

ALPHA COMPANY'S ULTIMATE FIGHTERS

Alpha Company,
53rd Signal Battalion

FORT DETRICK, Md. — The 4th Annual All-Army Combatives Tournament was held at Fort Benning, Ga., Oct. 3 – 5, and the first ever Fort Detrick combatives team was there to represent. All five members of the team came from Alpha Company, 53rd Signal Battalion, and competed in four different weight classes. SGT Buddy Blackham competed at 155 lbs, SSG Gary Grooms and SPC Jacob Hackenberg competed at 170 lbs, SPC Nicholas Smith competed at 185 lbs and SFC Jared Roy competed in the 205 lb weight class.

The tournament was designed to reflect the three levels of the Army Combatives Program. It begins at Level 1 where grappling is legal but strikes are not allowed. Points are awarded for take downs and dominant body positions. If a competitor is able to string together enough wins, he moves into the Level 2 portion of the tournament where slaps to the face, body punches, and body and head kicks are all legal. In the final match that takes place between the top four ranked fighters after the first day of fights, punches to the head are allowed. The finals are televised and held in a full ring.

Of the five competitors one of them was able to rise to the top. Roy dominated his first fight with a superb kimora to an arm bar transition. His second fight turned out to be more of a challenge. Both competitors grappled for the first five minutes with no victor. The match went into overtime where Roy was able to pull off a duck under and take his opponent down, scoring the first point of the match and being declared the winner. His next fight went



SFC Jared Roy took third place in the light heavyweight division at the 4th Annual All-Army Combatives Tournament at Fort Benning, Ga., Oct. 3-5. Photos taken by SFC Garrison Mothershead

in the same manner, a tense Greco-Roman grappling match in which he was able to score the first point of the match with an arm drag takedown. With his third win Roy secured a spot in the semifinals.

After a two hour intermission, it was back to the grind. Roy's first semifinal match found him facing a fighter about the same height as his own 6'3" frame. After a furious bout exchanging slaps, punches, and kicks, his opponent was awarded the decision. After having his arm raised, the winning opponent limped off, collapsing and being tended to by his fellow teammates and medical personnel while Roy nonchalantly walked off to find out about his next fight. In his last semifinal fight, he was able to pull off a submission from his back. After a grueling day, Roy was into the finals fighting in the consolation match for third place.

In the final day, after demonstrating outstanding physical fitness through five intense, hard-hitting fights, Roy was to face his last challenge. His competitor, a short, hulking Soldier, took the fight right to him by bull-rushing him, pinning him against the ropes and taking him down to the mat. After a grappling struggle, Roy was in a bad place taking blows to the back of his head. With the referee nearly stopping the fight due to a Technical Knock Out, Roy got to his feet and was able to sink in a guillotine choke ending the fight and securing third place in the light heavyweight division.

The five outstanding Soldiers from Alpha Company displayed amazing personal courage while representing their unit and Fort Detrick. Their motivation, dedication and incredible physical fitness has set the way ahead for the future by showing the Army what Signal Soldiers really have to offer.



The Fort Detrick Combatives team. (Left to Right) SPC Jacob Hackenberg, SPC Nicholas Smith, SFC Jared Roy, SSG Gary Grooms, SGT Buddy Blackham.