



Washington Football Team partners with GEICO Military and Buffalo Wild Wings to give back to 15 military installations

By Alec LaCorazza

From Oct. 5 through Nov. 2, the Washington Football Team ventured to 15 military installations throughout Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C., connecting with 1,500 service members to thank them for their service throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The effort was sponsored by GEICO Military and supported by Buffalo Wild Wings, USO of Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore and USO Hampton Roads and Central Virginia.

In an effort to show its appreciation, the team

handed out more than 1,500 appreciation packs that featured gift cards and coupons to Buffalo Wild Wings, virus-prevention branded face masks, and other essentials to lift spirits, boost morale, and spread the new team brand across installations in the region.

The effort extended to Joint Base Andrews, Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, Fort Lee, United States Coast Guard Headquarters, Fort Myer, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Fort Belvoir, Henderson Hall, Navy Yard, Marine Barracks Washington, Naval Support Activity Bethesda, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center,

Fort Eustis, Langley Air Force Base and Norfolk Naval Base.

Washington Football personalities hosted virtual interviews, while the First Ladies of Football hosted virtual challenges at each installation, connecting and engaging with each military member and dependent who stopped at the booth. The team considered the opportunity a privilege and thanked each installation for the opportunity to stop on base. Additionally, the team wanted to thank the USO of Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore and USO Hampton Roads and Central Virginia for allowing these connections to happen.





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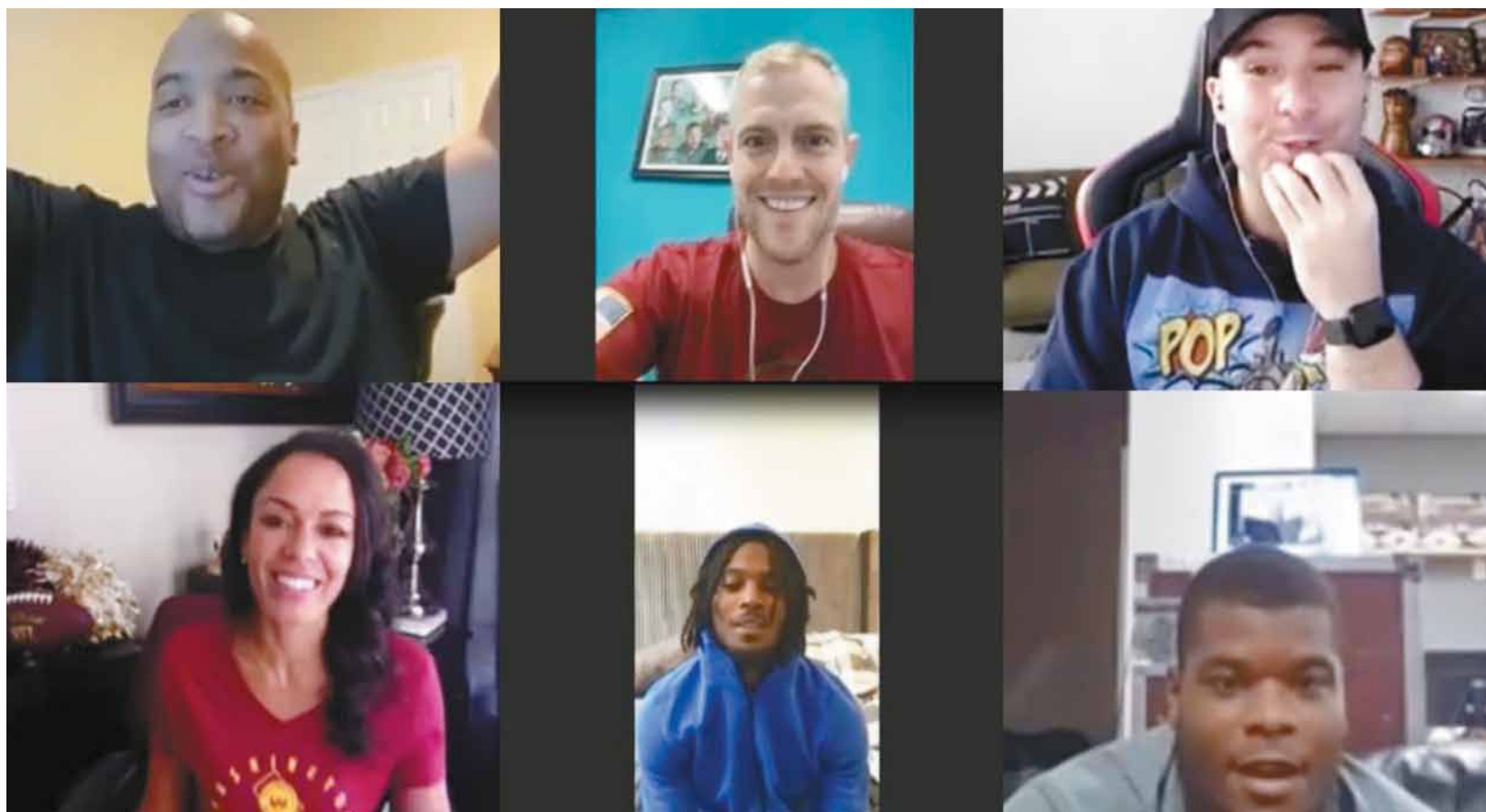
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Washington Salute hosts virtual gaming exhibition with Wounded Warrior Project

