



THE LONG GAME

Pilot **Mikael Dubois** claims top honors at first-ever televised military World Long Drive

By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ

There is golf...and then there is extreme golf. Former Air Force pilot and current Arizona Air Force National Guard Major Mikael Dubois connected for a 326-yard drive on his eighth and final ball to win the Military Division final of the World Long Drive (WLD) competition, the first time that a division of long drive hitters represented by military service members competed live on television, reaching the Golf Channel's global audience.

"It was an awesome experience to be able to showcase our skills with some great military competitors alongside the best World Long Drive professionals," Dubois told *Salute*. "The

support of local communities, a professional tour like WLD, and the wonderful sponsors are great for the military community. I was able to see firsthand the support with Long Drive for Heroes, which is a platform that provides awareness of PTSD of veterans by utilizing professional/veteran Long Drive competitors."

The May event—the inaugural "Celebrating Service: Fort Jackson," at the Army installation outside of Columbia, S.C.—was the result of a partnership between the World Long Drive Association, IMCOM and AAFES. The event began with the Army Golden Knights aerial parachute demonstration team landing on the Fort Jackson Golf Club hitting grid and featured active, reserve and retired military service members

competing alongside WLD competitors.

Dubois outlasted fellow Air Force service member Tyler Jeffers to win the competition, a victory that came just three months ahead of his August deployment to Afghanistan. Unfortunately, that deployment meant Dubois will be unable to compete in the Volvik World Long Drive Championship in September, but he says he will definitely compete in future events. "Most



Winner Mikael Dubois

certainly, this whole experience has been absolutely incredible!" he says. "Being able to compete out there on the WLD alongside the best of the best is exhilarating, something I could have never imagined. One of the coolest parts of the whole experience was having the pros I have only read about and watched on TV, as well as members of the WLD and Golf Channel, come up and congratulate me and say thank you for your service. It was a great feeling!"

Dubois says a highlight of the event was praise from Golf Channel/NBC sports analyst David Feherty, known for his "Feherty's Troops First" foundation. "Having a giant in the golf industry, David Feherty, a huge military supporter, out there interacting with the soldiers at Fort Jackson, supporting us competitors, and doing the announcing, is a huge boost to morale," Dubois says, adding, "It helped my personal morale by Feherty saying I had a nice swing! It all promotes a healthy lifestyle and sense of resiliency for military members and their families. It is so cool to see and feel the support of everyone out there."

The golf bug bit Dubois at an early age. "I started playing golf when I was three with my dad in Port Arthur, Texas. I loved being at the golf course, and you could find me there until dark most days," he recalls. "I played golf

all through high school and was recruited to the Air Force Academy to play golf and chase my dream to be a pilot."

Dubois graduated from the Academy and went to Laughlin AFB for undergraduate pilot training, receiving his "wings" in 2006. His active duty responsibilities included flying C-21s at Peterson AFB in Colorado Springs, Colo., the E-3 AWACS at Tinker AFB in Oklahoma City, as well as various deployments to the Middle East. He currently flies a KC-135 for the Arizona Air National Guard in Phoenix, and also serves as a first

officer for Southwest Airlines. He and his wife, Kara, live in Phoenix with their two children, five-year-old daughter, Carsyn, and three-year-old son, Hudson, as well as pup Waldo.

"My wife and I are both competitive people, and I haven't had that competitive feeling in golf since college," Dubois says of the decision to attempt the WLD contest. "These events bring those competitive juices out, while doing something I completely have a blast doing: hitting a golf ball. I have always been interested in long drive, and followed the competitions over the years. When I saw WLD announce the Fort Jackson competition with a military division, I was super excited. Having been out of it for years, I couldn't wait to get back into competitive mode."

"It was an honor to be able to represent the service men and women who are currently deployed in such an amazing event, and to be able to represent my home unit, the 161 Air Refueling Wing, Phoenix Air National Guard," Dubois adds. "As a golfer, who just happens to hit it far, it's an awesome feeling and an accomplishment. My Pops—who was able to make it out there with me, which was a great experience—always told me, 'It's not how far, it's how many.' Now I can officially say, *it is how far!*" 