



**TWO DAYS BEFORE** he was to leave Iraq in '06, Army Sgt. Brian Taylor Urruela's Humvee hit a pair of roadside bombs, killing his commanding officer and severely injuring him and his comrades. After 35 unsuccessful surgeries, the life-long baseball player made the agonizing decision to have his mangled right leg amputated. He thought the worst was behind him, but a new kind of suffering soon began. "When I got out of the military, all the support was gone," says Urruela, who was diagnosed with PTSD. "I was drinking away the pain."

With therapy and a hefty dose of determination, he pulled himself out of that hole, and now he is lifting up others with him. In August 2012 Urruela and a fellow vet founded VETSports (vetsports.org), a sports league with 100 players in several cities. "Sitting home when you're having a bad day is the worst you can do," says Urruela, who lives with his girlfriend and is studying sports management in college. His work is so inspiring that readers voted him one of 30 everyday heroes through PEOPLE and Major League Baseball's Tribute for Heroes campaign. "When we come together," he says, "everyone lets their guard down, and we start to heal."

That bonding has been a game-changer for second baseman Jeremy Fore. "We sit there in the dugout sharing stories," says Fore, 41, an Army watercraft operator in Tampa who struggles with PTSD. "Being out there with Brian is amazing. It does get better."

"With each game," says Urruela (with VETSports players, left to right, Christopher Mata, Jeremy Fore and Joshua Schichtl), "our bond grows stronger."

—CAITLIN KEATING

# HEALING WAR'S SCARS WITH SPORTS

**BRIAN TAYLOR URRUELA, 27**  
 Tampa

## HELP FOR VETERANS

People  
**FIRST**

Major League Baseball and the McCormick Foundation joined forces to launch Welcome Back Veterans. The nonprofit sponsors medical-center-based outreach programs for vets suffering from PTSD and their families.  
[welcomebackveterans.org](http://welcomebackveterans.org)

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