

Marine Sacrifices Finger to Save Wedding Ring



Photo by John Galayda/Staff Photographer
U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. David Battle Jr., 19, sits in the living room of his mother's Victorville home Saturday during a homecoming party.

VICTORVILLE, Calif. (Dec. 12) -- When Marine Lance Cpl. David Battle learned he'd either have to sacrifice his ring finger or the wedding band he wore, he told doctors at a field hospital in Iraq to cut off the finger.

The 19-year-old suffered a mangled left hand and serious wounds to his legs in a November 13 fire fight in Falluja. Battle, who is recovering at his parents' home in this desert city 80 miles northeast of Los Angeles, came under attack as he and fellow Marines entered a building. Eleven other Marines were wounded.

Doctors were preparing to cut off Battle's ring to save as much of his finger as they could.

"But that would mean destroying my wedding ring," he said. "My wife is the strongest woman I know. She's basically running two people's lives since I've been gone. I don't think I could ever repay her or show her how grateful ... how much I love my wife, my soul mate."

With his approval, doctors severed his finger, but somehow in the chaos that followed, they lost his ring.

Although Battle was disappointed, his wife, Devon, said she was honored.

"I can't believe he did that," she said. "At first I was mad when he told me, but then I realized how lucky I am to have him in my life."

The couple, who met in the eighth grade, were married in June, just two weeks before Battle left for Iraq. He hopes to eventually return to the Marines, and to replace his wedding ring, but that will have to wait until he recovers.