

The Wilderness Challenge 10-Year Anniversary Spotighting



Team 107:
Trample the
Weak and
Hurdle the
Dead.

1. When was your first WC? How did you hear about it? How did you do?

Sue Himes: I did my first WC in 2006. I heard about it from one of my co-workers at the Navy and Marine Corps Intelligence Training Center who wanted to put a team together. Our team, Team NMITC, was in the USMC category since I (the token female) was the only Navy person and the three guys on my team were all USMC. We ended up winning the USMC title and came in second overall.

Todd Gagnon: 2004 - S.N.A.G.S. A friend at work invited me to join his team. We placed 4th in the Navy category and 13th overall.

Josh Lafferty: In 2006, I competed with Trample the Weak and Hurdle the Dead. My girlfriend (now my wife) Danielle told me the team needed a third male, so I decided to give it a try. We finished as the top Navy team and third place overall.

2. How much training do you put into this event? Are you able to get any training done together as a team?

SH: I didn't put as much training into this event as I would have liked to, but I was limited by time and training primarily for the Marine Corps Marathon. Based on my experience in 2006, I knew that it would be enough training to get me in shape for WC, but I wanted to get some mountain biking in due to the more technical nature of the mountain bike course. I was able to get a bit of mountain biking in before the race, but not as much as I would have liked. I was most nervous about the biking portion going into this year's event.

TG: Lots of running, some biking, little water time. Normally we don't have time to get together as a team.

JL: In 2006, I was training for the Marine Corps Marathon, so I was in decent running shape. I was plagued by a number of nagging injuries going into 2009, so I just had to essentially gut it out because my training was very limited. The fact that I was mentally prepared for what I would face helped make up for what I lacked in training.

3. What is the hardest event and why?

SH: I still think the mountain biking is the hardest event due to the technical nature of it, although this year wasn't as technically challenging as I was expecting, which was ok!

TG: Duckie, because it's the toughest to train for and requires some specific skill to succeed.

JL: To me, the hardest event is the 8K trail run. It's like the 'time trial' for WC and sets the stage for the rest of the events. Our team always has really good speed/distance runners, so as a former sprinter (400m/200m), I feel a lot of pressure to not hold the team back. I'm a decent runner, but maintaining sub seven-minute miles over a five-mile course is no picnic for me.

4. Out of the entire weekend, what do you look forward to the most?

SH: I look forward to crossing the finish line, getting cleaned up and looking back on all the fun we had over the course of two days.

TG: The whole second day is great (no breaks), but I still like the 13-mile hike/run best. I love the challenge of it for a finishing event.

JL: I like the challenge of the water events. They really take me out of my normal element and I get a rush when we hit the tough rapids! The element of danger heightens my sense of awareness, and really forces me to focus on the task at hand.

5. What keeps bringing you back?

SH: The challenge of the race and the camaraderie you develop with your teammates and the other competitors over the course of the weekend. I love spending two days being physically active outdoors, doing things I don't normally do (like rafting and paddling or running on trails) in the beautiful wilderness.

TG: Best event I have ever attended; well organized, dedicated to active duty and a great way to enjoy other service members in a setting outside normal military duty.

JL: The event is well-coordinated, the staff is great and the race is challenging. I love the West Virginia setting, and really enjoy competing with my teammates and fellow competitors. It's one of those events that make our military culture seem a little more special.

6. If someone was undecided about competing in this event, what would you say to them?

SH: Just do it; you'll love it. There are some teams that are really competitive and out there to win, but most people are just out there to have fun. Mike does a great job of making sure the race exudes a strong sense of fun, friendly competitiveness. It's challenging but not un-doable.

TG: This event will truly make you feel special. The MWR team makes this a weekend for active duty members to feel special for completing such a tough challenge and just for serving our country. It's extremely well organized, a great deal for the cost of entry and a true challenge that will be rewarding.

JL: Take the plunge! You don't need to be a world-class athlete to be a part of it. Just come out and have fun it that's what you want to do. There's a little something for everyone, and I've always come away with a sense of pride when I successfully cross the finish line.