

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Guard Soldiers test their limits in pursuit of Best Warrior crown

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FORT MCCOY, Wis. — This morning [April 8], 16 Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers, representing units across the state, began the first leg of a grueling three-day competition known as the Best Warrior Competition.

The Best Warrior Competition measures each Soldier's physical, mental and professional capacity as they demonstrate their proficiency in various tasks. Physical fitness, land navigation and marksmanship are among the tasks competitors will take part in this weekend.

Command Sgt. Maj. Curtis Patrouille, the Wisconsin Army National Guard's senior enlisted leader, described the Best Warrior Competition as an opportunity for Soldiers and noncommissioned officers from across the organization to compete against each other to determine the best of the best.

"Even before they get to this level of competition, these Soldiers and noncommissioned officers have been selected from their unit and battalion leadership to represent at the state level," Patrouille said.

The Best Warrior Competition does not provide an advantage to any specific military occupation, Patrouille noted. In addition to honing individual skills and capabilities, the competition gives Soldiers the chance to share newly gained knowledge and experience with their units. Among those key experiences is the ability to persevere through hardship.

"Resiliency skills are a must throughout the competition," Patrouille explained. "A

competitor may not perform as they had planned on a particular event, and they need to be able to compose themselves, work with their sponsor and be ready to perform at their highest level on the next event.

“Having seen the Best Warrior Competition for the past several years, it still amazes me as to the commitment each of these competitors and sponsors show time and time again,” Patrouille continued. “The amount of pride they have representing their unit, battalion and brigade can be witnessed by the sheer level of determination each and every one shows throughout the competition.”

The Best Warrior Competition at Fort McCoy is not open to the public, but photos and live updates throughout the event will be posted on the Wisconsin National Guard’s Facebook page. Stay tuned throughout the weekend.

The Wisconsin Army National Guard’s Best Warrior and Best Noncommissioned Officer will advance to compete at the regional Best Warrior Competition March 10-15 at Camp Ripley, Minnesota — “an even more daunting competition,” Patrouille said.

Best Warrior competitors include:

Spc. Christopher Andersen, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment (Amherst, Wisconsin); Sgt. Josiah Bell, Company B, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment (Rochester, Minnesota); Spc. Cody Blosch, 1158th Transportation Company (Platteville, Wisconsin); Sgt. Tyler Buksa, Company D, 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation (Neillsville, Wisconsin); Spc. Caleb Butler, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry (Holmen, Wisconsin); Sgt. Nathaniel Hersil, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery (Merrill, Wisconsin); Spc. Joshua Kleinhans, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery (Kiel, Wisconsin); Spc. Ian Majerus, Company G, 132nd Brigade Support Battalion (Campbellsport, Wisconsin); Spc. Belen Martinez, 273rd Sapper Engineer Company (Racine, Wisconsin); Sgt. Andrew Pieper, 273rd Sapper Engineer Company (Bangor, Wisconsin); Spc. Jeffrey Pippenger, Headquarters, 724th Engineer Battalion (Altoona, Wisconsin); Spc. Caleb Ravn, Battery C, 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery (West Bend, Wisconsin); Sgt. Lance VanRixel, Company A, 173rd Brigade Engineer Battalion (Marathon, Wisconsin); Spc. Jacob Vossen, Troop A, 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry (Reedsburg, WI); Staff Sgt. Alex Wegner, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery (Appleton, Wisconsin); Sgt. Grant Wiley, 829th Engineer Company, (Golden Valley, Minnesota).