

AED holds first Unit Olympics

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Eric P. Hailston

On a beautiful autumn morning in Kabul, the Afghanistan Engineer District held its first ever “Unit Olympics.” The event, designed to bring Soldiers and Civilians at Qalaa House together to help boost moral and team building through friendly competition, was a huge success.

Held in conjunction with the Military’s normal Physical Training or PT, the event began at 6 a.m., Nov. 2, 2008. The Soldiers normally get together every Sunday to participate in Army PT, which is expected by all Soldiers on Active Duty, except when they’re in a Combat Zone. We do it for the fitness benefit, but mostly it is to bring the Soldiers together as a Team.

As the coordinator, I try to break away from the monotony of structured Army PT and find something challenging but also fun for the Soldiers. I took the idea of a Unit Olympics from the Army Field Manual 21-20, Army Physical Fitness Training. Three of the six events came from the Field Manual but the other three were events that would be fun to do and watch. All six of the events were chosen for their fitness aspects, as well as for their competitive potential.

Each team consisted of six members. Teams one and two were 100 percent military put together by me so that they would be evenly matched. Teams three and four consisted of five Civilians with one Military team captain. The two Civilian teams came out of the Kabul Area Office with Maj. Leigh Ford, Area Office Officer in Charge, and Sgt. 1st Class Katherine Wills, Non-commissioned Officer in Charge, serving as team captains.

The first event was a team Sandbag Relay. Next was a Broad Jump relay, which had the contestants hopping around like frogs on hot asphalt. The third event was a Litter Carry where the teams were broken in half and they each had to carry and be carried on an Army stretcher.

The fourth event was the Crab Walk Relay. If you have never had the pleasure to witness Soldiers performing the Crab Walk you do not know how much fun this event was to watch. It took place in the deep “sand” of the AED Volleyball court for safety reasons. The sand made it the most challenging and humorous



Courtesy Photo

Spc. Carlos Benefield (center) showing his technique in the Broad Jump Relay. In the background, Ben Neely (left) and Dave Flynn (right) try to catch up.



Courtesy Photo

Sgt. 1st Class Eric Hailston (far background) keeps a watch on the turn around line during the Crab Walk event. Competing are, clockwise from front to rear; Dave Flynn, Sgt. 1st Class Katherine Wills, Spc. Carlos Benefield, and Sgt. Samuel Dean.

event of the morning.

The final event was the epitome of team work and team building – the Push-up Derby. This was by far the best event, because all of the teams had to work together to reach a common goal and support their fellow teammates throughout the entire event. The clock was set at five minutes and the teams were given their “proper Army push-up” demonstration. On



Photo by Bruce Huffman

Litter Carry Relay, from far left: Lt. Col. David Baker and Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Winkleblack carry Sgt. J. Ivan Minaya, Lt. Col. John Schultz and Col. Thomas O'Donovan carry Spc. Carlos Benefield. Larry Cole and Steve Smith carry Maria Cunningham, near; Dave Flynn and Greg Taylor (not shown) carry Maj. Leigh Ford.



Photo by Bruce Huffman

Team One celebrating their Push-Up Derby win, performing a combined 350+ push-ups in the five minute time period, clinching the over-all competition for their team. From left to right: Maj. Carl Cecil, Master Sgt. Michael Sage, Lt. Col. David Baker, with Lt. Col. John Schultz jokingly showing his disappointment.

the command of “go” one team member began by performing as many correct push-ups as they could and then hand off to the next team member. The only rule given to the teams was that they were required to stay in the same order throughout the race. Only five members of each team participated, as one team member had to



Photo by Bruce Huffman

Ben Neely (left) prepares to switch off with Maria Cunningham (right) during the Push-up Derby.



Photo by Bruce Huffman

The day would not have been as much fun if our Qalaa House Cheerleaders did not wake up to support their favorite competitors. From left to right: Pamela Amie, Leslie Wright, Sherry Masters and Linda Souza-Barney. Not shown are Michelle Thrift and Sarasha Schmeets.

be the counter for an opposing team. After the first two minutes, some interesting techniques of energy conservation and quick turn overs were used by the teams once the muscle fatigue started to slip in.

In the end, as with all competitions, there can be only one winner, and on this day the winning team of the first ever AED Unit Olympics was Team One, which included Lt. Col. David Baker, Maj. Carl Cecil, Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Winkleblack, Sgt. Maj. Jon Beaulieu, Master Sgt. Michael Sage, Sgt. Jose Minaya and Sgt. Steven Wilson.

Congratulations to the winning team and a special congratulation goes to all of the Civilian participants. One Team, One Fight! 🇺🇸