

Port Royal makes physical fitness a priority

Lt. j.g. Sarah O'Hare

USS Port Royal

On USS Port Royal (CG 73), physical fitness is a top priority.

"Physical fitness affects every aspect of your daily life," explains Command Master Chief Mark Marshall. "In Port Royal, we acknowledge this fact and strive to push each crewmember to the maximum fitness level of which he or she is capable."

To achieve this standard, Port Royal requires that each Sailor attend two intensive Command Physical Training (PT) sessions per week and that all Sailors failing to meet Navy physical fitness standards participate in Command Fitness Enhancement Program (FEP). Additionally, an optional physical fitness training program, "Chow This", is offered to all interested crewmembers.

Fire Controlman Chief (SW) Shaun Hilton, Command Fitness Leader, and Lt. j.g. Bill Nesbitt, Fitness Officer join forces every Tuesday and Thursday morning to motivate and physically challenge each crewmember at Command PT.

On these two mornings liberty expires at Ward Field, where the first two hours of the working day are devoted to physical fitness.

"The great thing is that we recognize the benefits of a solid physical fitness program. Often, I've heard others say they don't have the time for command PT. They couldn't be more wrong," insists Nesbitt. "A physically fit crew is capable of accomplishing more in less time than a crew with poor physical fitness standards. When you make time to improve the physical fitness of each Sailor, the resulting increased energy of that Sailor contributes to professional efficiency."

While the Command PT Program is meant to be challenging, safety still remains a primary concern.

Hilton ensures each morning begins with a 15-minute warm-up and stretching routine.

"I've been involved with command fitness for just over four years. One thing I've learned is the importance of a thorough warm up and stretch routine. This significantly reduces injuries," he said.

After the warm-up portion, Hilton

turns things over to Nesbitt. On Tuesdays, the exercise regimen consists of fast-paced calisthenics, followed by a run that's just over a mile and a half.

Nesbitt has a large repertoire of exercises, many of which he learned during his years at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis. As he demonstrates each exercise, he explains the muscle group the exercise is intended to build. Usually, he chooses a combination of exercises that concentrate on a particular area.

"I have several routines," Nesbitt explained. "Some concentrate on legs, others on the back and upper body, and numerous concentrate on the abdominal muscles. All my routines are pretty fast-paced, with stretching incorporated between exercises".

Once Nesbitt finishes putting the crew through the paces, it is time for the run. The designated course circles Pearl Harbor Blvd and Avenue E. Each sailor is allowed to complete the run at his or her own pace.

On Thursday mornings the crew musters for a very different method of training. Thursday is circuit-training day.

"Chief Hilton starts things off as usual with the warm-up and stretching," Nesbitt said. "Then, I break the crew up into seven stations. Each station includes a specific exercise such as flutter kicks, eight count body builders, wind sprints, or calf raises."

Crewmembers get 90 seconds at each station, followed by a 90-second interval used to shift stations. The circuit stations are numbered clockwise, but the crew shifts by running counter-clockwise. This adds an aerobic component between each circuit. The fitness representatives, normally a mix of junior officers and Command Fitness Assistants, conduct a quick demonstration. Then, at the sound of one long whistle, the exercise begins. Four short whistles let the station runners know to wrap things up and at the sound of three short whistles, it's time to shift.

FC2 Michelle L.U. Oliverio, who got an outstanding-low on her last PRT, is a true believer in fitness. She keeps herself in excellent shape by exercising on her own several times a week.

"Though my own routine varies from our command PT exercises, I feel it's a well rounded regimen," she admits. "Because Chief Hilton and Lt. j.g. Nesbitt cycle through various routines, I've learned several new exercises from participating."

Capt. Lee J. Geanuleas, the ship's Commanding Officer, emphasizes his commitment to enhancing the physical fitness of his sailors by rewarding those who show improvement. .

"With the exception of the crewmembers who got an outstanding-high on the April PRT, I'd like to see you all improve at least one or more categories in the upcoming PRT," Geanuleas challenged prior to the October Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA) and Physical Readiness Test (PRT). "There will be rewards for the five most improved crewmembers," he proposed.

Once the results of October's PFA/PRT were tallied, it was determined that thirty-one point five percent of the crew rose to the occasion, improving their performance by at least one fitness level. Additionally, a three-day, two-day or one-day special liberty chit was rewarded to each Sailor who achieved an outstanding high, outstanding medium, or outstanding low respectively on his or her PRT.

In addition to rewarding the achievements of those who successfully complete the PFA/PRT, Port Royal takes measures to help those who fail, or those who simply desire to improve. The Command Fitness Enhancement Program (FEP) is one measure used to implement lifestyle changes in order to improve individual health and fitness.

This program is mandatory for all crewmembers failing to meet Navy Standards of physical fitness as determined by the PRT/PFA. FEP requires that all medically cleared participants attend "FISH", which consists of an hour of strenuous calisthenics led by Block Arena's personal trainer, Wayne Fisher. Once a month, each sailor is tested using PFA procedures in order to monitor their progress. Participating crewmembers also receive counseling from one of Port Royal's two certified physical fitness

trainers, Nesbitt or Gunner's Mate 1st Class Christopher Frances. Each counseling session consists of a one on one discussion with respect to recommended lifestyle practices to optimally increase performance. During the fall cycle FEP 2001, 60 percent of the participants passed within standards for both the PFA and PRT, proving a little personal involvement, as well as professional guidance can go a long way.

A second program, originating during Western Pacific Arabian Gulf 2000 and cleverly christened "Chow This", led Port Royal's quest to implement a higher standard of physical fitness.

The 16-week program, spearheaded by Hospital Corpsman Senior Chief (SW) Diego Gonzalez, offers an opportunity to anyone with the need or interest to learn about proper nutrition and weight loss techniques. Additionally, the program provides an exercise regime aimed at personnel not meeting Navy standards. This regime consists of one-hour weekly meetings and bi-weekly exercise sessions in the ship's gym.

During the meetings, personnel share common problems, lessons learned, goals, and encourage one another to continue striving to improve through patience and perseverance. When last executed, 17 personnel volunteered for the program.

Upon joining, their height, weight and body fat percentages were measured. At the end of the 16 weeks, seven of 17 had dropped more than 20 pounds, three had lost between 10 and 12 pounds, and the remaining seven lost between three and eight pounds with total body fat percentage loss averaging six percent.

Eleven participants successfully met established Navy standards and passed the fitness portion of the Physical Readiness Test the following cycle. Since the completion of the program, participating personnel continue to implement healthier lifestyle changes in order to improve their overall physical and mental state.

This program proved very successful in assisting our Sailors in improving their physical appearance, stamina, and endurance while losing some weight along the way.