

THE FIELD REPORT

JUNE 2012

One
Special
Wish
One
Special
Agent

Soldiers, electric guitars,
California: Oh yeah

The best compete to
represent First Army

Triathlon: One officer
is out of excuses



COMPREHENSIVE SOLDIER FITNESS

STRONG MINDS ★ STRONG BODIES

Physical | Emotional | Social | Spiritual | Family

PHYSICAL



Performing and excelling in physical activities that require **aerobic fitness, endurance, strength, healthy body composition** and **flexibility** derived through exercise, nutrition and training.

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On the Cover:
Colby Pretz searches for clues during a special Criminal Investigative Division course. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Teresa L. Adams*

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THE FIELD REPORT

Editor in Chief
Capt. Kenneth Stewart

Managing Editor
Staff Sgt. Michael Sparks

Layout & Design Editor
Spc. Adam L. Mathis

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Anyone desiring to submit an article for consideration in *The Field Report*, should contact Staff Sgt. Michael Sparks at michael.l.sparks@us.army.mil.



SOLDIERS LEADERS
CIVILIANS FAMILIES

Take 5

before going
to the beach!

SAFE SUMMER



What Have You Done
to Save a Life Today?

Save that Skin

- Wear sunglasses with total UV protection
- Wear wide-brimmed hats, long-sleeved shirts and pants
- Avoid direct exposure as much as possible during peak UV radiation hours
- Apply sunscreen properly

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ARMY SAFE IS ARMY STRONG

A BAND OF BROTHERS & SISTERS

Homeland Security

Story and photos by Sgt. Micah VanDyke,
28th Public Affairs Detachment



May 15 thrills most Soldiers as it signals mid-month pay; but the Soldiers of the 547th Area Support Medical Company, 56th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, 62nd Medical Brigade, Joint Base Lewis-McChord were excited that day because

it would be their final day of certification for their upcoming homeland security mission.

The weather warmed up over the course of the training cycle at Yakima Training Center, and so did the proficiency of the Soldiers as they performed troop-training tasks for the Defense CBRNE (Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear and high-yield Explosives) Response Force homeland security mission.

After recently redeploying from Iraq, they have embraced their upcoming mission that begins Oct. 1 to be a primary medical company and one of two ASMC units from JBLM assigned to the civil support joint task force. The joint task force mission responds to natural disasters or an attack involving a CBRNE threat.

The Department of Defense has assigned the 56th MMB to be a part of the DOD's joint task force to perform this mission for the National Response Plan and train up several companies to perform the mission if ever needed. The 56th picked the 547th to be their initial company certified.

The 547th ASMC was already trained and certified April 10 -13 at JBLM by U.S. Army North on hazardous material operations and awareness, but had yet to train with CBRNE troops. Without this combined training they wouldn't be ready for their role in the DCRF mission in October.

This unit training with the 44th Chemical Company, 2nd Chemical Battalion, 48th Chemical Brigade, Fort Hood allowed them, for the first time, to

perform a combined medical/chemical mass casualty decontamination (MCD). They trained together at YTC, and at the testing site of the Hazardous Materials Management and Emergency Response (HAMMER).

Both units were quick to teach each other about their specific military specialties. This knowledge made it easier for them to perform as a team during the DCRF scenarios, which led up to the final day where they set up the exercise of a MCD site responding to live isotope (radiation) contamination. This gave the Soldiers the realistic environment they needed to respond to this type of mission.

"We are very symbiotic now. They have shown us how to do CBRNE, how to do MCD, properly don gear, to operate within their lanes and when to provide medical triage," explained Capt. A.J. Maccini, commander of 547th ASMC. "At the same time, we've been teaching them about medical care, how to triage patients, and how to evacuate them to higher levels of care; so it's been great chemistry."

"Soldiers from both companies have gelled together; it's been terrific," added Maccini.

More than 800 Soldiers, from six installations, participated in this large-scale exercise and some local civilians helped out by acting as casualties.

