Lieutenant Dimitri Del Castillo, West Point Class of 2009 and a player on the West Point rugby team, was killed in action Saturday while leading his platoon in the Kunar Province of Afghanistan.

Castillo, known as "Del" by his teammates and coaches, was 24.

Del Castillo "embodied the Warrior Ethos of our rugby program, West Point, and that of the Army, and was a perfect gentlemen, especially to his beloved wife Katie," said West Point Director of Rugby Rich Pohlidal in a statement. His grace under pressure was uncanny for such

a young man- he always saw the bigger picture, never getting caught up in the moment.

"Dimitri was also tough, not just physically but mentally tough. I remember Dimitri never allowing any of his teammates to finish sprints alone, even if it meant Del doing an extra five or six sprints or hill climbs with some of our front row players. Caring for others is what he did. While he had so many God given gifts, his humility always was the first trait to come through."

Del had been awarded the Expert Infantryman's Badge (EIB) as a cadet during his summer training, a rarity for a cadet, and an accolade he didn't crow about (his coaches had to find out about it from other players). Still, he refused to wear his EIB badge on his uniform while an undergrad because, he said, "the combat vets on the team are the real experts, I'll wait to be one of them before I wear something like this in front those guys."

Del Castillo was awarded a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star, posthumously, for bravery during Saturday's action.

He was leading his unit in an area trying to clear the place of Taliban. His unit came under fire. Del Castillo radioed in air support and stayed on the radio even after he was hit. He died with the radio microphone in his hand.

He is survived by his wife, 1st LT Katie Pulliam, also a former West Point rugby player and class of 2009.