



WARRIOR FOR LIFE

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LEN LEE, LAURIE WOOD & DEAN NEWCOMB

'THIS PROGRAM SAVED MY LIFE'



THE WARRIOR FOR LIFE FUND IS USING HOCKEY TO SUPPORT VETERANS WHO ARE STRUGGLING IN THEIR POST-COMBAT LIVES

BY KEN CAMPBELL

BEING A FORMER PLAYER and coach and current hockey historian, Steve Hardy knows the importance of a clean draw. And given that he has mobility and balance issues, he knew it would be a challenge to perform what he called "a Kevin Collins-worthy puck drop." So even though it was only a ceremonial opening faceoff, Hardy practised for weeks in his garage, working diligently to get the puck to slap down flat.

On the day of the Nate Hardy Memorial Game last December, he was ready. But just as Hardy was about to drop the puck, somebody asked for more pictures. That threw him off, and he subsequently lost his balance, resulting in "the worst drop in the history of hockey." Luckily, Ray Bourque feathered the puck on his stick, picked it up

and handed it to Hardy. "And I say to him, 'Ray, if I were a linesman, I'd be fired,'" Hardy said. "And he looks at me and says, 'Yes, you would.'"

Steve Hardy is a Gold Star Father. It's a designation you accept with dignity, grace and respect, but it's also one nobody wants. Gold Star Families are made up of immediate family members who've lost a loved one in the line of military duty. Hardy and his wife had three sons. Their oldest, Josh, died of a brain tumor at 18, and, on Feb. 4, 2008, U.S. Navy SEAL and chief petty officer Nate Hardy was part of a raid on a terrorist compound in Baghdad. The first SEAL to enter the building, chief petty officer Michael Koch, was killed with a precision shot to the head. Nate Hardy was close behind, and he died instantly after being shot twice. He and Koch are buried side by side at Arlington National Cemetery. Nate Hardy, whose grandfather fought with John

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