

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Best Warrior Competition concludes, winners crowned

Posted on Thursday, Apr 27, 2023

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FORT MCCOY, Wis. — Soldiers from across the Wisconsin Army National Guard gathered at Fort McCoy April 20-23 where they endured wind, sleet, snow and rain to crown winners of the 2023 Wisconsin Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition.

The four-day competition tested the Soldiers' physical and mental stamina, as well as their knowledge of military tactics and procedures.

Spc. William Warner, a sniper with Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment, from Seymour, Wisconsin, and Staff Sgt. Michael Petersen, a training noncommissioned officer with Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry Regiment from Arlington, Wisconsin, emerged atop the enlisted and NCO categories respectively.

The 11 Soldiers and 11 NCOs who participated in the competition were evaluated on their proficiency in a variety of military skills during several grueling events, including a call-for-fire scenario, M4 rifle and M17 pistol qualification, day and night land navigation, a written test, a timed essay, an appearance board, Army Warrior Tasks, a 12-mile ruck march, and the Army Combat Fitness Test.

According to Command Sgt. Maj. Curtis Patrouille, the Wisconsin Army National Guard's senior enlisted leader, the competition involved every major subordinate command in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, and required approximately 50 to 60 people to support the event.

Patrouille said there is great value in the friendly competition.

“For me, this competition is really about pushing one another,” Patrouille said. “That challenge in the competition, it just brings out the best in each.”

The competitors agreed.

Sgt. Hendrik Boese, a motor transport operator with Detachment 1, 1158th Transportation Company, 641st Troop Command Battalion, 64th Troop Command, welcomed the challenge.

“I’ve always been competitive, but the reason I decided to volunteer for the Best Warrior Competition is because I knew it would teach me a lot,” Boese said.

The contest afforded the competitors the opportunity to grow and improve.

“I thought it was a good opportunity to test myself,” Spc. Connor Ford, an M2 gunner with Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, said. “The more you sweat in training, the less you bleed in battle.”

Patrouille encouraged Soldiers to share their story with others at their home units as he believes the competition is a very rewarding and challenging experience.

“Tell them what you did well in,” Patrouille said. “Challenge them to come here and compete again next year and in the years to come.”

The runner up for the Soldier of the Year was Spc. Kristopher Kniprath, an avionics technician with Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment. Sgt. Logan Butler, a maintenance team leader with Echo Company, 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment, claimed the number two spot for the NCO of the Year.

Warner and Petersen will move on to represent Wisconsin at the regional competition in Camp Garfield, Ohio, May 3-7.