Press Release

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Fort Drum FMWR Combine Challenge showcases Soldiers’ athleticism

FORT DRUM, N.Y. -- They couldn’t settle it with a test of explosive power, so it came down to a battle of reps.

The first Combine Challenge at Atkins Functional Fitness Facility on April 25 was a test of strength, endurance, and speed. But it also showcased Soldiers’ tenacity and relentless pursuit to win, as the contest went long into tiebreaker rounds to determine the victor.

Six competitors went through a round of four events: the sled push-and-pull, 50-yard dash, vertical jump and 225-pound bench press. When no clear winner could be determined, three finalists went back to the vertical jump test.

Spc. Darius Harkness, a physical therapy specialist with U.S. Army Medical Department Activity, set the bar high with a 2’4” leap, only to be matched by Staff Sgt. Nick Brown, with 91st Military Police Battalion. Both added another inch to their jump, going into a final round of bench presses.

Ultimately, Brown eked out the win with 15 reps.

“I didn’t think there would be that many tiebreakers, but this was good,” he said. “It was challenging – especially that push-and-drag.”

The vertical jump test is a new addition to the array of functional fitness equipment at Atkins.

“That’s not tested in the military, so we got to see how we measured,” Brown said. “And it gives you something you can look forward to improving on.”

Brown said he focuses on bodybuilding, but he adds powerlifting movements and cardio into his workouts.

“I’m motivated to being a good leader and to lead from the front,” he said. “I’ve got Soldiers who just seem to get younger and younger the longer I stay in. So, I want to stay fit and continue to set that example for them.”

Capt. Tyler Knutson, with 91st Military Police Battalion, recorded the most bench press reps during the Combine – 26 – but was eliminated in the tiebreaker after a 2’1” vertical jump.

“I thought this was a lot of fun and it really tested us physically,” he said. “It was cool to be see what we all could max on each event.”

In a gym environment, Knutson said he normally works one muscle group, whereas the Combine tested lower-body explosive power, upper-body strength, and overall endurance.

“This was a lot more cardiovascular and then the ability to recover quickly to go to the next event,” he said. “But I took this as a challenge to see where I can improve myself.”

Knutson said he has worked with Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) professionals within the 91st MP Battalion.

“Our strength coach has given us a lot of different methods to work into programs for our company and battalion,” he said. “And it’s also given us a lot of insight into how different workout methodologies work.”

Tess Bachtel, Atkins assistant manager, said she was impressed with the Soldiers’ competitiveness and how they rallied one another to perform their best.

“We were looking for a new challenge we could offer, something completely different,” she said. “Sometime people get kind of stuck in the rut with the same events, and then we don’t get a lot of people showing up. So, not only did this spark Soldiers’ interest, but it can also spark their interest into some of the new programs here and get more foot traffic into Atkins.”

For more information about upcoming Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation competitions and fitness programs, visit [www.facebook.com/FtDrumFitness](https://usg01.safelinks.protection.office365.us/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2FFtDrumFitness&data=05%7C02%7Clisa.r.albrecht.civ%40army.mil%7C9e8b45c34fd9438603fa08dc6a09e0c7%7Cfae6d70f954b481192b60530d6f84c43%7C0%7C0%7C638501838234951217%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Jgwlk%2BUJ9bbz1hBOqgsZ9gbmlIGqfh2P89hyxJJkljk%3D&reserved=0).

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Photo Captions:

Combine 1 – Staff Sgt. Nick Brown, with 91st Military Police Battalion, performs a vertical leap during a tiebreaker round at the Combine Challenge on April 25 inside Atkins Functional Fitness Facility. Brown emerged the overall winner in the four-event competition. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

Combine 2 - Fort Drum Soldiers test their strength, endurance, and speed during the Combine Challenge on April 25 at Atkins Functional Fitness Facility. Six competitors went through a round of four events: the sled push-and-pull, 50-yard dash, vertical jump and 225-pound bench press. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

Combine 3 - Spc. Darius Harkness, Staff Sgt. Nick Brown, Capt. Tyler Knutson emerged as the finalists at the first Fort Drum FMWR Combine Challenge on April 25 inside Atkins Functional Fitness Facility. The four-event competition was a test of strength, endurance, and speed as Soldiers demonstrated their tenacity during extended tiebreaker rounds. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)