By Logan Campbell

Washington Salute teamed up with Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) to host a virtual gaming exhibition Oct. 27, kicking off the NFL's Salute to Service initiative to honor, empower and connect service members, veterans and their families.

Washington Football Team players Kamren Curl and Saahdiq Charles competed against the Warriors virtually in four EA Madden exhibition matches.

Co-host Alec LaCorazza, Washington's military liaison, has been getting creative by coming up with different ways to connect Washington's coaches and players with servicemen and women from the safety and comfort of their homes.

"Since Coach Rivera jumped on board in January... [he] has pressed me time and time again to make November special," LaCorazza said, "and this is one few things we can do."

Beth Schmidt, the Washington, D.C. alumni manager for WWP, introduced the three

warriors who participated in the event. First was Michael Carrasquillo, who is the peer support group leader out of Frederick, Maryland, followed by his co-leader, King Smith, who has helped warriors connect with resources and each other, and John Rego, the warrior leader in Delaware who is a longtime Washington fan.

Natalie Wooley, an outreach specialist in Richmond, Virginia, was a big part of the gaming initiative for WWP. The novel coronavirus forced Wooley and others to brainstorm for eight months on ways to keep the warriors engaged.

"Gaming is the medium that brings a lot of our warriors together," Wooley said, "because they utilize it to overcome the PTSD, the anxiety, the struggles they go through because it's that brief second in time for an hour that they can be with other people and take their mind off of it."

The warriors were able to share their stories while games were being played. Carrasquillo was ambushed and shot five times as he was helping a fellow infantry man when a bullet ricocheted off his gun and took off his finger.

"I have the physical wounds of war, but I also deal with the invisible wounds: the PTSD, the depression and the isolation, Carrasquillo said. "Again, Wounded Warrior Project has been a huge part of my recovery allowing me to be with other warriors and know that I'm not alone and that I'm going through this with so many others. ...It's been vital to my recovery for sure."

Rego, who served in multiple tours as an airborne ranger, was in a building that was hit with an artillery round during his final tour, resulting in him being buried alive by the building. He was introduced to WWP after undergoing nearly 40 surgeries, and the organization changed his life for the better.

"They've done amazing things for me," he said. "They've kind of helped me reevaluate myself as no longer being just an injured veteran, but also help me figure out who the real me is. It has had such a positive impact on me and my life and has offered me the opportunity to help out other people in my area and work with other veterans who are in that process of transitioning out."



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& TUSKEGEE AIRMAN GENERAL CHARLES MCGEE

OCT. 29

11AM - 12PM

WITH



HONOR. EMPOWER. CONNECT.

Jason Wright, Doug Williams sit down with Tuskegee Airman in honor of Salute to Service Month

By Alec LaCorazza

Washington Salute celebrated Salute to Service Month and the 75th Anniversary of the end of World War II on Oct. 29 with a virtual Connecting Generations Discussion that featured 100-year-old Tuskegee Airman Brig. Gen. Charles McGee, Washington Football Team President Jason Wright and Super Bowl champion and Senior Vice President of Player Development Doug Williams.

