



JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD

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News Release #091-10
July 6, 2010

Seahawks help promote Air Expo

Football players visit McChord Field 'to generate that same hype'

When: July 17-18

Time: Gates open 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. for statics, displays, and concessions
Flying demonstrations 11 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Cost: Free and open to the public

By Ingrid Barrentine/Northwest Guardian

JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD, Wash. – They really do have a lot in common. The Seattle Seahawks and the United States Air Force, that is.

Both are powerful teams made up of offensive and defensive specialists that subject their members to grueling training routines and operate in arenas in which losing is no option.

So it seemed only natural for the Air Force and National Football League to join forces on Joint Base Lewis-McChord Monday to jointly promote the Seahawks' 2010 season and the biennial JBLM Air Expo 2010 July 17 and 18.

"Their season's just about to start," said Maj. Josh Ellis, the deputy director of the Air Expo, of the Seahawks. "They've got a new coach (and) there's a lot of interest and a lot of hype for the next season. We want to generate that same hype here for our Air Expo."

Two Seahawks defenders, Josh Wilson and Jamar Adams, made the short trek from their homes in Seattle to McChord Field to mingle with Airmen aboard a static C-17 Globemaster III aircraft and to fly a C-17 in the flight simulator. Afterwards, the NFL players signed autographs at the McChord Field Base Exchange and promoted the Air Expo.

Adams, a 6-foot, 2-inch, 212-pound safety, was excited to get his hands on the Boeing simulator flight controls. His older brother has served in the Air Force for nearly 20 years and is stationed in San Antonio, Texas.

"I wanted to be in the Air Force, (too)." he said. "I wanted to fly jets — to be a fighter pilot."

That ambition changed when Adams began receiving football-scholarship offers from colleges while still a freshman in high school.

He remembered thinking that eventually, he could learn to fly a plane.

"You can't always have the opportunity to play football," he said.

Major Chris Fardell, a performer in the Air Expo and Adams' simulator co-pilot, taught the athlete flying maneuvers similar to those Fardell will fly in the Expo. After about an hour of training, Fardell let Adams take the controls solo.

"So, if the pilot gets sick on my next airline flight ... ?" Adams asked.

"You're good to go," Fardell said.

At the McChord Field BX, Adams and Wilson talked to Soldiers, Airmen and their families as they autographed team pictures and Seahawks memorabilia.

Wilson was not a stranger to military; he spent part of January 2009 on a USO tour in Iraq.

"I am so glad I went over there because I learned so much and gained (a) greater appreciation for what people in the Army, people in the Navy, people in the Air Force do," Wilson said.

"The fact that these men (and women) would do this — risk their lives to protect me — is huge," the cornerback said. "The least I can do is come out and socialize with them for a couple hours."

Major Ben Jonnson, the Air Expo director, didn't seem to mind spending most of his day escorting the professional athletes around the base.

"This gives us a chance to interact with some of the big (players) in our community," he said. "It's fun for us to talk with them and interact with them and also talk about the Expo."

While the Air Expo will not feature the new aviation skills of the "simulator-certified" Seahawks players, it will showcase the abilities of many Airmen, Soldiers and civilian stunt pilots as well as state-of-the-art aircraft.

Much like Monday's air field tour for the Seahawks, the free, two-day extravaganza gives the public a unique opportunity to see what life is like on the other side of the fence of McChord Field, Ellis said.

The Air Expo is free and open to the general public. Gates open at 8 a.m., both days, with great opportunities to see the static display aircraft and dozens of exhibits before the flying starts at 11 a.m.

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