

Over the past week 70 disabled British military veterans and their families (100 including 58 children) went to Israel to participate in the 2022 Veteran Games – three days of swimming, marksmanship and CrossFit-inspired athletics against their Israeli counterparts, with touring in the afternoons. The Games were held at Tel Aviv's Beit Halochem, a campus in the north of the city that's run for and typically by wounded Israel Defense Forces veterans.

The Veterans, all of whom had some form of disability from their military service, pushed themselves to the limit during the games and the atmosphere was unquestionably incredibly welcoming and friendly. "The atmosphere here is electric," said Leo Docherty, the UK's parliamentary under-secretary of state for defense people and veterans, who came to Israel for the games.

During the Games, there was a Mental Health Conference led by Sir Simon Wessely, with 20+ leading medical professionals, sharing research and findings regarding mental health, and various current research including treatment and outcomes.

It was truly special to see how we can all help make a difference. Bringing the greatness of people together to be stronger, especially to honour those who serve and have served.

We at Patron are so proud to be part of sponsoring an event that has a lasting effect on improving the lives of all people involved. The Veteran Games encompasses all that Patron believes in:

- **Creating positive change**
- **Providing support where life prospects are impaired and empower individuals whose life prospects have become impaired to achieve their potential, and**
- **Reaching out to break down barriers and promote understanding.**

The Veteran Charities involved included The Not Forgotten Association, The RMA – The Royal Marines Charity, RAF Benevolent Fund, Veterans Foundation, Rock2Recovery, Veteran Scotland, Combat Stress, Help for Heroes, & AJEX.

Please find below a few of the many testimonials from the British Veterans.

Any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Aim high! Change the world!



Participants Testimonials

Dear Keith,

I am currently emailing my sincere thanks around to everyone involved in creating what I call "a week in Heaven". Heaven being the closest thing to perfection. As I try to digest the love, togetherness friendships, support and resilience shown during the recent Veteran Games.

There are so many words to describe how awe-inspiring my trip had been. I'd like to start by apologising for not speaking to you during the games. I struggle with my confidence and anxiety and unfortunately for me it holds me back.

Like most I was seriously injured, blown up twice in six weeks. I was negligently misdiagnosed on the ground in Afghanistan with a broken neck and continued commanding for a further six weeks until I was hit by another IED that sadly brought my life to a standstill.

After awaking from a coma with serious life changing injuries I was left on the scrap heap and became isolated. From there I began hating myself and lost trust in people. Charities refused to help me, my Regiment also. I was their most seriously injured soldier but nothing, no support.

I had to learn to walk again, by myself. Same as my brain injury. I had minimal rehabilitation for injuries described in Headly Court by the doctors as worse than losing my legs. I received no resettlement after serving 12 years and became lost in the system. I have faced employment discrimination and found it neon impossible to find a job and showcase my skills.

I hated my life; I couldn't understand why I was left on my own to rot.

I was forced to share my story through writing after several failed suicide attempts. Against the odds and even though my story was blacklisted I was finally heard, and life began to change. People wanted to help.

In 2019 I released my story, called Broken By War. It began inspiring people to reach out for help. Marriages were saved, people understood. Children began raising money for charities. And one young individual so inspired by me, won ITVs Good Morning Britain Young Loneliness Award.

I should have been proud, but I wasn't. In fact, I was still Broken. I wanted support; I was desperate to be part of the military community again. I never blamed the system for my treatment or regretted my service.

I was contacted by The Not Forgotten Association in late 2019 thanks to someone who had read my story. The Not Forgotten Association took me under their care. They supported me and showed me a kindness I had been longing for.

Then, at short notice in April I was invited to The Veteran Games, very unprepared but willing to give it my best shot. I arrived petrified, my anxiety and CPTSD through the roof. The athletes were much bigger than me and left me feeling intimidated. However, come the end of the Games I left feeling as big as the other athletes. I had seen bonds made, stories shared, and huge amounts of love and support offered.

I returned home smiling, humbled, and flawed by your everyone's kindness and professionalism. This would not have been possible without you and all the other sponsors.

