

sonia home

Subject: FW: News release - Wings of Blue Takes 47 Medals

From: Gutierrez, Barbara L CIV USAF USAFA USAFA/CMA

Sent: Friday, January 07, 2011 7:55 AM

Subject: News release - Wings of Blue Takes 47 Medals

News Release #003

Jan 7,

2011

WINGS OF BLUE TAKES 47 MEDALS AT NATIONALS

by David Edwards
Academy Spirit staff writer

U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo. -- The Wings of Blue parachute team might want to consider changing its name to Wings of Gold.

Air Force Academy cadets competing at the National Collegiate Parachute Championships in Eloy, Ariz., hauled in 47 medals and won gold in every event they entered save for two. Only a technicality kept the Academy team from making the medal count even more impressive.

Although 92 skydivers representing more than a dozen universities took part in the championship, it must have seemed as if the cadets were competing only against themselves.

"This year's performance is the best we have ever done in my 25 years coaching the team," Coach Bill Wenger said. "Out of 10 events and classes of events, we placed first in eight of them. For the first time, every cadet won a medal at the nationals. Our showing at the Nationals in all the events shows the overall strength of the team."

Participants had their pick of numerous events. The championship featured tests of two-, four- and six-way formation skydiving, vertical formation skydiving, classic individual and team accuracy, and sport accuracy.

Three of the events are divided into experience levels ranging from novice to intermediate to open. Mr. Wenger said that the team tries to enter every event at nationals, but it does not enter anyone at the novice level in the three applicable events.

The collegiate national championship is orchestrated by the U.S. Parachute Association, and according to the event website, this competition is the longest-running one in the organization's history.

Speaking of history, the Air Force Academy has a long track record of success at nationals. And this performance ranks among the most dominant.

Individual medal winners included cadets Jonathan Primeaux, John Nygard, Ben Barringer and Alexander Meyer. Cadet Meyer joined cadets Joshua LeMair, Eric Wallace and Kyle Yohe in winning team titles in two-way formation skydiving and classic accuracy. Cadet Nygard and his teammate on the Air Force Instinct duo, Cadet Robert Hemker, picked up the gold in two-way vertical formation skydiving.

About the only thing that stopped the cadets was the weather. An intense storm caused action on the second day of competition to be postponed. The event blog reported that "the drop zone was dramatically pelted with torrential rain, turning Skydive Arizona into a lake."

"The winds only affect the accuracy events, and it did indeed make these events very challenging," Mr. Wenger said. "There are four jumps in the accuracy events, and when the winds are constantly changing it makes it very challenging. For the other events, it was just a matter of waiting for the weather to clear enough to make the jumps. But as in any sport, waiting is often more difficult than jumping."

The Air Force Academy didn't have an absolute monopoly on gold medals. The U.S. Military Academy scored several victories as well, and West Point Cadet Kurt Yeager, a novice jumper, won the medal for Most Competitive Collegiate Competitor.

"I think the Wings of Blue are considered the number one collegiate parachute team in the country," Mr. Wenger said. "Year after year, the team's performance at the collegiate nationals and demonstrations around the country prove this."

Results from the National Collegiate Parachute Championships:

4-way FS Open

Air Force Impulse (Joshua LeMair, Alexander Meyer, Eric Wallace, Kyle Yohe)

4-way FS Advanced

West Point Indifference (Brett Jack, Christopher Liggett, Griffin Strader, Daniel Sullivan)

2-way FS

West Point Dumbrow (Christian Beckler, Kurt Yeager)

2-way VFS

Air Force Instinct (Robert Hemker, John Nygard)

6-way Speed

West Point Marianne and AJ (Brett Jack, Christopher Liggett, Anibal Lopez, Griffin Strader, Daniel Sullivan, Michael White)

Sport Accuracy

Novice: William Harris, UConn

Intermediate: Jonathan Primeaux, USAFA

Masters: John Nygard, USAFA

Classic Accuracy

Novice: Kurt Yeager, West Point

Intermediate: Ben Barringer, USAFA

Masters: Alexander Meyer, USAFA

Classic Team Accuracy

Air Force Lawn Darts (Joshua LeMair, Alexander Meyer, Eric Wallace, Kyle Yohe)

//SIGNED//

BARBARA GUTIERREZ

Parents' Liaison

U.S. Air Force Academy, CO

(719) 333-3828 Toll free 877-268-3383