"This is the first time ever working with a CBRNE unit and we were able to help each other blend in as just Soldiers," said Staff Sgt. Marisol Hernandez, NCOIC of the triage and treatment tent, 547th ASMC.

Making sure nothing goes



BOOM

Story and photos by Sgt. James Hale,
28th Public Affairs Detachment

His hands worked quickly and steadily as sweat was beading from his forehead down to his cheek. His two team members watched

from a distance as they hoped they wouldn't hear a dreadful boom.

Sgt. Ruben Lugo Jr., an explosive ordinance disposal (EOD) sergeant with B Company, 110th Chemical Battalion from Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM), led Spc Alexander Main, an explosive ordinance disposal (EOD) team member, and Staff Sgt. Philip Ellis, sample team leader, into a simulated chemical contaminated building during the team's certification exercise at the Yakima Training Center on 7 May.

B Co. is one of only two Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and high-yield Explosives (CBRNE) units capable of performing this type of mission and are an integral part of the 2nd CBRN Battalion's Defense CBRNE Response Force. The DCRF is made up of more than 800 Soldiers in 16 supporting units from 6 different military installations across the country who can respond to any U.S. CBRNE incident to prevent the loss of American civilians.

To complete the scenario, Ruben's team had to enter a building they suspected to contain dangerous chemicals, explosives and other obstacles. Their job was to make sure the area was clear for the collection team to enter the building and take samples of the chemicals for analysis and neutralization.

One of the obstacles they faced was a five-gallon container with a grenade attached to it on the second floor that was rigged to go off if the door next to it was opened. Lugo's team overcame this by trying to open the door from outside the building using specialized mounting plates, metal clasps, rope and a large mallet. After that didn't work, due to the door being barricaded from the inside, Lugo climbed the side of the building to the second floor window where he was able to safely enter the building, defuse

the grenade and remove the obstruction.

"I got a lot of good experience today," said Lugo. "We had great learning experiences and gained a lot of building blocks, which is why we came here."

B Co. differs from other Army units because its missions can be assigned by civilian agencies here in the U.S. An incident in the states can begin with a concerned citizen calling 911 and first responders suspecting chemical agents, and end with Soldiers from B Co. clearing a house in their full chemical gear or working with a Department of Defense agency to help protect the area around the house from harm.

"What we bring to the fight is a more detailed technical expertise," said Cpt. Stephen Siegner, a CBRNE response team team leader with B Co. "Your conventional chemical unit wouldn't be able to mitigate this kind of problem."

Bringing their Soldiers to YTC gives B Co. a different environment to help prepare them for the stresses that come with such a dangerous mission.

"This was my first time doing training like this," said Pvt. 1st Class Ashley Ganan, a decontamination team member with B Co. "I was pretty nervous because when we do our dry runs it's not as intense and nerve racking as it is when you're put on the spot so this was really good training for me."

As each section of the team finished doing their part of the training, they all had to be decontaminated before leaving the affected area. This is necessary so that they do not spread any contamination to other areas before a different chemical unit can neutralize the area. Even as the Soldiers were finishing the exercise, tired and covered in sweat, they still looked ready and eager to do it again and you could see in their face that they really love what they do.



Trading Shoes for Combat Boots

Story by Sgt. Memory Payne,
17th Public Affairs Detachment

Approximately one percent of the American population serves in the U.S. military, so for the other 99 percent, the military lifestyle can seem foreign.

The 189th Infantry Brigade, First Army, Division West took a day out of their regular training schedule to host local civilian employers. Attendees participated in a Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves event, a group that provides support to civilian employers with insight on what their Guard and Reserve employees experience when on duty.

The day was full of hands-on experiences and a breakdown of Soldiers' qualifications for civilian jobs based on their military experience.

The first stop of the tour was a visit to the 555th Engineer Brigade construction site. Masonry and carpentry Soldiers were in the beginning phases of constructing a semi-permanent structure to house helicopter equipment.

Employers put on hard hats and were given the opportunity to ask Soldiers questions about their military skills and how they apply to the civilian work force.

