

## NHSDTC CHALLENGE LEVEL COMPETITION RESULTS

### Facing the "Challenge" at the Nationals

When you blaze a new trail, you have to find out who are the leaders and who are the followers. Twenty-six schools made the trip to Daytona Beach to "draw a line in the sand" in the inaugural Challenge Level competition at the 1997 Nationals. These highly motivated, up-and-coming programs put together a solid day of competition drill against their national peers.

The grit, determination and will-to-win was every bit as fierce at the Challenge Level event as it was at the Masters Level event that followed the next day. The Challenge Level competition at the Nationals brought together 26 schools looking to end their drill season against their peers in beautiful Daytona Beach, Florida at the National High School Drill Team Championships. The judges were highly impressed with the effort put forth by these newer, less experienced drill and ceremony units.

The five team events within each division (Inspection, Regulation, Color Guard, Squad/Element and Platoon/Flight Exhibition) gave these proud teams a chance to display what they have worked so hard to achieve. The nature of this event featured schools displaying strength in some events and weakness in others. The overall scoring was tight in many events. With schools attending from across the country, a wide diversity of drill styles were on display in every area of the Challenge Level Nationals competition.

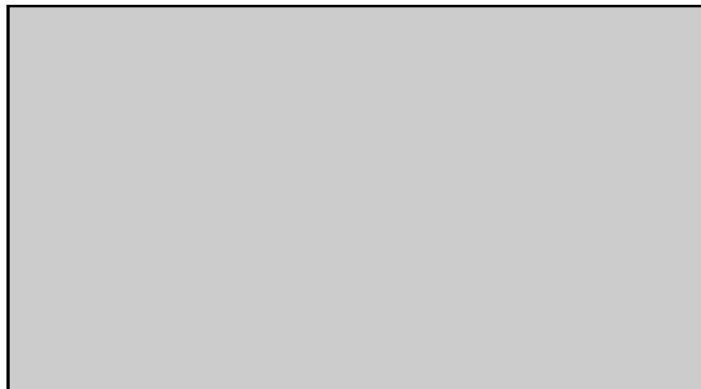
#### Armed Division Highlights

Paced by 1st place exhibition performances, the *Lords of Discipline* armed drill team from Oxon Hill HS achieved the overall championship within the armed division. Earning a 2nd place Regulation finish and a 3rd place Inspection finish helped this Oxon Hill, Maryland Air Force unit earn a Championship title, with a total score of 4,117 out of 6,000.

Cedar Shoals HS from Athens, Georgia displayed solid overall strength in capturing the Armed Runner-up title. The *Silent Knights* Army drill team gained a top five finish in four of the five team events (only missing out in Regulation) with two 2nd and two 5th place finishes, maintaining a solid 3,863 total points.

Other outstanding performances were on display by numerous armed schools including: New York MA *Silent Death* (1st place in Inspection and Regulation); Pine Ridge HS *Ladies of Distinction* (1st place Color Guard); Valley Forge MA *Blue Trojans* (2nd place in Inspection & Platoon Exhibition); Port St. Lucie HS *Fighting Jaguars* (3rd place finishes in Squad and Platoon Exhibition); and Forest Park HS *X-Cel* (three top five finishes - Inspection, Squad & Platoon Exhibition).

The Commander's Trophy is awarded based only on scores garnered by cadet commanders during Platoon Regulation drill. Cadet Knox from New York MA captured 1st place in the always tough Armed Division with a strong 289 point total (out of 350). Cadet Owens from Oxon Hill HS earned 2nd place (258 points) and Cadet Duverglas from Colonel White HS grabbed 3rd place (249 points).



Challenge Level trophies are spectacular at this novice-level, all-service drill spectacular.

#### Unarmed Division Highlights

In a tremendously exciting, tight competition, first year Nationals attendee, Wilby HS, displayed the type of preparation required to win at Daytona at any level. The Marine Corps *Wildcats* drill team from Wilby, Connecticut displayed great balance, gaining a 1st place finish (Element Exhibition), two 2nd place finishes (Regulation, Flight Exhibition) and a 3rd place (Inspection). These top placements gave their hard-nosed cadets an overall score of 4,037 out of 6,000 points.

First-year attendee Pine Ridge HS from DeLand, Florida just missed in their bid to gain an overall championship. The *Esoteric Reality* drill team was fantastic, gaining a top five trophy finish in ALL FIVE EVENTS! The Air Force program garnered 3970 points overall with a 1st place finish (Color Guard), a 2nd place finish (Inspection), two 3rd place finishes (Regulation, Flight Exhibition) and a 4th place (Element Exhibition).

Other strong Armed performances were on display by: Winsboro HS *LadyCats* (1st place Inspection and Flight Exhibition); Coventry HS *White Falcons* (1st place Regulation); East Boston HS *Jets* (2nd place Color Guard); Valley Forge MA *Gold Trojans* (2nd place Element Exhibition); James F. Byrnes HS *Nighthawks* (3rd place Color Guard); and Brentwood HS *Fighting Falcons* (3rd place Element Exhibition).

The Commander's Trophy competition was tough within the Unarmed Division. Cadet McKnight from Coventry HS captured 1st place with a strong 322 point total (out of 350). Cadet Vo from Wilby Hill HS earned 2nd place by one point (301 points) and Cadet Pittman from James F. Byrnes HS grabbed 3rd place (300 points).

A super Awards Ceremony was held immediately following the conclusion of the Armed and Unarmed knockout drills. This brief ceremony gave recognition to the individuals and the schools who helped to make the Challenge Level competition such a success in its inaugural year and a memorable part of their Junior ROTC program.

We at Sports Network salute the spirit, style and esprit-de-corps of the first-ever Challenge level attendees at the nationally-recognized National High School Drill Team Championships. We were honored by the sincere efforts and the total commitment put forth by so many instructors and cadets to prepare for and meet the "Challenge" at this truly unique and historic military drill competition.