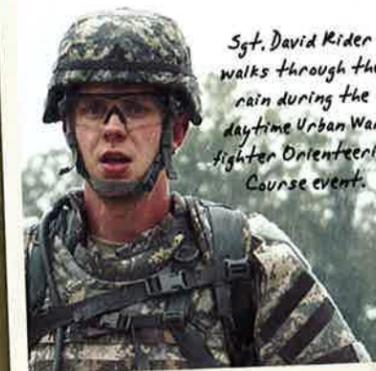


Photojournalist Timothy Hale spent a week at Fort Lee, Va., chronicling the journeys of two Soldiers representing the U.S. Army Reserve Command in their quest to become the best Soldiers in the Department of the Army. Although they came up short in winning their respective categories in the Best Warrior competition, they left an indelible mark during the competition that won't be forgotten. On the following pages are some of Hale's dispatches and images posted on the Army Reserve Best Warrior blog. To read entire dispatches go to: [www.bestwarrior.wordpress.com](http://www.bestwarrior.wordpress.com). To see more images, visit: [www.flickr.com/photos/myarmyreserve](http://www.flickr.com/photos/myarmyreserve).

— Paul R. Adams, Editor-in-Chief

# Best Warrior Dispatches

Flares and artillery simulators light up the sky as Spc. Joshua McDowell, right, scans his sector for a target during the Rifle Night Qualification event.



Sgt. David Rider walks through the rain during the daytime Urban Warfighter Orienteering Course event.



*McDowell, Rider represent Army Reserve at DA Best Warrior*  
FORTLEE, Va. — Sgt. David Rider and Spc. Joseph McDowell put their Army knowledge and skills to the test at the Department of the Army Best Warrior competition held here Oct. 18-22. The pair represented the command along with 22 other Soldiers and NCOs representing the other 11 major Army commands.

*While they did not take the top title of Soldier or NCO of the Year, it was not uncommon to hear organizers and event cadre speak highly of their skills during the week...*

Story and Photos By Timothy L. Hale  
Army Reserve Public Affairs

## Day 1 — Rider, McDowell tackle day one of the Army's Best Warrior Competition

Army Reserve Sgt. David Rider and Spc. Joshua McDowell had a good night sleep last night in preparation for this week's Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition at Fort Lee, Va.

Today's phase of the competition is an appearance board before a panel of Command Sgts. Maj. chaired by Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston.

Rider appeared before the board at 11:18 a.m. After approximately 20 minutes, he exited the room feeling somewhat relieved.

"Overall the performance was good as far as questions answered," Rider said. "I hit my normal 70-80 percent questions correct which I feel like I do on just about every board."

While somewhat nervous before entering the board room, McDowell said afterwards that he felt confident during his time in the room.

"It's nice to get through the first event and start preparing for the rest which I'm sure will be more physical and demanding," McDowell said.



Sgt. David Rider answers a question from Army Reserve Command Sgt. Maj. Michael D. Schultz.

## Day 2 — Rider, McDowell complete APFT at Army's Best Warrior Competition

As the fog hovered over Williams Stadium, bringing with it cooler temperatures, the action on the track heated up as Rider, McDowell and the other 22 NCOs and junior enlisted Soldiers were greeted with cheers and the 'Wave' around the stadium.

While both competitors said they felt they did well on the each phase of the test, they said the cheering crowds really helped to raise their enthusiasm.

"It was the most motivating PT test I've ever taken," McDowell said afterwards.

This morning was spent preparing their tactical gear with a PCC/PCI at the Post Field House.



## Day 3 — Rider, McDowell slosh through Day Urban Orienteering

Almost on cue, the skies opened up just as Rider and McDowell arrived along with the other 22 Army Best Warriors at the physical fitness track on the Ordnance Center and School side of Fort Lee for the start of the Daytime Urban Orienteering Course.

But as the old saying in the Army goes, 'If it ain't raining, we ain't training,' both Rider and McDowell donned their battle rattle, grabbed their clipboards, maps, plotters and DAGRS and set off on the roads around the post.

Their goal: find four strategically placed points and return to the start point before their three-hour time limit was up.

### McDowell 'skunks' competition, Rider has Top 4 finish

Don't let the headline fool you—McDowell and Rider had fantastic finish times during the Night Urban Orienteering Course.

The reference to the black and singularly wide white-striped mammal is because McDowell encountered what could be considered an early Mystery Task—negotiating around a skunk on the last of his four check points.

But have no fear, McDowell took care of the business at hand while his lane safety walker shared glances with the furry critter keeping it a safe distance away.

McDowell was the first of the 24 Warriors to cross the finish line, finding all four points in just over 40 minutes. The next closest junior enlisted Soldier came in around the 1:24 mark on the clock.

