

Cross into the BLUE at the Air Force Nationals

Air Force cadets & instructors converge on the Nation's Capital and push back the envelope to find the best and brightest drill teams the Air Force has to offer.

THIRTY-NINE highly motivated schools with sixty drill teams from sixteen states were a part of history at the 2nd ANNUAL Air Force JROTC National Drill Championships. With historic Washington, DC as the backdrop, each Spring the "Air Force Nationals" provides an exciting blend of Armed and Unarmed competition divisions exclusively for AFJROTC cadets from across the country.

On hand from HQ AFOATS/JR, Col. Brian King had the unique opportunity to see much of the event and was highly impressed! More importantly, Col. King was able to interact with hundreds of cadets during the day, as

*Both drill competitions
feature four team events
within both the
Armed & Unarmed Divisions:
Inspection, Regulation,
Color Guard & Exhibition*

well as deliver a strong address at the closing-night Awards Ceremony. His attendance and the on-going support of HQ AFOATS/JR make this event better for all participating schools. Every cadet in attendance that day will remember their weekend experience at the Air Force Nationals long after their AFJROTC days are behind them!

ARMED DIVISION

The Armed Division was a battle between six schools throughout the day. The slightest mistake by these top finishers affected the entire event finish. The tension hung thick in the air at the awards ceremony as no clear overall winner was apparent as the event trophies worked their way from the stage to the bleachers.

Using consistency as the key to success, **Coventry HS** from **Coventry, Rhode Island** grabbed the Armed National Championship. The **Red Falcons** were the only drill team in the entire event to trophy in all four team events, despite failing to win any single event! (2nd-Inspection, Regulation, and Color Guard; 5th-Exhibition). Coventry worked hard for their championship and it showed. Led by long-time drill guru **MSgt. Dick LeBel**, the Coventry Armed drill team capped a strong drill season with their win in the Nation's Capital!

Hialeah HS again grabbed the runner-up position. The **Vipers** drill team from **Hialeah, Florida** for the second year in a row earned two 1st place finishes (this year, in Inspection & Regulation) but a 4th place Color Guard finish and a 9th place finish in Exhibition cost them a chance at grabbing the title! Finishing in 3rd place overall was the 2001 Armed Champion **Lackey HS**. The **Ruff Ryders** again finished strong, capturing both the Color Guard and Exhibition competitions, but a very soft 12th place finish in Regulation drill killed the possibility of a repeat championship.

Other strong Armed Division finishes were marked by: **Central HS** (Exhibition-2nd); **Largo HS** (Color Guard-3rd); **Southeast HS** (Inspection-3rd, Exhibition-4th, Regulation-5th); **Anchor Bay HS** (Exhibition-3rd, Inspection-4th); and **Surrattsville HS** (Regulation-3rd, Inspection-5th).

UNARMED DIVISION

The Unarmed Division was another classic "battle to the finish!" So many fine schools put forth solid displays of drill talent; making for a difficult day all around for the judges! When the battle was over, a state powerhouse stepped up and rang the bell as **Southern Regional HS** from **Manahawkin, New Jersey** captured the Unarmed Championship. The **Blue Knights** drill team powered their way to 1st place in

both Inspection & Regulation and a 5th place finish in Color Guard. A poor finish in Exhibition opened the door, but no other team had the overall strength to take advantage. Trained and prepared by **MSgt. Lee Messina** (check out their awesome website at: www.srsd.org/jrotc), the drill masters from the Garden State look to continue their dominance into 2003 and beyond. Just missing an Unarmed championship by a single

quality point, **Lackey HS** put forth a supreme effort but landed just short. Displaying great balance, the **Ladies of Destruction** trophied in two events (4th-Inspection, 5th-Exhibition) while finishing no lower than 8th in any event.

Hialeah HS nabbed a 3rd place overall finish. The **Sinisters** drill team earned two 1st place finishes (Color Guard, Exhibition) but poor Inspection & Regulation events cost the Sinisters a shot at the title.

Other top Unarmed Division finishes included: **Sandalwood HS** (2nd-Inspection & Color Guard); **Southeast HS** (2nd-Exhibition, 4th-Regulation); **Walter Stebbins HS** (2nd-Regulation); **Surrattsville HS** (3rd-Regulation, 4th-Exhibition); **Newburgh Free Ady.** (3rd-Inspection); **Sandalwood HS** (3rd-Color Guard) and **Oxon Hill HS** (3rd-Exhibition).

Rarely do cadets get the chance to participate in a first-class drill event while also touring the capital of our great nation. Changes are in store for the 2003 AF Nationals making it even better! Check out the official SNI drill website at: (<http://drill.thenationals.net>). We at SNI hope to see you next year in the Nation's Capital for an exciting showing of Air Force JROTC drill excellence!



Coventry High School from Coventry, Rhode Island displays the joy that comes with capturing an Air Force Armed Division National Championship.