In just a few days' time it's my thirteenth anniversary, every year I sink into a suicidal mind frame as the memories of my lost friends during my service begin to haunt me. I witnessed five die and carried two of their coffins. I survived two ieds, they didn't. It eats me up and although none of this was my fault it still eats me up.

After returning from Israel more confident and with a clearer look on life, I now feel strong enough to fight on for another day. I will defeat the pain that destroys my mind every year and overcome the pain I suffer from my injuries. I will now be a better father and a loving husband.

I want to move on. I want to succeed in life. Before the games I didn't.

Thank you so much for showing myself and every other veteran including the Israeli veterans that there is still hope in this crazy but wonderful world.

If there's ever an opportunity to return, I will be back and I will look you in the eyes and say thank you and I will win a medal.

Dear Keith,

Just wanted to say a personal Thank you for your support of the Veterans Games, the week was just such an amazing event from start to finish and will never be forgotten.

Myself and the Veterans and their families we supported to attend are just bowled over by Israel and all the people we have met.

From the moment we arrived until leaving, we were overwhelmed by all we saw and everyone we met. We just felt the love and passion that everyone gave, and Israel was just beautiful in so many ways.

So thank you for your personal message before we arrived and taking the time to be introduced to our Veterans at the Closing ceremony. It has been an absolute Joy from start to finish, and I am sure there are a hundred or more stories to share from this event. But I thought I would share one personal story today just to give an impression of how your sponsorship can impact and has shaped new lives for those attending.

So Clive Jones who you spoke to at the closing ceremony (who is totally Blind) has not swam for over 17yrs, he decided he needed to get in the pool and be part of it all and after a very big deep breath he did participate in 50 metre freestyle and won a medal. He has just talk to me today about finding out about the local swimming pool opening times is now planning to get wet regularly!!

So now not only can he be an archery champion, but he now has a new hobbie to help get his fitness levels back up,

So as I say a Huge Thank you goes to all who helped sponsor this incredible event, and I hope you don't mind but I know Clive wants to email you himself to say Thank you,

Dear Keith,

I trust this finds you safe and well. It was lovely to meet you on Thursday at the closing ceremony in the Perez centre.

It was lovely to talk with you and I was grateful for you sharing your memories of your dad. I would like to tell you a little bit about myself, I was blinded in 2000 in an unprovoked and somewhat savage attack whilst serving in the Welsh Guards. I was attacked from behind by another serving soldier who was later diagnosed with Paranoid Schizophrenia. Due to the injuries sustained I had to have my right eye removed in 2012 and I am due to have my left removed this year. I would like to think that I am coping quiet well under the circumstances.

I cannot thank you enough for sponsoring the Veterans Games it has made a massive impact not only on me but my wife and son as well. We were all unaware just how beautiful the country is and how lovely the people are. I thoroughly enjoyed the trip to Jerusalem, Temple mount and the Holy sepulchre church as I have always been interested in the crusades and anything masonic and visiting the heart of it was just remarkable.

The whole week has inspired me in so many ways and has even helped me to get back in the pool, this was the first time I'd been anywhere near a swimming pool in 12 years due to losing my confidence in the water. It was hard to get back into the pool but I am so glad that I did.

As I mentioned my love is Archery. I am the current indoor and outdoor British Blind Sport (BBS) national champion and I am also on the Great Britain blind team. It's a sport that I love and wherever I shoot I need the assistance of a spotter which is the only way I can shoot safely, however it does prove to be very expensive for the archer. As of yet blind archery is not a Paralympic sport and therefore receives no official funding. The six archers which make up the team have to fund themselves and their spotters participation. I have just returned from Dubai for the World Championships and I am flying out to Rome at the end of July for the European championships.

I have attached a few pictures to show how a blind archer shoots. Keith once again it was wonderful to meet you and I have already spoke to Spencer about doing a little fundraising for Beit Halochem UK so that others may receive the positivity that the Veterans Games has given me.

I hope to be in your company once again in the future, until then take care, please send my warmest regards to your family.