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CONTACT: Mark D. Weinstein
Executive Director of Public Relations
[937-766-8800](tel:937-766-8800) (o)
[937-532-6885](tel:937-532-6885) (m)
Mweinstein@cedarville.edu
[@cedarvilleneews](https://twitter.com/cedarvilleneews)

West Point: Up Next for Victorious ROTC Ranger Team

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Cedarville University's Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Rangers team spent last weekend competing against some of the largest schools in the Midwest — Michigan State, Purdue, Ohio State, Notre Dame — and they came out on top.

Cedarville's 11-man team won first prize in the 7th Brigade Ranger Challenge in Fort Knox, Kentucky, that took place Nov. 5-6. A total of 37 ranger teams competed.

"It's a military skills competition based in teamwork and decentralized planning," Ethan McCall, a senior international studies major and team captain from Fort Wayne, Indiana, said. "We have team tasks that include urban orienteering, navigation on a wooded terrain and mission site challenges. They all focus on taking initiative, working in teams and coming together."

The challenge had four timed sections: four-hour sections on Friday night, Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon, and a two-hour conclusion Saturday evening. The 34 mission site challenges, as well as the additional competition elements, are incredibly taxing on cardiovascular endurance.

"Our most active team member completed 47 miles on foot over the competition," McCall noted. "The average for everyone else was 35, with rucksacks." Rucksacks are military backpacks for hauling gear and weigh around 50 pounds.

The ranger team formed after first-week tryouts in August 2021. Since then, they've trained five days a week at 6 a.m. each morning, alongside additional Saturday practices. This year's team was particularly inexperienced, with only two members having any ranger competition experience.

Cedarville's team officially entered the competition under nearby Central State University, which is the host school for this region of southwest Ohio. Since not all higher learning institutions have enough cadets to form their own teams, host schools are appointed for students from surrounding universities. However, every member of this weekend's winning team was a Cedarville University student.

McCall first competed in the Brigade Ranger Challenger — and won — during his freshman year, fall 2018.

"Getting to win this competition for a second time feels like I'm a part of a legacy," McCall added. "We did this freshman year, but this year, we get to lead the team to success."

With this victory secured, the Ranger team is actively training for the upcoming international Sandhurst competition at West Point Academy, which will take place during the last week of April 2022. During that two-day competition, Cedarville will go head-to-head with teams from military academies, the top two schools from each regional ranger competition, Australia, Britain, South Korea and many more.

“What I’m most grateful for with our success is that we get to keep training,” McCall said. “I love my team and watching them grow in skills and in relationship with one another. We get to encourage each other in our fitness and our faith. That is very special.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,715 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation, and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit cedarville.edu.

Written by Heidie Raine