE FOR THOSE WHO DO A LOT



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The Pros – football players, basketball players, NASCAR drivers, baseball players and other famous athletes. The GI Joes – service men and women around the world. And the “versus?” Video game competitions between the two that are spirited, to say the least.

As a partner with the nonprofit Pro vs. GI Joe, the USO hosts the events, which Atlanta Falcon Brian Finnerman once described as “giving him the chills.” The troops are at an overseas USO center, either on the controls or cheering on their buddies. Connected by Internet, the athletes play here in the U.S., alongside their teammates and the troops’ family and friends.

Service members in Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Dubai and Japan and wounded warriors recovering at the USO Warrior Center in Germany have gone head-to-head with sports superstars. Whenever possible, GI Joe (or Jane) plays against a pro from a favorite team. Webcams in both places make the connection virtual – and emotional.

Stateside, family and friends meet the pros, watch their loved ones compete and talk with them via the webcam. As one Marine laughed when he battled his favorite player, Green Bay Packer lineman Mark Tauscher, “I couldn’t believe I was playing Madden 09 against one of the best tackles in the NFL!” Even better, though, he said, “taking a break from the deployment to see my family is beyond words.” And an airman from Florida got an extra surprise after playing against a Tampa Bay Buccaneer – seeing 20 members of his family greeting him in unison.

During NBA All-Star Game weekend, Shaquille O’Neil was playing NBA 09 Xbox Live with a sergeant in Germany. Between matches, the two were chatting via webcam when Shaq told the sergeant to hold on because he had to pick something up. Shaq then leaned down and lifted into view the service member’s son, who was celebrating his eighth birthday. It just about undid the sergeant who exclaimed, “That’s my son!”

With Pro vs. GI Joe, everyone wins. Troops and their families hang out with their favorite athletes. The pros have a tangible way to thank the troops for the work they do. Families separated by deployment are reunited for a few precious minutes. As one of the pros said about his GI Joe competitors, “They’re the real heroes. We go out and play a game, but they go out there and do the real thing.”



This program is one of the many ways that the USO fulfills its mission to lift the spirits of U.S. troops and their families. Through special programs, targeted services, entertainment tours and in more than 140 USO centers around the world, this private, nonprofit organization continually seeks ways to build morale and express appreciation to active duty military personnel and their families.