

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers race for awareness

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MIAMI — A Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldier recently competed in the Life Time Miami Marathon and Half.

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Gibson of Oakfield, Wisconsin, a Black Hawk crew chief assigned to Joint Force Headquarters in Madison, ran 13.1 miles in one hour, 37 minutes and 55 seconds — good for 79th in his age group and 380th overall.

Gibson, 33, was one of more than two dozen National Guard Soldiers from 17 states who took part in the competition as part of the National Guard's All Guard Marathon Team. He qualified for the All Guard Marathon Team last May at the National Guard Marathon in Lincoln, Nebraska. The 14-year Wisconsin National Guard member has been on the All Guard Marathon Team the past two years.

"I feel really good about my finish in the Miami Half Marathon," Gibson said. "I will be starting dedicated training for the [2023] All Guard Marathon Team trials on May 7, so this race was more of an assessment of where my fitness stands before starting my ramp-up to that."

Gibson said he knew that there would be a significant adjustment from training in a winter Wisconsin climate to running in Miami's warmer temperatures and higher humidity.

"[It] required a lot of focus and care to accomplish successfully," he said. "I was hoping to average 7:30 minutes per mile over the race, and I was able to accomplish that successfully."

Prior to the marathon in Miami, service members were instructed on running form analysis and warm-up techniques during a holistic health and fitness workshop hosted by members of the Human Performance Optimization team.

The All Guard Marathon Team also staffed a booth at the Miami marathon where service members spoke with other runners, handed out promotional materials and received 48 leads from multiple states of potential recruits interested in the National Guard.

“We were able to spread awareness of the National Guard and the opportunities it provides to us while we were among people attending the pre-race expo,” Gibson said.

Gibson is a member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard Marathon Team, which includes Maj. Leah Baldwin, 1st Lt. Ethan Effinger, Sgt. Maj. Alan Althoff, Staff Sgt. Marguerite Zaepfel and Sgt. Austin Loomis. The team, minus Baldwin, will attend this year’s Lincoln Marathon Team Trials May 5-8. Baldwin said the event is both a team event and a qualifier to make the All Guard Marathon Team. This will be the first year that all 54 states and territories will have a team competing in Lincoln.