The hour-long discussion was hosted by Washington personality GeNienne Samuels, who kicked things off by explaining what connected the three panelists. Yes, the event was set up to celebrate Salute to Service Month and the 75th Anniversary of the end of World War II. Yes, Williams' father served in World War II and Wright's grandfather-in-law served as a strike navigator in the Korean and Vietnamese wars. And yes, they were both in the presence of one of the greatest American heroes in history (both in war and in the civil rights movement).

However, Samuels made sure to acknowledge

that McGee was not the only "trailblazer" for people of color on the panel. All three men share one gleaming trait: they have opened doors for people of color with their professional accomplishments, leaving legacies that will extend much longer than they could ever imagine.

"We're here to celebrate three men representing different generations, different experiences, bravery of different breeds in a year that has consisted of milestones in the fight for racial equality, addressing adversity, and progression for African Americans," Samuels said. "So, today we're happy to talk about our connections, our adversities, and continued progress."

Introductions

Jason Wright -- the NFL's first African American team president -- was honored and privileged to be on a panel with men who have paved the way for him as an executive leader. It was difficult for Wright to talk about the adversity men faced to give him the opportunities he has today.

Doug Williams -- the first African American quarterback to win a Super Bowl with

Washington in 1992 -- was excited to participate being the son of a World War II veteran. Williams' adversities extend back to growing up in southern Louisiana -- about 35 miles from the birth location of the KKK -- where he regularly saw burning crosses on each end of his all-black neighborhood. He emphasized how grateful he was to have seen progress with the organization and NFL, as well as public perspective. Bobby Mitchell became the first African American to play for the franchise in 1962, and about 25 years later, Williams was preparing for Super Bowl XXII with Mitchell, then a team executive. Super Bowl coverage questioned if Washington had the best team in the NFL because its quarterback was black, but now the league celebrates social justice. It even kicked off the 2020 season with a battle between the two highest-paid black quarterbacks in Patrick Mahomes and Deshaun Watson.

Brigade General Charles McGee -- one of the last living members of the Tuskegee Airmen -- understood the importance of talking about

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the mistreatment of him and his fellow Tuskegee aviators, but his 12-minute opening remarks detailed a career and life full of hope, perseverance, and meaning. With no sincere anger or contempt about the treatment he experienced, Brig. Gen. Charles McGee was more interested in discussing the importance of the golden rule -- teaching the youth and the next generation about hope and civility -- and his lifelong mantra, "the four P's": perceive, prepare, perform, and persevere. With a life dedicated to teaching the youth, McGee was proud he and fellow airmen were able to disprove the military study suggesting African Americans were not capable of operating airfare and change the perception about the capabilities of black people.

"Perceive: Understand yourself, know what you want, do what you love, and follow your dreams. Prepare: Get a good education. Far too often our education system is failing our youth, so it's all of our responsibility to teach, set examples, boost those that need it. Perform: No matter what you decide to do, be the best at whatever you decide to pursue. Freedom comes in the form of being the best version of who you'd like to be. Persevere: Don't ever let

anyone tell you you can't do something. Those are four good starting points in teaching and mentoring our youth."

Question & Answer Session

Wright and Williams took notes every time McGee spoke. Wright was amazed by McGee's steady and consistent sense of purpose and mission despite how others treated him, so he asked where it came from. That's when McGee discussed losing his mother as an infant and how despite not having motherly guidance, he understood that life is a blessing and that those blessings come in so many different forms. It all comes down to how you react to the blessings that come your way.

Fostering Change Today

When the group was asked about what people can do to continue fostering change around the country and in their communities. Williams, who is responsible for helping develop young players, honed in on sharing his experiences, telling his own stories and standing tall in the face of adversity.

Wright, taking everything he had learned from the discussion, identified two characteristics in McGee and Williams that made them impactful. They both were committed to being the best at what they loved to do, and their hard work and commitment put them in

position to open doors for the people behind them. Then they took the opportunity to mentor younger generations coming up and talking about their experiences. "Seemingly, it's the recipe for impact, change, and perspective," Wright said.

