

# The Mercury News

## **Soldiers greet families, Derby fans through satellite video**

SAMIRA JAFARI  
Associated Press

**LOUISVILLE, Ky.** - Marine Cpl. Daniel Foye is serving his second tour in Iraq, but that didn't keep him from cheering for his favorite horse during the 132nd Kentucky Derby.

Through satellite video, Foye was able to say a quick hello Saturday to his parents and wave his "Sweetnorthernstain" sign for the tens of thousands of fans at Churchill Downs.

"We're going to make a (\$10) bet for him," said his mother Janet Foye, of Lawrenceburg, sporting a white wide-brimmed hat with flowers.

Daniel Foye, 29, was one of five Kentucky servicemembers at Al Asad Air Force Base who greeted family members and Derby fans during a live video conference aired on two large screens by the winners' circle. The conference was arranged by the Freedom Calls Foundation, which has computers and telephones for video greetings at Al Asad, Camp Fallujah and Camp Taji.

Janet Foye said her son picked his horse this week after a heated discussion with his father David, a fellow track enthusiast, over the phone. But for her, the video meeting was simply a moment to make sure her son was OK.

"I'm glad they can see we support them, and not just us, but all the people here," said Janet Foye, motioning to the lively crowd at the track.

The families, who had 30-minute private video sessions with the soldiers earlier in the day, watched the races from box seats, met Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson and took pictures with Miss USA Tara Elizabeth Conner, 20, of Russell Springs.

For Lisa Godsey, though, the highlight of the Derby was having a chat with her daughter, 20-year-old Lance Cpl. Jessica Olson of Fort Mitchell. The broadcast at the winners' circle moved Godsey to tears - again.

Olson "kept saying 'Mom, don't cry,'" during their private video conversation earlier in the day, said Godsey, adding that she hadn't seen her daughter since she was deployed in January.

The other soldiers participating in the video conference were 1st Sgt. Ivory Hallmon and Pfc. Bryan Dewey, both of Radcliff, and Lance Cpl. Joshua Barker of Danville.

Freedom Calls came to the Derby after Churchill Downs officials observed military video conferences held at the annual Kentucky-Louisville basketball game, said Rob Sprang, director of Kentucky Telecare at the University of Kentucky, which helps arrange the meetings with soldiers.

Sprang said that while audiences and families enjoy a chance to greet soldiers, the events are more for the troops.

"It's nice to put a guy out on the screen," he said, "but mostly they just want to see their families. At best, they're able to e-mail each other, now they can see each other."

Freedom Calls Foundation at <http://www.freedomcalls.org>

Kentucky Telecare at <http://kytelecare.uky.edu>