

Soldier competes in extreme endurance event

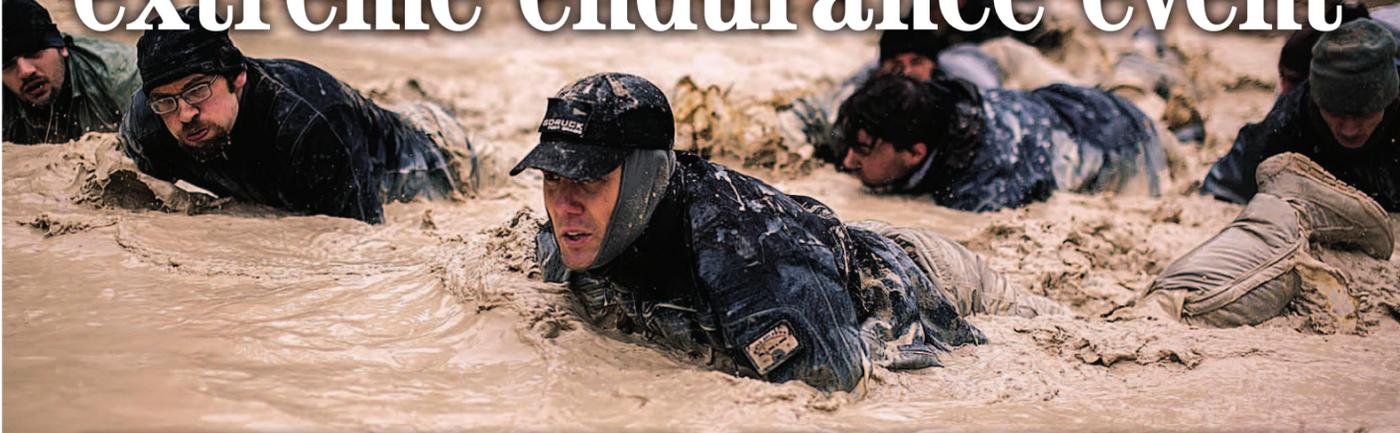


Photo by Paul Holston/Special to the Paraglide

Command Sgt. Maj. Eric Schmitz carries a 40 pound log at Hedrick Stadium to train for the upcoming Spartan Death Race.



Courtesy photo by Command Sgt. Maj. Eric Schmitz/525th BfSB

Eric Schmitz reaches to ring the cow bell at the top of one off the final obstacles in the South Carolina Spartan Best Race. When asked why he wears a kilt while racing, his typical response is, "because I can."

FINISH LINE

“Do you think the media should just cover the sports on the field?”



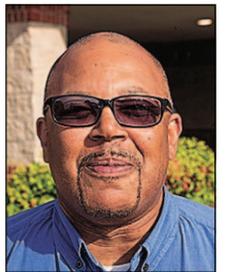
“Yes I do.”
— **Sgt. Michael Hart**
1st TSC



“Yes. Athletes aren’t politicians.”
— **Nastasha Duchannes**
DoD employee



“Yes because that’s their job.”
— **PV2 Sarah Simpkins**
44th Med Bde.



“Yes. It’s just about the sport.”
— **Kevin Williams**
AAFES employee

By **TOM McCOLLUM**
FORT BRAGG GARRISON PAO

Sir Edmund Hilary was the first westerner to reach the summit of the world’s tallest peak in the 1950s. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark explored the American western frontier in the early 1800s and Sir Ernest Shackleton led multiple expeditions to the South Pole in the early 1900s. They were all noted explorers in their day.

Command Sgt. Maj. Eric Schmitz must now be knowledgeable about their experiences and adventures (in detail) and be prepared to answer random question about them. He has to know all of this, plus his own personal limits, for a test of unknown scale or duration. He is not only looking forward to this, but he is paying to do this.

On June 27, Schmitz, the command sergeant major of the 525th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, will join 300 other elite, endurance athletes as they converge in Pittsfield, Vermont, for the Spartan Death Race.

Estimates are they only 30 of them will finish.

Unlike other endurance races that offer details of the challenges and maps, these athletes have no idea what to expect as the course map and list of challenges are kept secret. For an endurance athlete, not knowing where the light is at the end of the tunnel can be sheer torture.

In past races, they had to not only complete physical challenges, such as chop wood for two hours, but mental tests as well. In one test they had to memorize the names of the first 10 U.S. presidents, hike to the top of a mountain and repeat them in order. If they were wrong, they had to start that challenge all over again.

“I know very little about what I am about to face,” said the 22-year Army veteran. “I’ve learned that if you are going to do one of these races, think outside of the box when you do your training. You have to do your physical training differently. Road runs will not give you the right type of training.”

Thinking outside of the box is one of the reasons Soldiers on Fort Bragg may see him running the stairs and track at Hedrick Stadium while carrying a 40 pound log on his shoulders. Schmitz has to fit all of his training into a very tight time period.

“The hardest part about training for these races is finding the time,” said Schmitz. “Mostly I just do physical readiness training with the Soldiers but when we go for runs, I’ll carry a sandbag. On the weekends, I do more endurance training. I usually get up at 4 a.m. and get my training in before the Family gets up.”

“A lot of the time I will incorporate my Family into my training,” said the veteran of 11 other Spartan Races. “There have been several times I have loaded up my daughter in her backpack carrier, added two to four bricks to another smaller pack, and my wife and I have gone a hike. We get to spend time together and I get training in.”

“My wife and I have an agreement, I try to do

one race per month and the rest of the time I stay home and spend time with the Family. Most months I can do that, but some months there are a few races I really want to do so she gives me some slack on the agreement.”

“She definitely makes sure I have time to train, and on those weekends when I do not get training in, she will give me a hard time.”

Schmitz started competing in Spartan type races in 2009 while stationed in the United Kingdom.

“I had been running a long time and competed in a couple of ultra runs. While stationed in the UK, I saw a “Total Warrior” race and figured that looked interesting. I took about 8 to 10 senior non commissioned officers and we all had a blast. It was a great event. Later, we all did a Spartan race in the United Kingdom before we left.”

Since then, Schmitz has competed in 24-hour runs, raced in 15 obstacle course races, seven GORUCK events, he completed the Lookout

Mountain 50-miler and an Xterra off-road triathlon in 2012.

“Normally the hardest obstacles for me are the rope climbs and that’s because they place them towards the end where you start to get tired. I did an Ultra Beast and they had three rope climbs in it all near the end.”

While portions of a Spartan Race are difficult, nothing compares to doing hydro-burpees in thigh deep freezing water after rucking for 12 hours with 40 pounds on your back,” added Schmitz about one of his GORUCK experiences.

So why would a 42 year old Soldier want to compete in these races?

“It’s a challenge. I have been asked that a couple of times and I never have a good answer for it other than it keeps me young.”

“I will definitely continue to do these events. After the Death Race I am not sure where my focus will be. I have increased my GORUCK events this year and less Spartan races. After the Death Race I may take on my first, and last 100-miler.”



U.S. OPEN MILITARY TICKET POLICY

The U.S. Open Golf Tournament is coming to Pinehurst, North Carolina.

The military ticket offer will be available to personnel from Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy and the National Guard and Reserves. Proper ID is required for all tickets.

Active-duty military personnel will be provided with a complimentary gallery ticket during practice rounds.

Retired military personnel can purchase gallery tickets during the practice rounds at half-price (\$30). Proper ID will be required.

June 11, is Military Day and the USGA will provide active-duty military personnel with a complimentary Trophy Club ticket.

Full details on the U.S. Open Military Policy are available at www.usopen.com.