

April 1, 2009

“JROTC Orienteering Team Goes to Nationals”

On April 17th, the **Plano East Senior High School JROTC Orienteering Team** will go to the **U.S. Army Military Academy at West Point, New York** to compete in the 2009 U.S. Interscholastic Championship, the annual national orienteering competition. This is the third time the Panther Battalion will compete at Nationals.

Coach and Army Instructor **Master Sergeant Darrell Crews** says this year’s team is the best he has ever trained. Statistically, the Plano East Orienteering team ranked first in the state of Texas in 2005-2006 and 2007-2008. The North Texas Orienteering Association’s “Traveling First Place Team Trophy” currently is displayed in the Plano East Senior High School Panther Battalion trophy case.

With a **4th place** ranking in the nation in 2007 and a **3rd place** ranking in 2008, these Panthers are eager to demonstrate their skills in map reading and physical endurance. They are hungry for the taste of the rigorous competition at West Point, noted for its steep inclines and magnetic attraction for the toughest teams in the country. Orienteering is a unique sport that is open to all competitors, novices as well as those with advanced skills.

At Nationals, the difficulty of each course is represented by a different color. The Panther Battalion cadets will challenge all competitors on each course level. These courses range from novice to advanced and are colored **White, Yellow, Orange, Brown, Green, Red, and Blue**. The length of a white course, the novice level, is about 2 kilometers long with a 30 meter rise in elevation. Blue, the advanced course, is 10.5 kilometers long with a 435 meter rise in elevation. The challenge of orienteering is the ability to navigate one’s self through a series of set points, overcoming many obstacles such as hills, brush, thorns, and maybe even bodies of water.

In the words of **Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Bernard Aikens**, who serves as the Senior Army instructor for Plano East Senior High School, “Our Orienteering team thrives on the difficulty in maneuvering through underbrush, mud, and forestry.” This national level competition is both the biggest challenge and opportunity the team trains for each year.

Panther Battalion National Orienteering Team



Front Row from left to right: c/1SG Shannon Albracht, c/1LT Karen Rivera, c/1SG Sabrynna Gibson, c/PFC Jake Hardway, c/PVT Alyssa Reyna

Center Row from left to right: c/CPT Megan Frank, c/1LT Siddharth Patel, c/MAJ Allie George, c/PFC Arnaldo Vasquez, c/PFC Stephen Vinson, c/CPL Eric Parker

Back Row from left to right: Army Instructor MSG (Ret) Darrell Crews, c/1LT Corey Lilly, c/1LT Paul Benson, Orienteering Executive Officer c/LTC Brett Donmoyer, c/CPT Jason Dill, c/1LT James Davis