

Even the Mighty Can Fall



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During a TV news interview about a spring-break party where a few people were hurt, I heard someone say, “At a party of this magnitude, you have to expect some casualties.” I wasn’t at a spring-break party, but our end-of-deployment party was large, and I was the casualty.

Our squadron was overseas and celebrating the end of our det. The base had a pool with plenty of patio space for our barbecue. Of course, we had the standard alcoholic beverages available for those inclined.

I arrived a little late and drank a couple of social beers while chewing down a dried-up burger. After a quick awards ceremony, we had our standard O’s vs. E’s competition. This time it was a game of water basketball. As the game got more physical, I could see the XO starting to worry. We played four or five games, with each team holding its own.

After the games, the master chief, XO and the skipper said a few words about the success of our deployment. The speeches ended with each of them, along with a few others, being tossed into the pool. As I watched, I thought to myself that someone was going to get hurt. I could just see someone splitting his head against the side of the pool as they were being tossed in feet first. However, we got through that part of the festivities just fine.

While this was going on, I had spent my time socializing and drinking. Soon, the conversation got around to strength and weight lifting. A few of us, me included, had started lifting at the beginning of our deployment, and our strength and size had definitely increased. As we were comparing triceps and biceps, someone suggested having an arm-wrestling match. The combination of alcohol, peer

pressure, and newfound strength pushed me to enter.

We started with the right hand. The other guy had long, skinny arms, and as it turned out, strong wrists. He quickly twisted my wrist and beat me within five seconds. Feeling a little embarrassment, I quickly said, “Let’s try the left”.

This time, I got the jump on him and, using a lot of my weight to pull down his arm, won the match. After going one-for-one, the comments started flying: “Rematch!” and “I can’t believe you lost!”

By this time, both my arms were sore, and the concrete tables had scraped my elbows. A little voice inside me was saying I should quit while I was ahead. I should have listened, but peer pressure got to me, and I went for another round.

Once again, my opponent quickly had my wrist twisted backward. Being stubborn and not wanting to lose, I decided to throw my shoulder into the competition to try and swing things in my favor. When I did, I heard a loud crack (like a large branch breaking), and my arm quickly fell. I knew right away that I had broken it.

My deployment ended with my returning home a week early, very depressed and embarrassed—definitely not the homecoming I was so looking forward to.

After two operations, a metal plate, screws, some bone from my hip, lots of pain, and a year of healing, I have just begun to gain enough strength back in my arm to continue my job in the military.

If I had listened to myself, not caved in to peer pressure, and not had my judgment fuzzed by alcohol, I might have had a much better homecoming and wouldn’t have had to explain why the safety officer was wearing a cast on his arm. **#**