



**3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command
16th Sustainment Brigade
Public Affairs Office**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
3rd ESC Release #
March 10, 2009

Sustainment Soldiers grapple at Speicher

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16th SB Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq — Sustainment Soldiers from seven companies choked, arm barred, and grappled in a combatives tournament here Feb. 17.

Soldiers from the 391st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, and Bravo Co., 16th Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sust. Bde., competed in four brackets: lightweight, cruiser weight, middleweight and heavyweight.

“It’s a great competition,” said Command Sgt. Maj. James Spencer, command sergeant major, 16th Sust. Bde. “It’s a way for Soldiers to test the skills they’ve learned and to validate the training they’ve been doing for the last six months.”

Spc. Jesse Jarnagin, personal security team member, Bravo Co., 16th STB, won the lightweight bracket with four wins and no losses. The 23-year-old from Bellbrook, Ohio, defeated another PST member, Sgt. David Miller, for the title.

“You can train as a team, but you’re on your own out there on the mat,” Jarnagin said.

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Jarnagin, who competed in a weightlifting competition at Contingency Operating Base Q-West just days prior to the combatives tournament, said he competed to challenge himself.

Pvt. Rodney Sloan, 70th Transportation Co., 391st CSSB, and 19-year-old native of Cleveland, Ohio, won the cruiser weight division. Sloan said it was important to maintain focus during a match.

“The hardest part in combatives is keeping a level head when someone’s got you in an arm bar or a choke,” Sloan said.

Sloan had some experience staying calm on the mat. He wrestled in the state tournament during high school, he said.

Abdur Khan, PST member, Bravo Co., 16th STB, took home the middle weight bracket.

Khan, a 28-year-old from Beltsville, Md., said he felt like he had to win, that he couldn’t let himself down.

“It felt great,” Khan said. “I felt relieved because it was a lot of pressure.”

Khan, who also trains in Jeet Kun Do, a martial arts system developed by Bruce Lee, said combatives training helps him in several ways.

“It calms me down,” Khan said. “The more I learn, the less aggressive I become, and I’m a personal trainer and I’m transitioning to MMA (mixed martial arts).”

The heavyweight champion of the tournament, Sgt. Travis McGruder, surprised no one.

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COMBATIVES/3-3-3

The level-four combatant, and level one and two trainer, took home the bracket without much difficulty. The Pine Mountain, Ga., native previously taught level one and two Army combatives at Fort Benning, Ga.

First Sgt. Ronnie Allen, first sergeant, Bravo Co., 16th STB, whose Soldiers won three of the four brackets, said he was proud of his “Barons.”

“I’m extremely proud of them,” said Allen. “They train extremely hard with limited time to train, but their performance speaks for itself.”

Allen said Soldiers should challenge themselves with events like combatives.

“Show me someone content with mediocrity, and I’ll show you someone destined for failure,” Allen said.

Col. Martin Pitts, commander, 16th Sust. Bde., said combatives is more than just fighting.

“It’s more than just brute force; there’s technique, there’s strategy,” Pitts said. “It’s part of a Soldier’s entire skill set. There could come a time and place where a Soldier has to engage in hand to hand combat. And combatives training is part of our Army heritage.”



Spc. Jesse Jarnagin, personal security team member, Bravo Co., 16th Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sustainment brigade, takes down fellow PST member Sgt. David Miller, during the 391st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion's "Firepower for Land power" combatives tournament at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, Feb. 17. Jarnagin, a 23-year-old from Bellbrook, Ohio, won the lightweight bracket with four wins and no losses. (Photo by Sgt. Keith M. Anderson)