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“Smaller” ROTC Unit Comes Up Big

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- A team of Cedarville Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) cadets conquered much larger ROTC programs in a test of will, perseverance, physical endurance and teamwork to win the 7th Brigade Ranger Challenge Competition at Fort Knox, Kentucky. The competition was held November 2-4.

The team of 11 students beat cadets representing 17 schools from Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, Ohio and Michigan. Their next step is the 2019 Sandhurst Military Skills Competition in April, where they will compete with the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy, the U.S. Air Force Academy and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

The spring competition will take place at West Point, New York, and will include seven other regional Ranger Challenge champions and teams from various foreign academies, which in the past have included Australia, Italy, Japan and Afghanistan.

Members of the Ranger Challenge team include: co-captain Danuta Lesko from Lagrangeville, New York; co-captain Andy Arreguin from Tucson, Arizona; Nate Mason from California, Maryland; Scott Grimes from Mancelona, Michigan; Victoria Collett from Harrodsburg, Kentucky; Zach Ashley from Beavercreek, Ohio; James Barber from Ashland, Kentucky; Jake Schlichtmann from Collegeville, Pennsylvania; Ethan McCall from Fort Wayne, Indiana; Jack Williamson from Sparta, New Jersey; and Daniel Heiple from Coraopolis, Pennsylvania.

On Friday, the team navigated three different circuits, each of which included many obstacle course events. One obstacle included climbing and descending a 45-degree wall as many times as possible without any outside equipment – all while blindfolded. Another physical test required team members to hold themselves up on a dip bar for as long as possible, up to 10 minutes. Barber was one of just a few of the 162 cadets to stay on for the maximum 10 minutes.

The last activity on Friday was a tug-of-war round robin with the top five other teams – Ohio University, Indiana University, Michigan State University, the University of Notre Dame and East Tennessee State University. After quick victories, the Cedarville cadets came out on top.

Saturday morning started with a 3 ½-mile march carrying a 40-pound rucksack – the military equivalent of a backpack. After that, it was on to 15 different sites where teams carried out various missions – from creating a 100-foot-long rope bridge over a muddy gully to “blowing up” three different sites with dummy hand grenades while being fired on with paintball guns. In another mission, members completed a hatchet-throwing challenge, where Cedarville senior Grimes achieved the highest score.

The team completed the 15 missions two hours ahead of schedule, considerably faster than any other team, and then made an additional 5 ½-mile ruck march back to the starting point. McCall, a Cedarville freshman, came in second out of the 162 cadets on the final march.
“We’re the smallest program in our brigade, and we were going up against much bigger programs,” noted Arreguin, a junior prelaw major. “We were the underdogs, and no one was expecting our team to win. But it felt great to persevere, push through all the challenges and come out first, something our program hasn’t done in over a decade.”

The Cedarville students are part of a unit based at Central State University (CSU) which includes CSU and Wittenberg University students. Lesko, a junior exercise science major, praised Captain Matthew Barber, an ROTC instructor at Central State, for his leadership.

“We could not have done what we did without his mentorship and dedication to our training,” she said. “He expects excellence, yet gives us the guidance, time and freedom to grow into it. Also, our whole Marauder Battalion, the larger team we represent, made our training schedule possible with ample resources and support.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,193 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.