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Sports Day wraps up Eagle Owl exercise

Exercise Eagle Owl's participate in annual Sports Day.

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Exercise Eagle Owl's annual Sports Day March 9 included soccer, softball, volleyball, golf, skeet/trap shooting, rugby and the multi-faceted Iron Major competition.

Students from the Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land) at the Defence Academy's Joint Services Command and Staff College of the United Kingdom travel to the United States each year to attend the two-week Eagle Owl training exercise with students in the Command and General Staff Officer Course.

Dr. Richard McConnell, an assistant professor in the Department of the Army Tactics at the Command and General Staff School, said the sports day is a capstone event of the training.

"The sports day is a great way to conclude the Eagle Owl cultural exchange," McConnell said. "Having officers from the two counterpart schools understand each others' processes is important toward any successful coalition building efforts we may undertake."

The sports day also offers an opportunity for the officers to participate in sports familiar and common to each culture. The CGSOC team was the overall winner, winning four of the seven events. U.K. won a very competitive soccer match by the score of 1-0 on a penalty kick and also won the rugby match, which was not counted toward determining the overall winner. CGSOC won volleyball 3-0, softball 23-2, golf 4-0, and skeet/trap 182-178. The U.K. won the Iron Major competition, which was a timed event.

British Army Maj. Lee Waghorn, chairman of the U.K. Infantry Corps football team, served as the lead official for the soccer match. During intermission, he said after 45 minutes of play, the CGSOC team had the better chances at a goal.

"I volunteered my services to officiate soccer, which we call football," Waghorn said. "We have a prevailing perception in the U.K. that the ladies in the U.S. play soccer real well and the men do not. But, this is a really competitive match with great plays on both sides of the ball."

Although the final softball game score would indicate a one-sided affair, CGSOC head coach Maj. Kenneth Green said there were many moments of good sportsmanship and nice play on both sides. He said that the act of fielding with a glove was new to the British players.

"We have a distinct advantage in softball because the sport is very common in the U.S.," Green said. "The differences between skills utilized to play softball and those used in the U.K. to play cricket are relatively significant. I think they do very well for not having played softball."

CGSOC softball team first baseman Maj. Bryan Ralls said a big takeaway for many from both countries was getting to know each other. He said the Eagle Owl Sports Day provides an opportunity to interact and gain cultural understanding.

"We've learned lots about each other after duty hours and outside of the classrooms, too," Ralls said. "I was able to work in a small group with six British officers during the two-week exercise. The experience of learning about each other was enlightening in that many of our inherent differences in military processes are actually very parallel in applied effectiveness."

Lt. Col Ryan Strong, CGSOC student detachment commander, said the the most rigorous activity at the Eagle Owl sports day was competing in the Iron Major events.

"Competitors must complete a series of events that began and ended at Harney Sports Complex," Strong said. "We keep a leaderboard that tracks individual progress in real time."

British Maj. Angela Laycock began the Iron Major course with a dummy carry shuttle run. Men carried a 170-pound dummy and women a 130-pound dummy for 50 meters, dropped it and then sprinted 100 meters.

"Keeping a good grip on the dummy was a challenge," Laycock said. "The weight was not too terribly inconvenient. On to the next event."

Upon completing the dummy carry, competitors ran to Harney pool and swam 400 meters. Laycock began and ended the swim with a similar pace. She said that endurance is the ultimate key for success within the overall competition.

"The challenge for me was to keep focused in the pool and not get off track or bored while swimming the laps," Laycock said. "I enjoy swimming in the ocean, which is a different environment than swimming in a pool. I think my time was good though."



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

U.K. Maj. James Scott carries a 170-pound dummy in one of several Iron Major events during Eagle Owl Sports Day March 9 at Harney Sport Complex. The U.K. team won the Iron Major challenge, with U.K. Majors Josh Vause and Claire Hall the top male and female competitors. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp

From there she ran to the Harney Annex where Iron Major competitors did 100 weighted squats. The weight was 95 pounds for men and 65 pounds for women. Laycock said keeping her form while lifting the weight was important toward overall endurance and achieving her best possible time in the competition.

"I had good form during the squats," Laycock said. "Pacing was important near the end."

Immediately after completing the 100 weighted squats, Laycock then completed 100 burpees, which is a full body exercise that involves nearly every major muscle group.

After the burpees, competitors grabbed a rucksack that was weighted 45 pounds for men and 30 pounds for women, and then ran the trail around Trails West Golf Course for 4.25 miles.

"I had stamina and strength in my legs during the run," Laycock said.

After the run, all of the Iron Major competitors returned to the annex where their respective running time stopped. They then had 10 minutes to complete as many pull-ups possible. Each pull-up reduced their time by five seconds for men and eight seconds for women.

They then did five minutes worth of kettle bell swings. Each swing reduced their overall time by two seconds. After the kettle bell swings the final event was the wall ball toss. Those competitors who scored the lowest overall times were the eventual Iron Major winners. Laycock finished 10th overall.

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