

# La Salle to play DeMatha (Md.) at Navy in Memorial Game for heroes Travis Manion, Brendan Looney

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Two military heroes known for their close friendship will be honored when Philadelphia's La Salle College High plays DeMatha Catholic (Md.) on Friday, April 8 (3 p.m.) at Navy/Marine Corps Stadium in Annapolis, Md., in the inaugural Travis Manion-Brendan Looney Memorial Lacrosse Game.



Marine 1st Lt. Travis Manion, USMC, (left) with best friend LT (SEAL) Brendan Looney, USN

The contest will honor the memories of two lacrosse standouts that roomed and graduated together from the Naval Academy before defending their country overseas. They died several years apart, but last fall were laid to rest together in Arlington National Cemetery after LT (SEAL) Looney was killed in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan.

Looney's best friend, 1st Lt. Travis Manion, USMC, a 1999 graduate of La Salle, became a Marine Corps officer after graduating from the Naval Academy. He was killed by a sniper in Iraq on April 29, 2007.

Since Looney's death, the legacy of the two and how they developed an unbreakable bond has continued to touch so many.

The event, being played before a college game between Navy and Maryland (7 p.m.), will benefit the [Travis Manion Foundation](#). Donations also are being sought ([see accompanying story](#)).

“They epitomized what it means to be a leader,” said event organizer Lt. John O’Hara, who graduated with Manion at La Salle and was a friend to both at the Academy. “They truly defined the word.

“They didn’t have to say anything; people would follow them. They led by example in the way they carried themselves. I can’t speak of two greater men. They were the toughest two guys.”

Manion was a lacrosse and wrestling standout at La Salle, but only wrestled at the Naval Academy. Looney was a standout football player (wide receiver) at DeMatha and amazingly never played lacrosse full-time until his sophomore year at Navy. He eventually became a standout defensive midfielder and played for Navy in the 2004 Final Four.

The same characteristics of hard work and dedication that helped Manion and Looney become successful in athletics were evident in the military field. When Looney passed away, those who knew them decided their story needed to be told.

O’Hara said La Salle assistant coach Kevin Merlini came to him with the idea of the memorial event.

“I thought, that was an awesome idea,” said O’Hara, a company officer at the Naval Academy. “This was a sport they both loved and it’s important to both schools.

“Everything surrounding this event – the location, the sports venue – is perfect. Any time you cross state lines with two well renowned programs coming together, it creates interest.

“It’s two great programs and two great schools. Of course, I am somewhat partial, but it’s a great scenario.”

O’Hara also believes the event will shed an everlasting light on the example set by Manion and Looney. He plans on helping make the game an annual event.

“We want to make sure everyone knows how important they were and the great impact they left,” he said. “Those that didn’t know them, can now read about their story.”

O’Hara said that the friendship between Manion and Looney was legendary.

“They were almost like a comedy scene with the way they interacted,” he said. “They could finish off each other’s sentences. There was a mutual respect and you could see both were self-motivated and drove each other to be better and to expect the best from themselves.

“All donations earmarked for the event will go directly to the Foundation. Some of the donations are set aside for stadium rental and overhead merchandise. But anything beyond the expenses all go to the Foundation. Their legacy has been growing and this is an opportunity to give back.”