

Aiming High at the Air Force Nationals!

What a memorable roller-coaster! After nearly five years of dreaming, hoping, planning, (then plans dashed!), pushing forward, and finally succeeding, Sports Network International proudly introduced a remarkable, single-service JROTC drill competition. The low clouds outside couldn't dampen the high flying spirits inside the Prince George's Sports & Learning Complex -- what a day!

Thirty-eight drill teams from fourteen states participated in the inaugural **Air Force JROTC National Drill Championships** competition. Planned to be held in the Nation's Capital each Spring, the "Air Force Nationals" are an exciting blend of Unarmed and Armed competition divisions performing in both basic drill events and exhibition style events.

On hand from AFJROTC Headquarters, **Colonel Brian King** had the opportunity to see a great deal of the competition, interact with the cadets during the day, as well as deliver some poignant closing comments to the assembled cadets and instructors. This support meant a great deal to the cadets, as well as the Air Force judges and support staff that selflessly devoted themselves to the task of providing the finest drill competition possible to the solid young cadets who gave a supreme effort throughout the day.

ARMED DIVISION

The Armed Division was a free-for-all that was up for grabs between several great schools until the last event was complete. Everyone held their breath as no clear overall winner was apparent from the event trophies distributed at the Awards Ceremony. Climbing to the top of this highly competitive event was **Lackey High School** from **Indian Head, Maryland**. The **Ruff Ryders** drill team was on top of their game, grabbing a top three finish in EVERY team event (1st-Inspection; 2nd-Regulation, Color Guard; 3rd-Exhibition). Lackey HS grabbed their championship the old fashioned way -- they EARNED IT with long hours of practice leading up to the event.

Just behind in the runner-up position by just a single quality point was **Hialeah HS**. The **Vipers** drill team earned two 1st place finishes (Regulation, Color Guard) and a 3rd place finish (Inspection), but a tough 4th place finish in Exhibition drill cost them a chance at grabbing both the Armed and Unarmed championships!

Finishing in 3rd place overall was the highly touted unit from **C.E. King HS**. With excellent 1st place Exhibition and 2nd place Inspection finishes, along with a solid 4th place Color Guard finish, only a soft 6th place finish in the always-tough Regulation competition kept the **King Thunder** drill team out of the Overall trophies.

Oak Ridge HS turned a few heads with their strong 2nd place Exhibition finish, along with a 3rd place Regulation performance. **Terry Sanford HS** carted home some hardware, showing all-around strength gaining three 5th place team finishes (Inspection, Color Guard, and Exhibition).

UNARMED DIVISION

The Unarmed Division competition was a real treat to watch. Geographic differences provided diverse drill styles, all excellent in their own way. As the scores began to come in, it was clear that one school had taken control of the field and was leaving the rest in the dust. **Hialeah High School** from **Hialeah, Florida** blew the judges away, winning three of four events (Inspection, Color Guard and Exhibition) and finishing in 4th place in the remaining Regulation event. The national powerhouse **Sinisters** drill team hone their craft and dazzle spectators annually with top finishes at the showcase **National High School Drill Team Championships** in Daytona Beach, Florida.



Colonel Brian King, Director, Air Force Junior ROTC, was a valued spectator at the AF Nationals event, posing here just prior to the Awards Ceremony with Hialeah HS cadets from the National Runner-up Vipers drill team.

A very tight battle ensued for 2nd & 3rd place. Coming down to the last event, **Southern Regional HS** edged out the hard chargers from **Sandalwood HS**. Overall consistency distanced both programs from the rest of the field. While neither school captured a single event, they finished strong in all. Southern Regional's **Blue Knights** drill team garnered three trophy finishes (2nd-Inspection, 3rd-Regulation, 5th-Color Guard) while the Sandalwood **Silver Eagles** were just nosed out, managing two trophy finishes (2nd-Exhibition, 5th-Inspection).

Other fine performances came from: **C.E. King HS** (1st-Regulation, 4th-Inspection, Exhibition); **Newburgh Free Academy** (2nd-Regulation, 3rd-Color Guard); **Bolingbrook HS** (2nd-Color Guard, 3rd-Exhibition); and **Terry Sanford HS** (4th-Color Guard).

Special thanks goes out to all of the local DC area schools that assisted greatly with the planning and execution of this unprecedented drill competition. Sports Network International looks forward to continuing this wonderful event for Air Force cadets around the United States to participate in this first-class drill event, while taking the opportunity to tour the Nation's Capital.

Schools having questions regarding the event, or programs looking to make themselves a part of the AF Nationals are urged to go to the homepage (www.thenationals.net/af-nationals.htm) of the event on the internet. The official event invitation and registration form for schools, as well as other important event information can be found there. If you prefer, these forms can be faxed directly to your school by Sports Network International. Good luck to all Air Force programs throughout the new school year!