

## YYZ Airport Watch Pitch In to Help Clean Up

With a mandate to observe, record and report, volunteers from the YYZ Airport Watch group recently decided to add garbage collection to the list.

In an area affectionately referred to by the group as "FedEx Hill", an area of land just to the north of Toronto Pearson's airfield, some 30 members of YYZ Airport Watch donned rubber gloves and brandished garbage bags and rakes to undertake the clean-up. Within 30 minutes they had collected more than 10 bags of garbage. The clean-up was supported by the GTAA who assisted by providing additional garbage bags, rakes and trucks to haul the trash away.

YYZ Airport Watch is a group that was formed in April 2004 with the idea to promote airport security through the eyes of enthusiasts. The idea took off and now membership totals nearly 100.

"We respect the fact that our airports must be safe and secure, and it is for this purpose we have created the group," says Peter Ivakitsch, Director of Communications - YYZ Airport Watch. "We are very familiar with day to day events and we recognize when something is out of sorts. With this in mind, our objective is to provide the local airport authority with extra eyes and ears in exchange for a relaxed environment for us to observe air traffic."

The GTAA thanks YYZ Airport Watch for their continued efforts in making Toronto Pearson safe and secure—and now add to that list aesthetically pleasing.



## Rising Up to the Combat Challenge

by Patricia Wilkinson

Being a firefighter takes more than just hard work and training. It is a physically demanding job that requires you to be at your very best.

To the six firefighters who make up the Toronto Pearson Airport Combat Challenge Team, they not only respect this, it is the reason behind their dedication to a sport that also demands nothing but the best.

Hailed by ESPN as the toughest two minutes in sports, firefighters compete in the Combat Challenge wearing full bunker gear and a Scott Air-Pack.

They race head-to-head on a linked series of five grueling firefighting-related tasks. The event tasks, which

include a five floor stair climb carrying approximately 42 pounds of hose and the dragging of a 175 pound 'victim' 100 feet, are timed and completed sequentially.

"The Combat Challenge is a great way to stay in shape for the demands seen on the job every day," says GTAA Firefighter Jason Lavery, noting a high level of physical fitness can be hard to maintain over a 25 year career. "The season is six months long, but the training is a full year commitment."

The GTAA team first tried their hand at the challenge three years ago. Considering it was their first year in competition, the team did remarkably well, with the average race time between two and two and a half minutes. Still, Lavery admits it was a rude awakening to fully understand the physical intensity of the sport.

"The first year was about getting our feet wet in a sense," says Lavery. "We had seen and heard about the Combat Challenge, but were naïve about the level of commitment which was required. We had no specialized training equipment, and were not in good enough shape to handle a full season of events."



Still, inspired by the competition seen at the national level, the team began their second season with an enhanced motivation, some equipment and gear, and a team intensity that grew with each event. Average race times dropped below two minutes, and the Pearson Airport team began gaining a reputation as a serious competitor.

Now, into their third season, Lavery hails this year's competitions "a great success."

"Pearson Airport won the team event in Belleville, placed third overall in Windsor, and were first in the region for the relay event in Brampton," says Lavery, noting just a few of the team and individual accomplishments from the 2005 year.

The group recently returned from the National Championships in Edmonton Alberta, competing against the best that Canada had to offer. Building on the momentum of the season, the team did the GTAA and Toronto Pearson proud, placing 8th in the country in the relay event, and 19th in the team event.

"We travelled to the National Championships

with high hopes and weren't disappointed," says Lavery.

Both the national and the regional competitions, Lavery continues, serve a dual purpose. The first, of course, is to compete, with the second involving the opportunity to bring together firefighters from around the country.

"The people you meet at each event are great. Everyone is very supportive of each other and willing to share the latest techniques and training practices," says Lavery. "Just after the Air France emergency, the team competed to a standing ovation when their names and team were announced."

He adds that GTAA Fire and Emergency Services, which is a relatively small fire department, have gained national exposure in the industry thanks to the competitions. "Pearson Combat is strongly recognized as a combat team. Our intense training is paying off with good results and very competitive events."

The team will compete in one more event this year when they travel to the World Championships in Deerfield Beach, Florida the beginning of November.



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