Soldiers seek to acquire civilian qualifications by tracking their Army training in order to earn civilian credit, but transferring credit is an individual responsibility.

After observing the Army engineers, employers were taken to the Cannon and Castle Grill Dining Facility and given a tour behind the serving lines. Employers appeared surprised at the amount of work that is put into serving nearly 1,500 personnel per day. They not only had the chance to walk through a bustling Army DFAC, they were able to sit down and enjoy a meal with their hosts as well.

With their bellies full, the employers were ready to knock down some targets at Range III.

All the employers had fired weapons before, but shooting at a military range was new to most of them. They put on the body armor, kevlar helmets, gloves, eye protection and ear protection and they were ready to step on to the firing line.

"I feel like am 10 years old again, I love Soldier stuff," said Lon Lane, employer with Frontier Communications.

By the end of the tour, ESGR participants saw several aspects of what Soldiers do daily.

"I didn't realize how much cross-training soldiers do; this is exciting," said Douglas Wagner of Everett, Wash.



WOUNDED WARRIOR P R O J E C T

Story and photos by Sgt. Micah VanDyke,
28th Public Affairs Detachment

With renewed aspirations and positive energy, Soldiers assigned to the Warrior Transition Battalion are shown a path toward a future of stability and purpose. This path does not run through a park

or a neighborhood, it's a path that uses the Army values to assist wounded Warriors.

The goal is to transform these Warriors from being Soldiers with unique skill- sets, into highly market-able civilian veterans. The Department of Homeland Security and the Corps of Engineers are two agencies that provide this training.

The WTB sponsored the Operation Warfighter Internship Fair at Joint Base Lewis-McChord April 24 giving Soldiers a chance to speak with agencies about what they offer and what they can expect from the federal job market.

As an ever expanding program, the goal of the monthly job fair is to fill hundreds of different internships for availability to transitioning Soldiers from 35 different federal employers. The average internship can last up to 120 days. Federal employers may be flexible dependent on each Soldier's availability.

Eligibility for the program is not simply limited to WTB Soldiers. Service members from all branches of military service are eligible if they are undergoing the medical evaluation board process. The board process determines their percentage of disability as well as their physical limitations for future employment.

Currently 36 Soldiers are assigned to federal internships which have been made available by 19 federal agencies. The WTB sponsors job fairs each month which rotate between many different agencies.

Some Soldier's fears and uncertainty of a transition into civilian life may be partially alleviated due to this program's ability to provide on-the-job training.

Many employers were excited to attend the event and provide these services.

"I was very excited about volunteering for it," said Daryl Wallace, a representative from the Department of the Navy, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, "Especially to help guys who've volunteered and sacrificed a lot for our country and who should be taken care of when they get back. I'm very passionate about this program."

Cherie Westphal, the WTB transition coordinator, helped put on the event and was thrilled to have the internship fair take place because it educates Soldiers on the various opportunities within the program.

"This is the reason I focus on this program, said Westphal. "It gives them the tools, so then they understand how it's done."

Westphal looks forward to future events that emphasize assisting service members during their transition to civilian life.

While the transition is emotionally draining at times for some, the program is rewarding for most Soldiers and gives them a variety of job search experience.

"If Soldiers are going to transition out, the best program for them is Operation Warfighter," added Westphal.

One wounded warrior was motivated and enjoyed helping with the initial setup. Sgt. Guaiza S. Hemsing, a supply clerk assigned to Army Reserve unit, 373rd Military Intelligence Battalion, Tumwater, Wash., was pleased with career fair.

"It sets you up so that you can actually have something when you get out," said Hemsing.

"You have a foundation to step on when you transition over to be a civilian."



In the Race

Story and photos by Sgt. Christopher Gaylord,
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

In college, 1st Lt. James Appel always wanted to compete in a triathlon. But, somewhere, he always found a reason not to.

"I kind of made excuses when I was in college for the reasons why I didn't," said Appel, the executive officer for Company C, 702nd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

"I had a couple of buddies that did sprint triathlons when I was in college, but I never really committed myself to it."

