

Sports

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Wrestlers visit troops in Afghanistan

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BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Members of the World Wrestling Entertainment Corporation visited U.S. and Coalition forces in Afghanistan Dec. 7 to 9.

Wrestlers and WWE staff split into four groups that traveled to several bases throughout the country visiting troops and taping segments for WWE's reoccurring Monday Night RAW broadcast, which aired Dec. 19.

"Our reasons for visiting the servicemembers are simple," said Trish Stratus, WWE women's champion. "We wanted to thank them for their service (and) tell them we still support them and that they aren't forgotten."

The WWE staff, who came with the wrestlers, volunteered to come, Stratus said. Everyone involved with the WWE wanted to come, but only a few were able to come.

"It was kind of surreal to see these people that I've watched on TV for years and now they're eating at our chow halls, shopping at our exchange and sleeping in hooches like us," said Army Sgt. William Ziegler, 18th Engineer Brigade commander's driver. "Back home in the states, I never had a chance to go to a show, and I didn't have a chance of meeting them."

Many of the wrestlers said they were surprised by how happy the ser-



COURTESY PHOTO

WWE's Men's Champion John Cena shakes hands and exchanges shout outs with the troops at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan Dec. 9. Over 5000 coalition troops came out and got a glimpse of some of WWE's best talent.

vicemembers were to see them.

"I mean here they are, and they're not just putting on a show. They are traveling around the base talking to people, video taping us, and eating with us," Ziegler said. "I know it made me and the engineers at Task Force Sword feel like we are important."

Most servicemembers said that having the people from the WWE

come and tell them personally, one on one, how great a job they're doing and how this is not a forgotten war helped to lift their morale, said Command Sgt. Maj. Lenora Coates, of Task Force Cerberus.

On the last day, the WWE recorded a wrestling segment at the medical evacuation hanger here for its weekly broadcast of RAW. U.S. servicemem-

bers, Coalition forces and civilian contractors attended the taping.

Vince McMahon, the owner of the WWE, opened the program by thanking everyone in attendance for their service and explained his reasons for visiting Afghanistan.

McMahon said he dislikes hearing that Afghanistan is a forgotten war and that he still thinks about the servicemembers over here.

"This show we're taping will be broadcast so that we can get the word out back home of how great a job our U.S. armed forces are doing in Afghanistan," he said. "We'll not let the people back home forget about you. We have the greatest armed forces in the world, and I just want you all to finish the job you started and come back home safe."

Many of the female wrestlers held back tears as servicemembers thanked them.

"I don't know why they are thanking us," Stratus said. "We should be thanking them for volunteering to do a job every day that separates them from loved ones and puts many of them into harm's way, just to make sure those of us back home in the states can enjoy the freedoms that so many lives have already been sacrificed for."

Army world class athletes vie for spots on U.S. Olympic Team

JACK L. GILLUND

Army News Service

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – With little more than a month before the start of the XX Winter Games in Torino, Italy, 10 Soldiers in the Army World Class Athlete Program remain hopeful for spots on the U.S. Olympic team.

Spc. Mike Kohn, Spc. Steve Holcomb, along with Capt. Garret Hines and Capt. Lorenzo Smith are competing for spots on the U.S. Bobsled Team. The United States is scheduled to send two two-man and two four-man crews to the Olympics. The top nine athletes will compete in both disciplines.

"As soon as I found out that I wasn't going to be

in the 2002 Olympics, I hopped in the driver's seat and haven't really looked back since," said Holcomb, who has been a bobsled athlete since 1998 when he graduated from Park City Winter Sports High School in Park City, Utah. "This sport is basically experience. The more you have the better you get. The learning curve is still steep but it's starting to plateau a little bit as I start to catch the other drivers."

Fastest qualifiers

During the U.S. National Bobsled Team Trials in October, he and teammates Brock Kreitzburg, Curt Tomasevicz and 2002 Olympic silver medalist Bill Schuffenhauer posted the fastest run time of day one at Canada Olympic Park in Calgary, Canada, – 55.5 seconds. Holcomb finished first overall in four-man competitions during the two-day event and earned the right to pilot USA I during World Cup competitions leading up to the Olympics. Kohn finished in third place and is piloting USA III.

Sgt. Jacob Beste, along with Spc. Sarah Kamiliewicz, Spc. Jill Krause, Spc. Denise Teela and Spc. Jeremy Teela are vying for spots on the United States Biathlon Team. Five men and five women will represent the United States as biathletes at the Winter Olympics.

"The U.S. is expected to field its strongest biathlon squad in Torino," said United States Biathlon Association officials in a press release. "Army WCAP athletes Jeremy Teela and Jill Krause will potentially bolster the team."

Spc. Ryan McDonald hopes to become the first snowboarder to represent WCAP in the Winter Games. The U.S. Snowboard team is scheduled to send 16 athletes to the Olympics. These athletes will compete in Halfpipe, Parallel Giant Slalom or Snowboardcross competitions. McDonald's specialty is Parallel Giant Slalom. He currently ranks fourth in the point totals that will determine who

receives a spot on the U.S. team in that discipline.

In addition to the athletes, two WCAP Soldiers will represent the Army at the Winter Olympics as coaches: Sgt. Tuffield Latour is the head coach for the U.S. Olympic Men's Bobsled Team, and Spc. William Tavares is the head coach for the U.S. Olympic Women's Bobsled Team.

The following is a list of competitions WCAP athletes may be a part of and their scheduled times during the Olympics. All times are listed Eastern Standard Time.

Bobsled

Feb. 18 Two-man, heat 1 11:30 a.m.
Two-man, heat 2 1:20 p.m.
Feb. 19 Two-man, heat 3 11:30 a.m.
Two-man, heat 4 1:20 p.m.
Feb. 24 Four-man, heat 1 11:30 a.m.
Four-man, heat 2 1:20 p.m.
Feb. 25 Four-man, heat 3 11:30 a.m.
Four-man, heat 4 1:20 p.m.

Biathlon

Feb. 11 Men's 20-kilometer Individual 7: p.m.
Feb. 13 Women's 15-kilometer Individual 6 a.m.
Feb. 14 Men's 10-kilometer sprint 7:30 p.m.
Feb. 16 Women's 7.5-kilometer sprint 6 a.m.
Feb. 18 Men's 12.5-kilometer pursuit 8:30 p.m.
Feb. 21 Men's 4x7.5-kilometer relay 6 a.m.
Feb. 23 Women's 4x6-kilometer relay 6 a.m.
Feb. 25 Men's 15-kilometer mass start 4 a.m.
Women's 12.5-kilometer start 6 a.m.

Snowboarding

Feb. 22 Men's PGS qualification run 4 a.m.
Men's PGS elimination run 4:37 a.m.
Men's PGS 1/8 run 7:00 a.m.
Men's PGS quarterfinals 7:34 a.m.
Men's PGS consolation 5-8 7:52 a.m.
Men's PGS semifinals 7:56 a.m.
Men's PGS classification 5-8 8:10 a.m.
Men's PGS finals 8:14 a.m.



JACK GILLUND

Spc. Ryan McDonald, a member of the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program, slides around a gate on the slalom course at Copper Mountain, Colo., during the 2005 Continental Cup Nov. 21 and 22.