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AT&T National Kicks Off With Military Salute

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By **Samantha L. Quigley/American Forces Press Service**

MARYLAND, July 2, 2008 - They may not be on the pro tour yet, but two military children got a taste of the big time when they helped pro golfer Fred Couples kick off the second AT&T National at Congressional Country Club here today.

Jeffrey Dahl, 9, of New Jersey and Margaret Rollins, 13, of Virginia, teed up with Couples to hit the ceremonial "shot from around the world" to conclude the opening ceremonies and officially start the week's tournament-related events.

The two were excited about the opportunity as they waited for their 15 minutes of fame. Jeffrey, whose father, New Jersey Air National Guardsman Maj. Thomas Jeffery Dahl, is serving in Pakistan, had even set a goal for the day.

"I want to hit it straight and far," Jeffrey said. "Probably my best drive is about 135 yards."

Their waiting ended when the golf balls they were about to send into the wild blue yonder arrived from the very same place. Five members of the 101st Airborne Division's Screaming Eagle Parachute Demonstration Team carried the golf balls with them as they jumped onto the course.

Nike Golf had shipped drivers and golf balls to military installations in Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, Iraq, Afghanistan and the USS Harry S. Truman. A servicemember on each installation and the ship took a swing and sent the balls back to the tournament, where Jeffrey, Margaret and Couples sent them flying once more.

For Margaret, whose father, Army Sgt. Tyrone M. Rollins, is deployed to California, that was the highlight of her experience at Congressional, which is saying something considering her first impressions.

"When I first got here I loved it. I just fell in love with it. I was like, 'Oh, my gosh! This is not like the local golf club,'" she said. "It's not every day you get to play here."

Jeffrey and Margaret were just two of the 20 military kids representing the "Our Military Kids" organization who were honored during the event. Each has a parent deployed or who recently returned from deployment.

Our Military Kids provides support to the children of deployed and severely injured National Guard and military reserve personnel through grants for enrichment activities and tutoring.

"The children are having a wonderful time," said Linda Davidson, Our Military Kids co-founder. "They're very excited about the opportunity to be here, and I think it's a great way to recognize them."

In fact, they seemed to be having the time of their lives when they met the members of the Screaming Eagles and got to climb into the team's 1974-model UH-1H helicopter.

The children weren't the only honorees enjoying themselves. The Wounded Warriors Project hosted several injured servicemembers recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center here.

One of those soaking up the ambiance said the day was a blast for all of them.

"They're just ecstatic to be out here," said Dan Nevins, a former soldier. "[For] a lot of the guys, this is the furthest they've been away from the hospital since they've been hurt. They're just out here to enjoy the weather, enjoy the game, enjoy the golf, enjoy the hospitality."

He knows of what he speaks, too. Nevins, who now works for the PGA Tour, deployed to Iraq in January 2004 with his National Guard unit. The soldier was injured Nov. 10 that year when a homemade bomb exploded under his vehicle as his unit was heading out on a mission.

"It got my legs," he said. "The other three guys in the truck, they got their bell rung pretty good, but they were fine."

This is the kind of sacrifice the AT&T National honors, he said. Tiger Woods, who grew up in a military family, hosts the tournament.

The military honors will continue as each day of the tournament is dedicated to a branch of the armed forces. Today the recognition went to the Coast Guard. Tomorrow, the honors go to the Air Force, with the Navy, Marine Corps and Army following on consecutive days.

Our Military Kids and the Wounded Warrior Project are supporters of America Supports You, a Defense Department program connecting citizens and companies with servicemembers and their families serving at home and abroad. AT&T is a corporate sponsor of the Defense Department program.



Jeffrey Dahl, 9, of New Jersey, left, professional golfer Fred Couples, and Margaret Rollins, 13, of Virginia hit the ceremonial first shot to open the second AT&T National golf tournament July 2, 2008, at Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Md. Both children's fathers are servicemembers, serving in Pakistan and California, respectively. Defense Dept. photo by Samantha L. Quigley



Jeffrey Dahl, 9, of New Jersey, left, professional golfer Fred Couples, and Margaret Rollins, 13, of Virginia hit the ceremonial first shot to open the second AT&T National golf tournament July 2, 2008, at Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Md. Both children's fathers are servicemembers, serving in Pakistan and California, respectively. Defense Dept. photo by Samantha L. Quigley [Download high res image](#)

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