Today, however, the 26-year-old's excuses are gone, tossed to the wayside by a newfound commitment to the sport – and the help of one very good training partner: his company first sergeant.

First Sgt. Kristopher Rick, who got his start with triathlons more than 20 years ago as a high school student in Yuma, Ariz., is guiding Appel through every step of his goal to finish the daunting race that blends swimming, cycling and running into one physically grueling event.

In July, they'll compete together in JBLM's 20th annual Triple Threat Triathlon – a shortened version of a full triathlon called a "sprint triathlon" – in which competitors will face a half-mile swim, a 12-mile bike ride and a three-mile foot race.

The two have different goals – Appel simply wants to finish a triathlon, and Rick, who completed an Iron Man last year in 14 hours, 18 minutes, will use the Triple Threat as a training event in his pursuit of a new full-triathlon best time.

But for both, the multi-faceted race represents a very personal challenge.

"It's something not a lot of people think they can

do, so having that goal to strive for is important," Appel said. "It's always been a goal of mine to complete a triathlon."

"I see it as kind of a mark of excellence," said Rick, who put together a triathlon training team in March that comprises 13 soldiers and spouses from his brigade and more than 10 from other units, including Appel. "The people that have interest in triathlons – usually it's something they never thought they could do or thought just other people could do, and then when they start getting into it realize it's attainable."

"It gives them that spark, and they keep driving and aspire to do bigger and better things."

Six days a week, Rick and Appel train on and around JBLM, both striving for their own bigger and better things.

They ride their bikes for miles down twisting stretches of vacant, paved road on the installation's training grounds and swim in the open waters of American Lake, which lies partly on JBLM and partly in the neighboring community of Lakewood.

Rick has helped Appel set his bike up to exact specifications, and he's coached him through his biggest challenge: the swim.

Fortunately, that's Rick's strongest suit.

"It's really great to have someone there to mentor me and kind of show me the way," said Appel, a Colfax, Wash., native, sitting on his bike in the JBLM parking lot where the two start their 12-mile training rides each Tuesday morning. "I really appreciate the first sergeant driving me."



THE NAME'S
PRETZ.



COLBY
PRETZ.

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Teresa L. Adams,
28th Public Affairs Detachment

On an unusually sunny Saturday, children are outside, playing baseball, running, riding bicycles with friends and neighbors. Many are carefree and innocently oblivious to the fact that for some kids running while playing outside is something they will never experience.

Today, 11 year-old, Colby Pretz, a native of Auburn, Wash., visited Joint Base Lewis-McChord with a life-long dream. For as long as Colby could remember he has wanted to be a special agent. The possibility of him reaching this dream has been hindered, since he was diagnosed as a baby, with Spinal Muscular Atrophy. Colby has never ran or known what it is like to play outside without the assistance of his wheelchair.

SMA affects motor neurons in the spinal cord and brain. As a consequence, Colby's muscles continuously weaken.

Fifteen Soldiers assigned to the 44th Military Police Detachment, Criminal Investigation Division, came together to make Colby's dream of becoming a criminal investigator a reality.

Spc. Blanca M. Shore, an investigator assigned to

the 44th, whose son also has SMA, paved the road for Colby by convincing her co-workers of the need to make his wish come true.

Shore said she met Colby and his mother Jodi Pretz at a "Families for SMA" charity potluck last year.

Shore says she has a special place in her heart for children who suffer with this disease.

"They are awesome kids who have so much to deal with just by having the disease," mentioned Shore. "They are so happy, outgoing and bubbly."

Blanca's supervisor, Warrant Officer Kevin H. Kim, assistant team chief at the 44th, and the members of his team planned a scenario which allowed Colby to realize his dream.

"I am pretty sure there are other kids who want to be agents, pilots and other military specialties," Kim



Colby Pretz dusts for finger prints during a crime-scene scenario. Colby was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy, a disorder which continuously weakens his muscles.

said. "Hopefully by hearing about Colby, members of our military community will reach out to help kids become what they aspire to be."

