



Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Russell, from left, Staff Sgt. Christopher Croslin and Staff Sgt. Jonathan Miller led the way on a ruck march during the 2014 competition at Fort Jackson, S.C. (Photo by Jonathan (Jay) Koester / NCO Journal)

Drill Sergeant Competition Promises Action, Training, Not Much Sleep

By Jonathan (Jay) Koester - NCO Journal

It's not that Staff Sgt. Jonathan Miller, the 2014 U.S. Army Drill Sergeant of the Year, doesn't want to help the 14 competitors in the 2015 Drill Sergeant and AIT Platoon Sergeant of the Year competition. It's just that it can take a while to explain what the competition — scheduled for Sept. 7-10 at Fort Jackson, S.C. — entails.

“The list of things not to expect is a lot shorter than the list of what to expect,” Miller said. “What they can't expect is a lot of sleep. The competitors will be tested both physically and mentally, through a long list of tasks and events that will also test their competence and ability to instruct.”

The four-day competition includes obstacle courses, exams, a rappel tower and plenty of road marching. But

the most important thing that sets the competition apart, Miller said, is the key NCO skill of teaching.

“The thing that is vital to know about our competition is that we are the Army's elite trainers, and we encompass that in our competition,” Miller said. “We absolutely involve all the physical aspects and all the competency aspects, including exams and essays, requiring knowledge and the ability to articulate. But then we also have the added part of instruction. We have our drill sergeants and our AIT platoon sergeants instructing Soldiers, and they're evaluated on their ability to teach individual and collective tasks.

“Another important thing to consider about our competition is that you can't have the Best Warrior, Best

Sapper or Best Ranger without first being trained by a drill sergeant or AIT platoon sergeant,” Miller said. “These competitors represent the very best drill sergeants and AIT platoon sergeants the Army has to offer.”

The winners of last year’s competition — Miller; Staff Sgt. Christopher Croslin, 2014 Army Reserve Drill Sergeant of the year; and Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Russell, 2014 AIT Platoon Sergeant of the Year — helped organize this year’s event and will be there to inspire the competitors through the grueling days starting Sept. 7.

Last year’s event ended with a drill sergeant reunion dinner to honor the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Army Drill Sergeant School, plus the opening of a Drill Sergeant Hall of Fame. The drill sergeant reunion was so well received that the United States Army Drill Sergeant Association is planning another one at the end of the competition this year. The 51st anniversary reunion dinner will be Sept. 11 at Fort Jackson. All former drill sergeants — retired and currently serving in the Army — are invited to attend the competition and the reunion dinner.

Last year was the association’s first, so Miller is hoping the events continue to grow.

“We have a lot more members now. I’m hoping, as we all are in the association, that we continue to grow and that each year our celebration gets better and better,” Miller said. “Obviously, we can’t expect every former or current drill sergeant to show up every single year, but what I would love is when I’m retired, 30 years from now, to see the United States Army Drill Sergeant Association and the anniversary still going strong.”

Want to attend?

- For more information on the competition or the 51st anniversary events, including the reunion dinner, email or call Staff Sgt. Miller at jonathan.w.miller32.mil@mail.mil or 757-501-7022.
- You can also get more information, and fill out a RSVP form, at the drill sergeant association homepage at www.armydrillsergeants.com.
- Or find the association on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pages/The-United-States-Army-Drill-Sergeant-Association/725254827496768. ■



<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NCOJournal>

<https://twitter.com/NCOJournal>

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NCO Journal, the U.S. Army, or the Department of Defense.