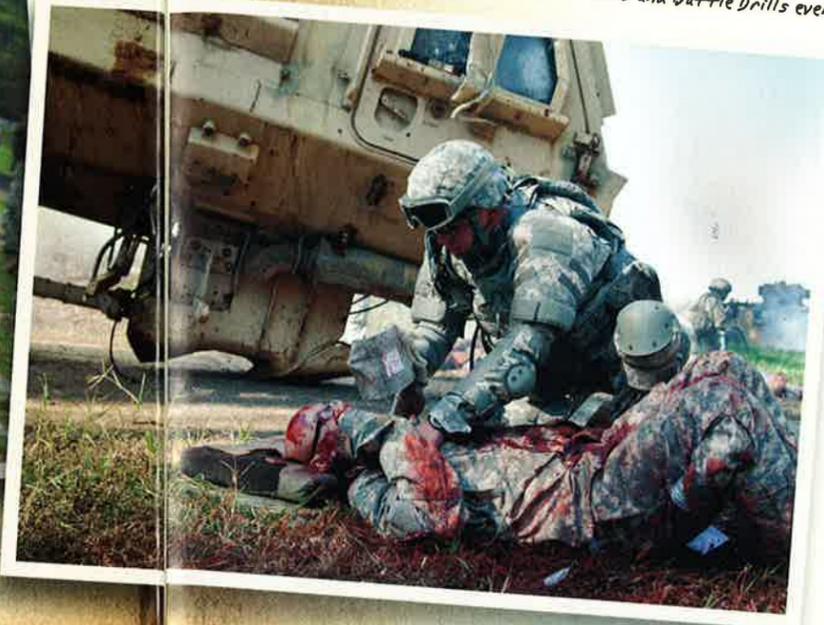
His Army Reserve battle buddy, Rider, came in fourth overall with 1:09 showing on the clock and he was the third NCO to cross the line.



Spc. Joshua McDowell plots a point during the daytime Urban War fighter Orienteering Course event.

LEFT: Spc. Joshua McDowell, front, and Sgt. David Rider step off their pace count during the daytime Urban War fighter Orienteering Course event.

BELOW: Sgt. David Rider treats simulated casualties on the Medical Trauma lane at the Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills event.



## Day 4 — McDowell, Rider press on through Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills

An early morning wake-up greeted McDowell and Rider as they set out for a series of events comprised of Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills.

There were a number of lanes, to include: Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT), convoy simulators, IED lane, 9mm lane and a medical trauma lane.

### McDowell, Rider send hot lead downrange

After a day that saw the competition start and end in darkness for Rider and McDowell, they only have one day left to get through before the 2010 Army Best Warrior competition is over.

Tonight, the pair engaged a number of targets during the M4 Rifle Night Qualification range.

A cool breeze blew towards the Warriors as parachute flares streaked into the dark skies. Artillery simulators flashed at various distances across the landscape, often turning night into day with their bright white flash.

## Day 5 — It's a Mystery

Today started like the last two days, in the dark as they were faced with a Mystery Event—a series of mini-scenarios designed to keep them moving and thinking without much time in between.

First an artillery barrage resulting in mass casualties, then it was on to protecting a polling center before coming under attack which led to a cordon and search operation, then on to a session in a marksmanship simulator followed by a series of male and female uniform inspections and finally ending up with a stress fire lane.

### McDowell, Rider face double-elimination combatives

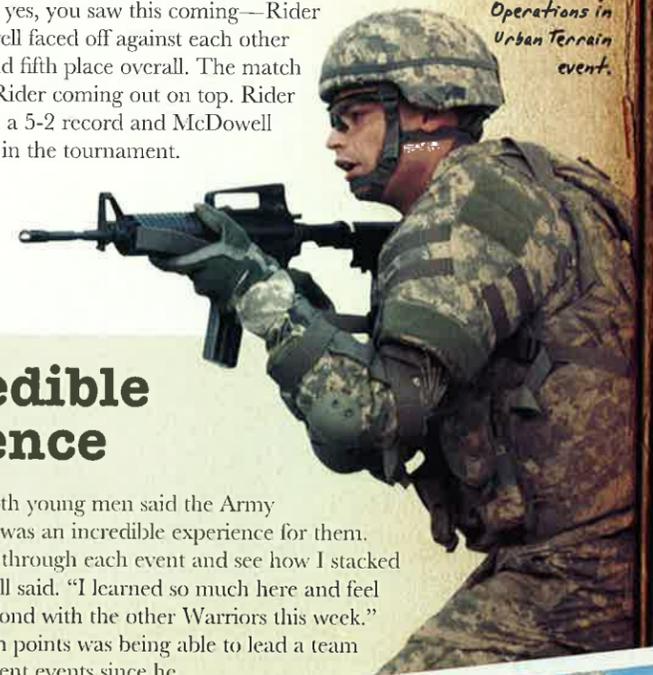
A new twist to this year's tourney was to pair off the first round by weight class regardless of NCO or Soldier category.

Rider, unfortunately, did not survive the first round and was knocked into the consolation bracket (more to come on that later).

Meanwhile, McDowell reeled off win after win until his sixth match which resulted in a loss in the semi-finals, knocking him to the consolation bracket.

In the meantime, Rider fought his way through his bracket and, yes, you saw this coming—Rider and McDowell faced off against each other for fourth and fifth place overall. The match ended with Rider coming out on top. Rider finished with a 5-2 record and McDowell a 3-2 record in the tournament.

Spc. Joshua McDowell takes aim during the Military Operations in Urban Terrain event.



## An incredible experience

At the end of the day, both young men said the Army Best Warrior experience was an incredible experience for them.

"I just tried to make it through each event and see how I stacked up at the end," McDowell said. "I learned so much here and feel like I have developed a bond with the other Warriors this week."

He said one of the high points was being able to lead a team of Soldiers through different events since he doesn't get many opportunities to do so.

"I learned to lead with confidence and to lead my Soldiers through each event. It was actually great to forget about the points and just go through each event with them."

For Rider, the biggest accomplishment he said he felt was the "pride in the way I conducted myself this week, whether I win or lose."

Some of his takeaways from this week was learning to motivate his squad of Soldiers and to train hard to prepare for not just competitions but any mission.

"If you train well ahead of time, you will reap the rewards later," he concluded. ■



Congratulations on a GREAT JOB! Spc. Joshua McDowell and Sgt. David Rider