The Soldiers set up a crime scenario where Colby responded to a criminal act, lifted finger prints, processed the crime scene and eventually took part in a hostage negotiation situation. He completed the exercise and was awarded the status of "Honorary Criminal Investigative Agent."

During his award presentation, he was presented with a CID badge, t-shirt, baseball cap and an embroidered patch that he said he will proudly hang on his wheelchair.

"I am just so glad that you let me do this," said Colby. "I know it is very rare that you let people do this."

After the awards, Soldiers and attendees enjoyed lunch while Colby and his mother, Jodi Pretz, reflected on his trials and the beauty of Colby's triumph.

Jodi wears a purple t-shirt that displays "Families of SMA." She is a mother who takes her job seriously. The pride in her eyes is palpable as she describes the boy who is her son; and the simple fact there is nothing she wouldn't do for her child.

"Colby draws people in. He's such a special kid," says Jodi. "People just want to do things for him."

Colby just laughs and seems to have an innate gift which allows him to acknowledge the tough times as well as find joy in special moments like these.

"There are some things about SMA that have advantages," says Colby. "Not too many people get to go through a secret agent course!"



Army Rock Stars

Some Soldiers fight
with more than
bullets



Sgt. Robert Chiaravallotti (middle), bass player for Heavy Left, a hard rock group belonging to the 56th Army Band and Master Sgt. Dana Luxon (right), the group's lead guitarist, rock out during a performance for students at Eureka High School in Eureka, Calif.

Story and photos by Sgt. Christopher Gaylord,
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



There are jobs, and then there are hobbies. Few people can successfully meld the two into one.

But Sgt. Robert Chiaravallotti – leaning against a guitar amplifier taller than his waist, his fingers dancing rapidly across the strings and neck of a bass guitar hanging over his shoulder – is clearly one of those few.

“It’s more than a hobby, man,” he says, a smile enveloping his face as he momentarily breaks concentration during a warm-up before a show, April 27, for students at Eureka High School in Eureka, Calif., with fellow members of Heavy Left, a hard rock group that belongs to the 56th Army Band at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

“This is pretty much my life – my livelihood – right here.”

From the waist down, the 41-year-old bears the resemblance of any common Soldier – tan combat boots and digital camouflage pants bloused neatly above his ankles.

But above the waist he more closely represents his former self – a kid who grew up on rock and roll, minus the hair, his head bobbing every now and again to a rhythm kept inside him.

“This is the music that we kind of cut our teeth on, so we naturally just revolve around it,” he says.

Chiaravallotti keeps the bass line in his group, which makes heavy rock legends like Jimi Hendrix and Ozzy Osbourne as much a part of the



Members of Heavy Left perform for students at Eureka High School in Eureka, Calif., April 27. The show was part of a visit to the northern California coastal town April 26-29, during which Heavy Left accompanied the 56th's swing and big band ensemble, Swingin' Sounds of Courage, to perform for the community for its 47th annual Rhododendron Festival.



Staff Sgt. Mike Brenmark, play heavy rock hits from the '70s and '80s during a performance for students at Eureka High School.

Army as tight haircuts and strict discipline through covers of popular songs from the '70s and '80s – music that allows them to let their hair down, even if they can't let it down physically.

"It shows a different side of the Army that people don't see," says band mate and lead guitarist, Master Sgt. Dana Luxon, his hands resting on a jagged-shaped green and black guitar. "They see what's on the news and make their own perception of it, so it gives them something different."

Heavy Left played for the students during their lunch hour as part of a visit to Eureka, during which they accompanied the 56th's swing and big band ensemble, Swingin' Sounds of Courage.

The two bands performed separately at the high school, but joined to headline the town's 47th annual Rhododendron Parade.

Heavy Left members filled in as percussionists for the parade, but belting out screaming numbers by Iron Maiden and Judas Priest in a high school courtyard was more their scene.

