

South Dakota National Guard

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152nd CSSB hosts first annual best squad competition

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BROOKINGS, S.D. – The 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion of the South Dakota Army National Guard hosted its first annual Best Squad Competition at Dakota Nature Park Sept. 11, bringing together soldiers from all of the battalion’s associated units for only the second time since the 152nd was established.

The event also marked the first time the entire battalion trained together since transitioning to a new commander in June.

“Lt. Col. Nathan Moore has taken command and we have plans that this will be an annual training event,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Schmidt, senior enlisted leader of the 152nd. “It was very fortunate that Lt. Col. Moore observed the battalion’s first collective training exercise in May with the outgoing commander to get an assessment of what the staff and troops were working toward and to continue that momentum.”

The competition challenges each squad of soldiers academically, mentally, physically and technically using multiple tasks focused on key areas including land navigation, setting up a SINCGARS radio, medical first aid on a casualty, call for medical evacuation, weapon familiarization, preparing a range card and preventative maintenance checks and services on a vehicle.

“The lanes chosen for this event are squad leader, fire team leader and core-level soldier tasks,” said Schmidt. “It goes back to readiness – we want to increase readiness and make it relevant rather than randomly picking seven or eight different tasks to evaluate.”

The competition also demonstrates the long-standing relationship of mutual support between South Dakota State University’s Reserve Officer Training Corps and the SDARNG.

“It’s very important we have a good relationship,” said Cadet Tyler Murray of the ROTC program. “We’re helping them out and able to provide personnel and some of our knowledge to run this lane, and the Guard helps us out a lot by getting us equipment and access to assets they have on their side that we don’t.”

The competition provided the seven participating squads a meaningful experience individually and as a team in a motivational and challenging environment.

“With the PMCS lane, everyone pretty much knew what they were doing so we could all accomplish that task collectively,” said Sgt. Daniel Fossum, 730th Area Support Medical Company. “As a team, we were all happy to be here and participate – we all had a good time and learned something too.”

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Competitions like these provide an opportunity to train participants to return to their respective units with experience and knowledge to share, and it helps identify candidates to represent the unit at the state's Best Warrior Competition the following spring.

"We always try to send our best and brightest; whether it's the Best Warrior Competition or Best Squad Competition, we're trying to send our best representatives," said Schmidt. "They go back to their companies and they're able to assist in that training at the company level.

"The last couple of years we haven't been able to come together with the pandemic going on and now we're able to. That's why we all joined the service – for the camaraderie and Esprit de Corps."

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220911-Z-JQ500-1109: A squad of soldiers from the 730th Area Support Medical Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, prepare range cards during the 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion's first annual Best Squad Competition at Dakota Nature Park in Brookings, S.D., Sept. 11, 2022. The competition challenged seven squads of soldiers from each of the 152nd's associated units mentally, physically and technically using multiple tasks focused on core-level soldier skills. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher Valdez)



220911-Z-TW084-2033: U.S. Army Spc. Mikaela Birath, 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, performs medical first aid on a casualty during the 152nd's first annual Best Squad Competition at Dakota Nature Park in Brookings, S.D., Sept. 11, 2022. The competition challenged seven squads of soldiers from each of the 152nd's associated units mentally, physically and technically using multiple tasks focused on core-level soldier skills. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce)



220911-Z-JQ500-1166: U.S. Army Sgt. Conor Boone, 730th Area Support Medical Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, performs maintenance checks at the 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion's first annual Best Squad Competition at Dakota Nature Park in Brookings, S.D., Sept. 11, 2022. The competition challenged seven squads of soldiers from each of the 152nd's associated units mentally, physically and technically using multiple tasks focused on core-level soldier skills. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher Valdez)



220911-Z-TW084-2019: U.S. Army Sgt. Braxton Farmen, 740th Transportation Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, assembles a weapon during the 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion's first annual Best Squad Competition at Dakota Nature Park in Brookings, S.D., Sept. 11, 2022. The competition challenged seven squads of soldiers from each of the 152nd's associated units mentally, physically and technically using multiple tasks focused on core-level soldier skills. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce)



220911-Z-JQ500-1059: U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Keith Armstrong, Reserve Officer Training Corps, South Dakota State University, evaluates a squad of soldiers creating range cards during the 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion's first annual Best Squad Competition at Dakota Nature Park in Brookings, S.D., Sept. 11, 2022. The SDSU ROTC program sent a squad of cadets to compete as well as cadre to support the competition. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher Valdez)



220911-Z-JQ500-1018: Soldiers of the 730th Area Support Medical Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, run to their next squad lane during the 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion's first annual Best Squad Competition at Dakota Nature Park in Brookings, S.D., Sept. 11, 2022. The competition challenged seven squads of soldiers from each of the 152nd's associated units mentally, physically and technically using multiple tasks focused on core-level soldier skills. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher Valdez)