

Sports

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CATRINA FRANCIS

Col. Celestia Abner, of William Beaumont Army Medical Center, bowls a few practice frames. Abner led the All-Army women's team last month in the 2006 Armed Forces Bowling Championships at the National Bowling Stadium in Reno, Nev.

Bliss bowler excels at All-Army championship

CATRINA FRANCIS

Monitor Staff

When the word "bowling" is uttered, many start to visualize men drinking beer or maybe they think of Fred Flintstone. Some may even venture to say bowling is not a sport.

Lt. Col. Celestia Abner, chief of clinical quality management at William Beaumont Army Medical Center, dispels these as being some of the biggest misconceptions of the sport she loves.

Abner said she has been bowling since she was 12 years old. Her love for the sport grew from watching her mom bowl. During her youth, Abner bowled in junior leagues and high school. She has not had a formal coach and learned the game from her mom.

During her college years, Abner did not bowl and was years before she bowled in a competitive match.

"People don't think bowling is a sport ... you have to be in bowling shape. You use muscles you don't think you have. You have to do cardio and stretching," said Abner.

Abner said stretching prevents bowlers from encountering injuries. She also said bowlers have to condition themselves to bowl many different games at one time.

Once she entered active duty, Abner did not want her life to center around work. Being a nurse afforded her the opportunity to meet others who shared her passion for bowling.

Abner said she was taking care of a patient and

the patient's mom told her about their church league. Abner was invited to sub for their league, which rejuvenated her love for the sport.

Abner started trying out for the All-Army Team in 1994. She has made the team each year since then with the exception of a few years where she had military obligations and deployments.

Many may think the selection process for the team is simple, when in fact, the process is physically grueling for the applicants. Once an applicant is selected, they attend a trial camp.

Abner said this year they bowled 21 games in three days. The top six who had the highest total pin fall made the team.

"Everybody kind of goes up and down and there's fighting to the very end until you get that top six," said Abner.

Abner said her goal this year was to defend her title and be No. 1 after being deployed for a year. During the trials, she led the entire time and had the high average for the women.

"Bowling is one of the only sports where you don't have things that keep you obligated the entire year. Usually the top male and female [from] the armed forces are the ones who go to an additional tournament later in the year," said Abner.

Abner said she would like to enter more tournaments this year but said she is aware the mission comes first and bowling second. She has also thought about possibly bowling on tour once she retires from the military.

Sports briefs

Black History hoop tourney

Fort Bliss will host its 10th annual Black History Month Basketball Tournament at Logan Heights Gym Feb. 17 through 19. The double-elimination tourney is open to men's and women's military and civilian teams.

The entry fee is \$200 per team, which may consist of 12 players and one non-playing coach. Checks should be made payable to Fort Bliss DMWR and may be mailed to Fort Bliss Sports Office: PO Box 6100, Fort Bliss, TX 79906. The entry deadline is Feb. 10. The top three teams will earn team trophies, with T-shirts going to the top two teams.

A highlight of the tourney will be a 3-point shootout and free throw contest. Three players per team may enter each event, and awards will go to the top two in each competition.

For information, contact Nate LaCour at 568-5198 or Joe Fedak at 568-5995.

Intramural bowling

The intramural bowling season is now underway at the Fort Bliss Bowling Center. Action takes place Monday, Wednesday and Thursday nights at 6:30 p.m.

Teams consist of five bowlers on each night of competition, and unit rosters may have up to 10 bowlers. Bowlers roll a three-game series when competing.

The 12-week regular season will be capped by the post bowling championships, scheduled for April 17 through 20. The top 16 teams will advance to the post tourney, and individuals must roll 12 games (four nights of competition) during the regular season to qualify.

For information, call Don Aguilar at 568-6272 or Joe Fedak at 568-5995.

Women basketball players wanted

The Women's Post Basketball Team is looking for additional players. For more information, call Nate LaCour at 568-5198 or Joe Fedak at 568-5995.

Softball tryouts

The Men's Post Softball Team will have open tryouts Feb. 6 through 17 beginning at 6 p.m. at the Omar Bradley Softball Complex. These tryouts may include the weekend with times announced during the weekly practices. The team is a traveling team, which could include weekend tournaments and league play in an El Paso Softball League. For information, call 799-7208 or 568-5995.

Two undefeated teams clash, USASMA emerges victorious

DUSTIN PERRY

Editor

What seemed to be a sure thing quickly turned into one of the most nail-biting match-ups between two undefeated basketball teams in the Fort Bliss Independent Intramural League during the game's final minutes.

The 230th Finance Company and the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy met Jan. 26 at Stout Physical Fitness Center for a regular season game against each other. Prior to the game, both teams had impressive 7-0 records, but it was the players of USASMA who eventually managed to continue their streak with a 60-55 victory against their opponents.

For the entire first half, USASMA led by an average of 12 to 20 points with little to no resistance from the 230th. It wasn't until the last three minutes of the game that the Finance Company managed to get within maybe-we-can distance of USASMA with a fierce defensive uprising and accompanying jump shots and lay-ups, which reduced their deficit to a mere five points.

Although the Gods of Comeback were on the side of the 230th, time was not. Only a few seconds remained – seconds that ultimately proved to be insufficient for them to get the points they needed.

Edward Morris, USASMA coach, said he was pleased with his team's win but thought the competition fought hard.

"They had some key players," said Morris. "I'm pretty sure we're going to see them again."

Morris attributes the close score to the fact that his team didn't control the tempo late in the game like they did in the first half. In future games, Morris said the USASMA players will be focusing on a transition defense.

"I guess we got too relaxed when we had the



DUSTIN PERRY

Jonathan Ely, right, attempts to block the shot of a USASMA player during a game at Stout Gym.

lead," said Morris. "The guys did keep their cool under pressure, though."

Luis Martinez, 230th coach, said although his team ultimately walked away with a "1" under their loss column, he was extremely proud of the way his players performed.

"They never gave up, and they fought until the end," said Martinez. "We'll be better prepared the next time we meet them."