"Whether we're playing for one, or 1,000 or 10,000,

the energy is the same for every show," said Heavy Left drummer, Staff Sgt. Mike Brenmark, who started off in the Army as a cook but soon reclassified to become a musician.

"They should light their guitars on fire," said one student sitting on a bench clapping his hands to the band's performance of Heart's hit "Barracuda."

The student added that it's "pretty amazing" the Army actually has rock groups like Heavy Left – a group whose music has a lot to say to a young generation.

"The kids love it; it's a whole different side of the Army that they normally don't see," said Luxon, a Pittsburgh native, who started playing guitar in the fifth grade and briefly toured the East Coast with professional bands before joining the Army in 1984. "You can see that they're connected to it. They respond."

Chiaravallotti knows firsthand how intensely one can respond to a show put on by military musicians. A performance he witnessed by a Marine Corps band when he was 12 changed his life for good.

He visited Washington as a boy scout and saw the United States Marine Band, also known as "The President's Own," perform. That, he remembers, was the day he decided on his future.

"I remember watching that performance, and that actually made me want to join the military band," he said. "It practically changed my entire life and guided me."

Luxon has been in the Army 28 years and played in 10 different bands, ranging from Dixieland music to jazz. But none compare to shredding on his guitar modeled after the one Darrell Abbott of speed metal band Pantera played.

"It's my favorite kind of music," he said. "I grew up playing it."

And the story is the same for the band's front man and rhythm guitarist, Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Wilson Jr., a diehard Led Zeppelin and Stevie Ray Vaughan fan who got his first guitar when he was 16.

"I think it keeps us young," said Wilson, an Otisville, Mich., native. "That's for sure. It's energy. It's just an hour-long show of power."

But no matter how powerful a show is, how hard the band shreds or how wild the group gets, Wilson and his fellow band members still hold their reputation as Soldiers to high regard.

"We represent the Army," Luxon said. "That's really important. It's not a free-for-all. We don't turn into a bunch of crazy MTV idiots."

"This is our way of telling the Army story, but we do it through music, and we do it through very cool music."

Rangers strum the way

By Sgt. Christopher Gaylord,
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

If there's any one thing Sgt. Norman Montes De Oca envisioned for his life, it was earning the right to call himself a U.S. Army Ranger.

"As far back as I can remember, I wanted to be a Ranger," said Montes De Oca, a San Pedro Sula, Honduras, native who grew up in Redmond, Wash. "In high school, that was all I ever thought about."

Today, Montes De Oca plays guitar and percussion for 56th Army Band group Swingin' Sounds of Courage, a jazz-style big band.

He spent his time as a Ranger, deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan with the same battalion his father served, and he loved it.

But two years in, with Ranger School and the follow-on possibility of leading his own squad in his sites, an accident to his head and ankles ended his life-long, Ranger ambitions.

Which is how De Oca ended up at Waller Hall, killing time by playing his guitar.

"This guy saw me playing and said, 'hey, you're really good. You should go check out the 56th Army Band on North Fort and audition.'" Montes De Oca said, recalling his encounter with a soldier who had tried out for the band himself but couldn't read music.

"I kind of took it as a sign that maybe that's what I should be doing."

He tried out and was accepted into the band under an on-the-job training program in 2010.

Now, music fills his days. And even after nearly two years of playing with the band, the admiration is still new to him.

"[As a Ranger] We'd get back from a mission, and they'd be like, 'good job,' and nobody else would know," said Montes De Oca, who picked up guitar at the age of 5 after watching the movie, "Back to the Future." "There's not a crowd out there like, 'wow, that was a well-executed mission.' You never got that."

"Everywhere I've gone, they've been like, 'hey, you're in the band, that's awesome,' he said. And while he looks forward to that day, his future still uncertain to him, one sentiment will always stay with him wherever he goes.

"Whether it's in the infantry, or in the band, or any other fields of endeavor, Rangers lead the way."

ABT 2 B UR LST MSG

(ABOUT TO BE YOUR LAST MESSAGE)

DON'T TEXT WHILE
DRIVING. IT CAN **KILL**
YOU OR SOMEONE ELSE.