Concluding Remarks

As the event came to a close, the group was asked to provide 1-2-sentence answers about how our youth can stand tall and continue to progress today. Williams lives by the mantra he's always followed: be resilient. It's easy to throw in the towel, but possibilities will be endless if our country's youth refrain from quitting. Wright urged people to understand that the "deep love for our country and our military and the desire to see our nation evolve into a greater state of justice are not at odds with one another. They're all a part of the same vision for the American idea." McGee emphasized the importance of being prepared and understanding that the steps it takes to get to where you want will never be easy, but they're accessible if we help our youth reach them.


Washington Salute would like to extend a warm thank you to Friends of the World War II Memorial for allowing us to sit down and talk with McGee. It was a pleasure, and we hope to host him at a game very soon!




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**Salute to Service
Game Gallery**
**New York Giants vs
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NOV. 10

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Salute To Service: Ron Rivera and Alex Smith sit down with Walter Reed patients

By Kyle Stackpole

Washington Football Team head coach Ron Rivera and quarterback Alex Smith virtually sat down with patients from the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Nov. 10 as part of the NFL's Salute to Service Month.

Rivera and Smith, both of whom have ties to the military, spoke to service members from the Military Advanced Training Center (MATC), Murtha's Cancer Center and In-Patient Care Unit. The hour-long event, which was hosted by Washington Football personality and former cheerleader GeNienne Samuels, included a lengthy discussion with Rivera and a Q&A session with Smith, who will make his first start in nearly two years Sunday against the Lions.

Rivera and Smith have had long, successful NFL careers, but their strength and perseverance through distressful situations allows them to relate to those who have made sacrifices to protect our country.

Rivera, who grew up in a military family, recently finished treatment for squamous cell carcinoma, which is a form of skin cancer. Going through 35 proton radiation treatments and three chemotherapy cycles was tough, Rivera said, but he kept telling himself "I've got this" throughout the process. That mindset allowed him to take care of himself while developing a young and promising football team. In fact, Rivera only missed two practices and coached every game.

Just as Rivera can relate to patients at Murtha's Cancer Center, Smith went through a similar recovery process as those rehabbing at the Military Advanced Training Center (MATC).

"We actually use a Sports Medicine Rehabilitation model for a lot of our injured troops,"

said Steve Springer, a registered nurse in the department. "On average, they tend to be in their mid-20s. A lot of them were very active prior to injury, and we really focus on getting them back to maximum function and we focus on not what they're missing...but actually what they can do, and we try to return them to sports, active duty, whatever they really want to continue on with the rest of their life."

Springer said they primarily take care of amputees, and that was almost Smith's fate after suffering a gruesome broken leg and subsequent infection in 2018. His injury was deemed "war-like enough" that he received clearance from the Secretary of Defense to rehab at a military center. Over the next two years, Smith traveled to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio on three separate occasions for consultation about his healing process. While there, he paid his respects to amputees and burn victims at the Center for the Intrepid.

Throughout his remarkable recovery, Smith followed the mantra "Just live," which is about embracing everything life brings -- the good, bad and in between -- and being present in those moments. It can be easy to shy away from tough times, Smith said, but being able to push through those adversities can lead to miraculous progress.

Rivera sees that resiliency in wounded warriors, which is why he cannot wait to visit them around the Washington Metropolitan Area once everything goes back to normal. Rivera interacted with a lot of wounded warriors in his eight-plus seasons in Carolina, including one who was particularly inspiring.

Rivera first learned about then Sgt. First Class Cedric King through his military and coaching connections in 2012. It just so happened the

Carolina Panthers were playing in Washington that season and King was a Walter Reed patient, so before the game, Rivera invited King to speak to his players at the team hotel. King, who lost both legs in Afghanistan, was a month removed from being in a coma.

"During Salute to Service month, we had Cedric come [to Carolina] and he banged on the ["Keep Pounding"] drum for us," said Rivera, who has a large framed photo of the moment in his office. "It really is one of my favorite moments with the Salute to Service -- it really, truly is -- because he's such a neat man, he really is. Like I said, we've become friends and we text and visit and talk on the phone and he comes and sees us at practice and he'll speak to the team. That's one of the things that I really, truly do look forward to."

That conversation changed the fortunes of both King and the Panthers. Now a retired Master Sgt., King has run the Boston Marathon several times and completed numerous half marathons. The Panthers, meanwhile, won three straight division titles and appeared in Super Bowl 50.

