

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Army National Guard crowns best warriors after grueling competition at Fort McCoy

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FORT MCCOY, Wis. — A select group of 15 Soldiers in the Wisconsin Army National Guard competed in the 2022 State Best Warrior Competition April 7-10 at Fort McCoy.

Seven non-commissioned officers and eight enlisted Soldiers had the opportunity to represent Wisconsin in the upcoming regional Best Warrior Competition at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, next month.

Sgt. Josia Bell, a resident of Rochester, Minnesota, with B Company, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Battalion, emerged as Wisconsin's Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, while Spc. Joshua Kleinhans, a resident of Kiel, Wisconsin, with B Battery, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery Battery, will compete in the regional competition as Wisconsin's Soldier of the Year.

For three days, competitors from all over Wisconsin faced off against one another in challenges that tested their mental and physical aptitudes. Events included the Army Combat Fitness Test, M4 carbine, M17 pistol, and M249 machine gun qualifications, a physical appearance board, essay writing, land navigation, calling for fire, a simulated medical range, a written test, 12-mile ruck march, and hand grenade qualification.

“The purpose of the Best Warrior Competition is to bring the best of the best together to try to determine the best non-commissioned officer (NCO) and Soldier

within the state and within every company, battalion, and brigade,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Curtis Patrouille, the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s senior enlisted leader. “They have gone through several competitions to try to determine their best representative to send to the competition.”

Soldiers and NCOs had hectic days – the events of the competition were kept a secret from them until they showed up at the event itself. In addition, the sergeants major incorporated multiple mystery events like the dead man’s hang and reorganizing flags in order of precedence.

“What I love about this event every year is the sheer determination that I see from the individuals competing year in and year out – total exhaustion, sleep-deprived, and yet they just keep pushing and pushing.” said Patrouille.

“Competing in this competition is definitely an asset to becoming a better Solider all around,” said Sgt. Tyler Buska, with Company D, 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation. “There’s a lot of events throughout the competition that better yourself as a Solider and as an NCO. It’s a very good experience, and I highly recommend it to all NCOs and Soldiers to give it a shot.”

Each competitor brings with them a sponsor who has been with them in preparation for this event and during the entire competition. Without them, the event wouldn’t be possible.

“One of the fun things about being a sponsor is seeing these events and the competition between the different Soldiers,” said Sgt. Adrienne Maniscalco, a sponsor from Company D, 147th Aviation. “There’s a lot of Soldiers here from different units and jobs with different strengths and weaknesses.”

“These are basic Solider skills that each and every Solider needs to have, and there’s no advantage to any one job,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Curtis Patrouille, the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s senior enlisted leader. “I love that this is a fair and equitable competition.”

The Indiana National Guard will host the regional Best Warrior Competition May 11-15 Camp Ripley, Minnesota.