I used a Designated Driver!



***What have
YOU done to save
a life today?***



**ARMY SAFE
IS ARMY STRONG**



**ARMY SAFE
IS ARMY STRONG**





CHOOSING
THE BEST
OF THE

FIRST





Staff Sgt. James Severin waits to face a board of six command sergeants major for the final test of the First Army 2012 Best Warrior Competition.

Story and photos by Spc. Adam L. Mathis,
17th Public Affairs Detachment

Staff Sgt. James Severin of Griffin, Ga., did not let his back touch the chair as he looked at his phone. For two and a half days, that phone had been his bible, allowing him to study Army manuals no matter where the events of First Army's 2012 Best Warrior Competition took him. Now, the phone was in front of him again as he prepared to face a panel of six command sergeant majors, all eager to test his Army knowledge.

Severin, the Division East candidate for the Noncommissioned Officer of the Year award, had reason to prepare. Last year, he had made it to this level of the competition only to lose—by a few points, he had heard. Moreover, like last year, Severin, along with the other candidates, did not know his scores from the previous events. Coasting was not an option.

Even the judges did not know the scores. Command Sgt. Maj. Wilbert Engram of Warner Robins, Ga., an event host with the 189th Infantry Brigade at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, said keeping the scores a mystery from everyone in the competition prevented bias from the judges and kept all of the competitors motivated to put forth a lot of effort for each event.

No one, however, could accuse Severin of lacking motivation. During some of his free time between events, he had studied Army manuals or practiced hands-on tasks. Severin's approach to winning was to over-prepare.

"That's how I gain confidence. If I sit there and be like, 'Look I've done this like 19 times,' I've got it ... that's where I get my confidence from," said Severin.

And that's how Severin dealt with the mystery of his standing in the competition.

The next day, Severin's competitor for the Noncommissioned Officer of the Year award, Sgt. 1st Class Paul Patterson of Conifer, Colo., was dealing with the mystery in the banquet



Working on his Tarzan routine, Sgt. 1st Class Paul Patterson takes on an obstacle course during his second day of competition to become the Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for First Army.

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"That's how I gain confidence. If I sit there and be like, 'Look I've done this like 19 times, I've got it ... that's where I get my confidence from,'" said Severin.

And that's how Severin dealt with the mystery of his standing in the competition.

The next day, Severin's competitor for the Non-commissioned Officer of the Year award, Sgt. 1st Class Paul Patterson of Conifer, Colo., was dealing with the mystery in the banquet room where the winners would be announced. Arriving long before the ceremony started, he spent some of his time slowly pacing the room, hands folded on his stomach. Patterson had not planned on being here.

Two weeks before the first round of competitions, Patterson received a phone call at his civilian job: he had just volunteered to compete.

"I'm not going to lie, I didn't prepare," said Patterson.

He spent approximately two hours studying some Army material and didn't bother to work out. Between often working 60 hours a week and coaching baseball teams, he did not have a lot of time.

"I don't stand a chance," said Patterson. "I'm going

against a bunch of active duty guys; I'm going to go have fun."

But not knowing his standing did taint the competition a little. Despite coming in first during the ruck march and the running portion of the physical training test, the mystery of his performance clearly weighed on Patterson.

"I feel like I have just done terrible," said Patterson. "I can't put a finger on it."

Arriving for the ceremony a little later than Patterson, Spc. Jule Dao's feelings about the competition were revealed by bouncing up and down on her toes.

"I guess I'm nervous but, either way it's going to be good, win or lose," said Dao of Lake Forest, Calif. and the Division West candidate for Soldier of the Year, "I got this far. ... How do you think I feel?"

Dao did not appreciate the suspense regarding her standing in the competition. By day two, she had already described the suspense as "hard." By day three, the suspense "kills you."

"You just got to shrug it aside because there is nothing you can do other than stress about it," said Dao.

Sometimes, though, a little stress crept into her mind during the competition. Dao's instincts told her the eight mile march, carrying a bag that she said weighed more than half her body weight, was going to be bad. Her instincts were right.

