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## **No snow, no problem for these beginner biathletes**

**CAMP ETHAN ALLEN TRAINING SITE, Vermont** — Three Alaska Army National Guardsmen put a new spin on their biathlon education, leaving behind the snow and their cross country skis to glide on pavement with roller skis at a novice biathlon summer camp near Jericho, Vt., July 9-14.

The week-long camp boasted 26 biathletes from across the Guard who were selected to learn the fundamentals of marksmanship, skiing and range procedure in preparation for the upcoming season.

“The objective is to have athletes that have never tried biathlon before have the opportunity to get properly rifle fitted and go through the process of shooting at a lower heart rate in order to fully understand the mechanics of biathlon shooting,” explained Vermont Air National Guard Tech Sgt. Travis Voyer, a coach for the National Guard Biathlon Program. “Then they progress into combination training – combining physical training like running or roller skiing with biathlon shooting.”

From an introduction to biathlon to completing a relay race, the training afforded the neophyte biathletes a preface into the sport in a comfortable and tailored environment.

“The coaches work individually with you on fundamentals while making the learning exciting,” said Alaska Army Guard Lt. Col. Safiya Ingram, Joint Force Headquarters deputy judge advocate, who decided to try biathlon out of curiosity after 13 years of service. “Biathlon puts together shooting and physical prowess and this camp essentially gives you the opportunity to experience and understand what the sport is about in a non-judgmental atmosphere.”

Despite the fact that training continues throughout the summer, biathlon is a renowned winter sport that combines skiing and precision marksmanship. Participants alternate between skiing laps intended to get their heart rate up, and then transition to shooting small targets at 50 meters while attempting to control their breathing.

“There are so many factors – a part from breath control – to consider while trying to hit the target,” said Alaska Army Guard Maj. Mike Moore, a chief nurse case manager with the Medical Detachment, who recognized concentration, diligence and not rushing the shot were always in the back of his mind while holding his Anschütz .22 caliber rifle. “I learned patience while I was shooting and relied on my military training to never give up and always complete the mission.”

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With military roots that stretch back centuries, biathlon continues to parallel the same physical effort and mental focus that troops experience when they are in battle.

“I joined the military in 1985 and now at 52 years old I am learning a new sport to help keep me in shape both physically and mentally. It is never too late or even early to learn a new skill,” said Moore, who is encouraging his newly enlisted daughter to also attempt the sport. “This training was fun and taught in a manner where no one was stressed. You were there to learn and walk away with a new skill to continue to work on.”

Moore is not only walking, but rolling away with a new skill after trying roller skis – that mimic snow skis, while requiring the same level of skill and athletic dexterity – for the first time.

“I felt like a duck out water and was appreciative to initially use them for the first time in this controlled environment with professional instruction,” explained Moore. “They take a lot of core strength and balance to master, but I will continue to persevere until I get there.”

The Guardsmen trained in temperatures well above 90 degrees with no rain, which is atypical for the green mountain state and left with fresh scrapes and bruises after an intense education for the novel enthusiasts.

“I wish the training was longer even though it was physically demanding,” explained Ingram. “Picking up the sport can be daunting and it was good to be with my Guard community as we learned and will eventually progress together.”

Voyer is grateful that these Guard athletes had a positive first time experience with the sport as many athletes attempt their first race having never performed biathlon procedures.

“All of the athletes had super positive attitudes, which is important for athletes from beginner to national levels, and were good listeners,” said Voyer, who trains Guardsmen year-round on the National Guard Biathlon development team. “I hope they learned a lot from camp and will continue to develop with this sport.”

All three athletes will be taking their new confidence and ability to their first competition this December in Alaska followed by the possibility of selection for the 2019 National Guard Western Regional Biathlon Competition held at the Soldier Hollow Nordic Center in Midway, Utah, Jan. 8-13 and Chief of the National Guard Bureau Championships here, Feb. 22 – Mar. 1.

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## PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **