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Memorial Day Veteran-Specific Adaptive Climb Deemed Major Success

Boulder, CO – Despite harsh weather conditions and a last-minute change of plans, the Veteran-Specific Adaptive Climb was hailed as a resounding success by all who attended over Memorial Day weekend. The four-day expedition consisted of an 18-mile trek across the Enchantment Lakes Traverse, a high alpine basin comprised of lakes and granite peaks approximately 15 miles southwest of Leavenworth, Washington. This was the first of three scheduled Veteran-Specific Adaptive Climbs that Paradox Sports will sponsor this year.

The team was comprised of four veterans with diverse backgrounds, injuries and levels of experience. Among them was 1st Lt. Chris Perreault, who was seriously injured during an insurgent attack in Afghanistan. The trip marked a major recovery milestone for Perreault.

“It’s a coincidence that I’m going on the one-year anniversary of my accident, but I think it’s a good way to culminate my recovery,” said Perreault.

Joining Perreault, was experienced climber Chad Jukes, a 29-year-old who had his right leg below the knee removed after an IED detonated underneath his security convoy in Northern Iraq. Jukes was one of the 11 veterans featured in *High Ground*, an award-winning documentary about their 20,000-foot ascent of a Himalayan Peak. Fellow veterans John Masters and Manny Jimenez accompanied Jukes and Perreault as they headed to Washington with the goal of summiting Mt. Rainier, a 14,411-foot volcano southeast of Seattle.

However, six feet of snow over the holiday weekend drove the group to the eastern side of the Pacific Crest, where they would spend three nights hiking through the Enchantments. It was later revealed that no one would summit Mt. Rainier in the following two weeks due to unforgiving weather. Despite wet sleeping bags, driving winds, a couple of navigational errors and sopping wet socks, the team persevered to finish the 18-mile Enchantment Traverse.

“The opportunity to get active outside was a wonderful chance to enjoy the beautiful sights that are out of the way and I would otherwise never have made a destination,” said Masters, a 29-year-old retired Army Ranger who lost part of his right hand to an IED.

A support team of experienced mountaineers, including Justin Davis, Frank Huster, Dan Aylward and Paradox Sports board member Rob Coppolillo volunteered their guiding services.

“My dad was a vet, my grandfather was a vet and my sister works at a hospital with vets, but this was my first time working with them directly,” said Coppolillo. “We finished the Enchantment Traverse in high spirits. Good group, fun time, tough weather, but we were psyched on completing a long circuit in harsh conditions.”

Following their success in the Enchantments, the team headed to Seattle to visit one of the country’s best and most well known climbing gyms, Vertical World. The rock gym was especially challenging for 23-year-old Jimenez, a high left shoulder amputee who was injured while serving as a squad leader in Afghanistan when an IED detonated. Thanks to the positive support network provided by his newfound comrades, he completed four routes in the gym that day, a huge milestone for Jimenez considering this was his first time climbing since his accident.

“Out of everything we did during the week, what fun to be on the other end of the rope when Manny slapped the chains,” said Coppolillo.

This was the second adaptive expedition featuring veteran athletes organized by Paradox Sports. The program was launched on Sept. 11, 2012 with the ascent of the 13,770-foot Grand Teton in Wyoming with disabled Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, including amputees. Paradox Sports will sponsor two more Veteran-Specific Adaptive Climbs this year, including the Grand Teton on Veteran’s Day and various formations such as El Capitan in Yosemite National Park on Sept. 11.

“Working with veterans is a big part of our roots,” said Tim O’Neill, executive director of Paradox Sports who co-founded the organization in 2007 with DJ Skeleton, an Army captain who was injured in Fallujah, Iraq. “Our first clinic was in conjunction with the Walter Reed Medical Center in D.C.”

This program was made possible through grants received by Marmot, as well as various donors who wish to remain anonymous. Paradox Sports would also like to thank Second Ascent for donating rental gear and the generous, hard-working guides who made this trip a success.

Participation in this program is open to all veterans. For more information or to register for the upcoming climbs, please visit <http://paradoxsports.org/programs/veterans-climbs>.

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Paradox Sports is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that improves people’s lives by creating an adaptive sport community built to inspire. More information can be found at www.paradoxsports.org, or on their [Facebook](#) page.