



HELP FOR HEROES CHALLENGE MATCH

SATURDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2008 – TWICKENHAM STADIUM

By Mark Souster, *The Times*

Four months ago I was angered when I read about the disgraceful treatment of wounded servicemen undergoing rehabilitation at a public swimming baths near Headley Court. I was hugely moved by their predicament. The negative attitude of some people towards returning troops and their urgent need for the very best rehabilitation facilities made me consider what I should do to help.

The special relationship between rugby and the Armed Forces, my position as a rugby writer with *The Times* and a little bit of home grown 'can do' convinced me that rugby held the answer. What better than a rugby match at Twickenham?

I had read about 'Help for Heroes', the charity set up by Bryn Parry in Wiltshire, close to my home. 'H4H' seemed an ideal body to support so when I took a proposal to Paul Vaughan, the business affairs director at Twickenham, the RFU immediately came on-side.

Next stop was to harness the enthusiasm of former England international Simon Halliday and Adam Cocks, who recently returned from operations in Afghanistan and is now receiving treatment at Headley Court.

The outburst of support from many directions means that most of the ducks are now in a row. We are on the verge of announcing the H4H Challenge match on 20th September here at Twickenham. We know we can attract serious sponsors to support our vision and pack the stadium with people and organizations who really do care. The teams will consist of some big name players from England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland, stars from the Services and like-minded players from around the world.

The goal is £1 million to fund a specific capital project at Headley Court. This money is



for the soldiers, sailors and marines, and airmen damaged in Iraq and Afghanistan. I can assure you this is entirely non-political and is not intended in any way to make any judgment on this country's involvement in conflicts overseas.

From my daily contacts throughout the UK I know there is a massive heartfelt support for 'our boys' and a nationwide gut-feeling that we must all help. I know people care and I know that like me many want to show their appreciation for these young men and women wounded and disabled in the service of our country.

So, if individuals want to help the best way will be to buy tickets. Details of when and where these will be available will be announced soon. Meantime keep in touch with what we're doing by logging on to www.armynavymatch.org.uk and click the H4H Challenge Match link. Companies and individuals who might feel inclined to back the event on whatever scale can register their interest at www.armynavymatch.org.uk. For more information about the work of Help for Heroes please log on to www.helpforheroesrugby.org.uk



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