

Dynasties & New Blood Pave the Navy Way

Would any of the Navy's finest schools achieve the elusive goal of dethroning multi-year national champion Flour Bluff High School under the blue skies of Pensacola, Florida?

Every Spring, the best of the best from each Area in Navy JROTC travel far and wide to test their overall mettle in the arduous Navy JROTC Academic, Athletic & Drill Championships. The competition is always fierce and a genuine treat for competitors and spectators alike. These tenacious young squids converge annually on the home of the Blue Angels, NAS Pensacola, Florida to compete for the highly coveted title at the "Navy Nationals".

After the dynasty from Flour Bluff HS earned a razor-thin Championship in 2005, hope sprang eternal from many competitors that they could vanquish the New York Yankees of the drill world. But champions of this caliber have a heart and soul that will not allow them go quietly into that dark night. If someone was going to best Flour Bluff, they would have to take the crown away as this proud program was not going to give away anything.

The overall Navy Nationals competition is a totally unique experience in the world of high school athletic competitions through its variety and intensity. Much like active-duty military life can be, the event maintains "hours of waiting followed by minutes of terror!" A long 14-hour competition day kicks off the event on Friday beginning at 0700. Early school registration on Friday morning leads every competing cadet into the meticulous Unit Personnel Inspection (UPI) competition. Here, hard-boiled Navy Chiefs scour every competing cadet only to be followed immediately by Marine judges evaluating the Color Guard units. Both events' "by-the-book" nature and rigid uniformity give even the most casual onlooker a moment's pause to watch the excellence on display.

All competing units are so well trained and prepared that the UPI event is typically separated by a small margin; but when the pencils were still this year, two schools distanced themselves from the field. **Flour Bluff HS** from **Corpus Christi, Texas** pounded out a slim victory early in this high point value event, besting **Boca Raton HS** from **Boca Raton, Florida**. In 3rd place, always tough **Lake Howell HS** from **Winter Park, Florida** also made a very strong showing.

The Color Guard event yielded the first dark horse victor as long-time attendee **East Aurora HS** from **East Aurora, Illinois** stunned many onlookers with a flawless colors presentation, just edging out always well-prepared **Centennial HS** (2nd place) from **Las Vegas, Nevada** and **Boca Raton HS** who trophied again with a 3rd Place finish.

Trading Class "A" duds for matching shorts and t-shirts, schools began to really sweat under the melting Florida sun during the

inspiring athletic event competition. Crowds of on-lookers cheer on their favorites, hoping to give them a boost of one or two push-ups or curl-ups that can sometimes mean the difference between winning & losing. It was a blow-out of record proportions as **Pearl River Central HS** from **Carriere, Mississippi** obliterated the competition in team Curl-ups; **Centennial HS** had a convincing victory in team Push-ups; while **Union Grove** from **McDonough, Georgia** hit the daily double by narrowly sweeping both the Oval & Shuttle Relay sprint events.

When all of the athletic scores were tabulated, **Pearl River Central HS** used their overall dominance in Curls-ups to eclipse a hard-charging **Centennial HS** who came in 2nd within the Overall Athletics event. A tight 3rd place Overall Athletic finish by **Lake Howell HS** put the Sunshine State schools from Area Seven (including **Boca Raton HS** and **Flanagan HS**) in a tightly-knit striking position to challenge multi-year champion Flour Bluff going into the final Day One team event, the Academic Exam.

With darkness firmly set-in on an event day that began long ago for most of these competitors, the 15-cadet academic teams put on their thinking caps and went after the 1,500 points up for grabs. No worries about perfect scores being churned out this year on the brutal 2006 exam with the median score dropping roughly 20% from previous years.

With the Scantron still smoking, the test may have been tougher, but the results were similar to past years. **Flour Bluff HS** soundly won the event, setting up a solid overall point lead going into the drill event competitions on Saturday. **Pearl River Central HS** had one of their finest academic performances, narrowly capturing 2nd place over the fantastic team effort put together by **Stephen F. Austin HS** from **Sugar Land, Texas** (3rd place).

Cadets and spectators alike hit their racks for a few hours of sleep before marching into the exciting drill phase of the competition. With four events all occurring simultaneously, keeping track of all of the drill action can be a bit daunting!

Many drill finishes were noteworthy, but the highlight had to be first time attendee **Patuxent HS** from **Lusby, Maryland** capturing both the Armed

& Unarmed Basic competitions! **Flour Bluff HS** captured 1st place in the Armed Exhibition event (as well as earning 1st place in Drill Overall) and annually strong **Junipero Serra HS** stepped up to win the Unarmed Exhibition event, giving them a strong 2nd place overall drill finish.

The famous **National Museum of Naval Aviation** (www.naval-air.org) plays host each year to the closing evening awards presentation. The ceremony is a memorable night of honor for these deserving youngsters. The evening kicked off with an outstanding keynote speech from Navy Nationals special guest speaker **Rear Admiral Gary R. Jones**, **U.S. Navy Commander, NSTC/Navy Region Midwest**.

Since the scores are not distributed in advance, everyone attending had the edge-of-your-seat excitement that helps to make the evening special. While many different schools took home trophies, as the night progressed it became apparent that the reign of **Flour Bluff HS** was to continue for a 10th consecutive year. The legends from Corpus Christi, Texas powered to a convincing Navy Nationals Championship Title.

Grabbing the Navy National Runner-up title was **Boca Raton HS**. Their finish was made all the more amazing as a late-entry snafu gave them just two solid weeks to prepare for the event! Just behind in 3rd place was the always-formidable **Centennial HS**. Schools looking for complete, top-to-bottom scoring should go to the official web home of the Navy Nationals at: <http://navy.thenationals.net>.

The support of NAS Pensacola, the Marines, the Navy Chiefs, the OCS Recruits and everyone else on base help to make this a special weekend all around. Words cannot express what they do for so many NJROTC cadets and their families. The event looks forward to returning in 2007 to this exceptional venue.



Flour Bluff HS from Corpus Christi, Texas proved their dominance in capturing their 10th consecutive Navy Nationals Overall Championship over an outstanding field of 23 NJROTC units from throughout the United States.