Rivera is striving to build a similar culture with Washington, and honoring the military will be a significant part of doing so.

"To me it's very special, and if there's any opportunity for us to recognize our military folks, and not just the men and women who serve but the spouses and the dependents because from my perspective, just knowing what it can mean to a child, knowing that your parent in the military, that's really big," Rivera said. "I try to make sure that if there's an opportunity to do something to give back, I most certainly want to be there to show our support."

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Julie Donaldson, Coach Rivera, And Jason Wright surprise ROTC students with accolades

By Alec LaCorazza

Washington Football Team President Jason Wright, head coach Ron Rivera and SVP of Media and Content Julie Donaldson surprised three deserving cadets in Howard University's 130th US Air Force ROTC Detachment. In celebration of the NFL's Salute to Service Month, the executive team worked with ROTC Commanders in setting up a virtual meet and greet with three exceptional students that have demonstrated ROTC core values and characteristics.

The cadets were invited to the virtual meet-and-greet with Washington executives under the impression they would be talking about their experience in the ROTC program and possibly identify opportunities for the team to enhance the program in coming seasons. What the cadets didn't know is that Rivera, Donaldson, and Wright were going to reward them for academic excellence and act as a milestone for their educational and professional careers.

Julie Donaldson Informs Javon Price He's Been Selected To Be Cadet Wing Commander

Javon Price is a senior at Georgetown University studying Foreign Politics with a focus in Security Studies. Holding numerous leadership roles within the university, Price is

the Campus Ambassador at Georgetown for the Institute of Politics and Public Service. Prior to joining the ROTC, Price was formerly enlisted in the Air Force for four years and decided to go back to school. Price is focused on setting an example for other people of color that are dedicated

to public service and serving their country.

Although the virtual event was meant to be a surprise for all three cadets, Price had mentioned in his introduction that he had already been told privately he would be taking command as the newest Cadet Wing Commander. This position puts Price in charge of planning and executing training for all 93 cadets in his detachment. Howard University's 130th Detachment includes students from American University, Catholic University, George Washington University, Georgetown University, Marymount University, Trinity University and the University of the District of Columbia.

Donaldson was happy to congratulate the young man on all of his success. Price was also praised by Wright on Price's determination to put himself in uncomfortable situations.

Ron Rivera Rewards Luke Lynch With Commander's Scholarship For Excellence

Luke Lynch, a sophomore from American University, is a Public Health major on a premedical track to become a Combat Rescue Officer in the United States Air Force. Lynch is currently serving as an EMT at American University and prides himself on taking everything he learned from the ROTC into the ambulance with him. Lynch chose the ROTC program in remembrance of his time spent as a public servant with his late father at a local soup kitchen growing up. Aside from leading his detachment in training efforts for Public Health and Safety, he believes his greatest accomplishment was his participation in efforts to increase diversity and inclusion within ROTC and the USAF.

Rivera asked Lynch about his goals after college, and he laid out a wide variety of military related avenues in the medical field, including medical school and combat rescue. After hearing about his aspirations, Rivera surprised him with the 2020 Commander's Scholarship for Excellence, which is worth up to \$18,000 a year.

Jason Wright Surprises Cadet Nnamdi Olebara With United States Air Force ROTC HBCU Scholarship

The final participant, Nnamdi Olebara, attends Howard University and prides himself as a student-athlete on the Howard University football team and track & field team. Olebara's superior officers describe him as tenacious and willing to outwork his peers for overall excellence. Olebara has a 4.0 GPA and balances his student-athlete responsibilities with working part-time. His background as an ROTC Air Force student in high school brought him many early successes and opportunities, and he has aspirations to become CEO of a Fortune 500 Company.

Wright was excited to inform Olebara that he was a recipient of the United States Air Force ROTC HBCU Scholarship, which covers full tuition for the rest of Olebara's academic career at any HBCU. Olebara expressed excitement and relief, telling the group he had originally been accepted to West Point but chose Howard to participate in athletics with a desire to earn the scholarship.

The Washington Football Team thanks Howard University United States Air Force ROTC program for allowing the organization to be a part of these special moments.



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