

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Army Guard medic earns Expert Field Medical Badge

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FORT MCCOY, Wis. — After two intense weeks, a Wisconsin Army National Guard combat medic has a coveted badge, and some bragging rights.

Sgt. 1st Class Talon Dumke of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, a member of the Wisconsin National Guard's 54th Civil Support Team, earned the Expert Field Medical Badge (EFMB) after completing the third Army Reserve Medical Command-sponsored competition May 12 at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. And he was named "Top Doc" for his efforts.

"The EFMB was very challenging," Dumke admitted. "I wanted to represent the Wisconsin Army National Guard and my unit to the best of my ability. I did not know about the 'Top Doc,' so I was surprised and even more proud of the accomplishment.

"It was kind of a bonus beating out all the Reserve and active-duty service members," he added.

The competition, hosted by Central Medical Area Readiness Support Group from Fort Sheridan, Illinois, began April 30 with training, where candidates were given an opportunity to boost their proficiency on current Army medical practices. Dumke said this was the most helpful part of preparing for the event.

"We saw exactly how they wanted the tasks to be done," he explained.

To earn the EFMB, competitors had to successfully perform land navigation in both day and night conditions, tactical combat casualty care (TC3) tasks, medical and

casualty evacuation tasks, communication tasks, general Army skills tasks, and an exam. Medics also were required to have a passing fitness test score and weapons qualification prior to competing.

The testing phase was held May 8-11, and included physical fitness assessment, day and night land navigation, tactical combat casualty care, Army Warrior skills and evacuation lanes. The test culminated with a 12-mile road march with rucksack on May 12, followed by a formal ceremony for the finalists.

The badge is highly regarded in large part because of how difficult it is to earn it. Of the 49 Active, Guard and Reserve Soldiers to enter this year's competition at Fort McCoy, only eight finished — ranging from lower enlisted to lieutenant colonel. The attrition rate for completing the EFMB testing can be as high as 90 percent.

"It is possible through hard work, staying focused, and giving it your all," Dumke said of earning the EFMB. "Talking to or working with a badge holder to learn more about it, and preparing as much as possible, will make a big difference."

Lt. Col. Seth Kaste, commander of the 54th Civil Support Team, described Dumke's performance during the EFMB competition as "truly exceptional."

"He brings a passion for fitness to our team which builds resilience and teamwork," Kaste said. "Talon is also one of our finest technical experts. His analytical acumen is well-respected throughout the CST community and is a force multiplier for our team.

"While the honor of 'Top Doc' is extremely impressive," Kaste continued, "our team has been fortunate enough to witness exceptional performance from Talon ever since he joined our team."

During the awards ceremony, Maj. Gen. Scott Lynn — commanding general of the Army Reserve Medical Command — related the story of Medal of Honor recipient Pfc. Jesse Funk, who braved heavy machine gun fire to help carry two wounded officers to safety during the Meuse-Argonne offensive Oct. 31, 1918.

"The reason that you are an Army medic is the same reason that he was: your nation needs you, and the Army needs you — both the organization and the individual Soldiers," Lynn said. "Once again, thank you for being here, thank you for your efforts and congratulations."

Dumke, currently the health care noncommissioned officer and analytical laboratory system operator for the 54th Civil Support Team, has been a combat medic for the entirety of his 14-and-a-half-year career in the Wisconsin Army National Guard. He also deployed in 2010 with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation.

"I have always said being a medic is the best job in the Army," Dumke said.

Staff Sgt. Christopher Hernandez contributed to this report