"Even just a couple of steps in there, right when I threw on the ruck sack, I knew, I'm like, 'This is hurting already; it's going to suck,'" said Dao.

Dao tried not to focus on her competitor, but instead worked to perform at her best. Her motivation came from thinking about what others would say when she finished the march.

Spc. Timothy Andariese of Chelsea, Mich., shifted back and forth as he waited to hear if someone would say his name as the winner. The award could go either way he knew; Dao, he said, was a strong competitor.

"She's very formidable," said Andariese.

So formidable, in fact, that Andariese, the Division East candidate for Soldier of the Year, was the only competitor who seemed to focus much on his opponent. Andariese paid attention as she shared some about herself during the competition and, when it came time for combatives, started making strategy adjustments to win.

"Actually, she's so skilled in combatives, I had to

come up with a new fight plan," said Andariese. "I had to fight her fight."

Fighting her fight was not easy for him. Andariese's upbringing, like so many, included strong prohibitions against hitting a woman, making it hard for him to fight her.

"That was my favorite and least favorite event," said Andariese.

Still, it didn't stop Andariese from accidentally body slamming her. Dao had wrapped her legs around his torso and Andariese stood up. Since Dao refused to let go, he did not know what to do and tried to gently put her back on the ground. But, when he fell from trying to balance her weight plus his, she came down on the mat with a thud that drew the sympathy of the audience, and had Andariese asking her during the fight, "Are you okay?"

Humorously, in a contest full of mystery about where the competitors stood, the winners knew they had won before their names were called. The master of ceremonies first called out the names of those who came in second, but since there were only two competitors for each prize, she revealed the winners.

Dao was so convinced that she was not going to win, she was getting ready to stand up when the runner's up name was called and very surprised when her opponent's name was called.

"I was definitely surprised," said Dao. "It feels good though. I was confused the whole time on where I was at in the competition, but it was a big shocker, I thought Andariese was going to win."

For Severin, learning that he won validated the time and effort he had put into this contest. After last year, that was something he could use.

Severin competed in the 2011 competition and lost to a frustrating opponent, one whom he said the laws of physics did not apply to when it came to combatives. Severin nicknamed him the Terminator.

"He was sent back from the future to kill John Connor," said Severin.

Severin has a purple belt in jiu-jitsu, and said he has fought a lot of people, but his old opponent was simply impossible for him to beat.

"It's almost like I entered into some kind of black hole where physics don't apply because like seriously, I'm like, 'This should work, this should be moving,' and nothing happens," said Severin.

Such an overwhelming opponent from last year perhaps explains Severin's goal for this year's competition: "Really, my only goal is don't look stupid."



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Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention

INTERVENE

When I recognize a threat to my fellow Soldiers, I will have the personal courage to **INTERVENE** and prevent Sexual Assault. I will condemn acts of Sexual Harassment. I will not abide obscene gestures, language or behavior. I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I will **INTERVENE**.

ACT

You are my brother, my sister, my fellow Soldier. It is my duty to stand up for you, no matter the time or place. I will take **ACTION**. I will do what's right. I will prevent Sexual Harassment and Assault. I will not tolerate sexually offensive behavior. I will **ACT**.

MOTIVATE

We are American Soldiers, **MOTIVATED** to keep our fellow Soldiers safe. It is our mission to prevent Sexual Harassment and Assault. We will denounce sexual misconduct. As Soldiers, we are all **MOTIVATED** to take action. We are strongest...together.

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- Perform a thorough safety inspection before lighting the grill
- Never use a grill in an enclosed space
- Only use an approved charcoal lighter fluid to start a charcoal - fired grill, and never add any flammable liquid to a burning fire
- Follow the instructions for lighting your gas grill
- Keep grills away from houses, fences, trees and anything else with a propensity for burning
- Don't wear loose clothing when cooking on a grill
- Keep all flammable materials away from the grill
- Make sure the fire is out when you are done



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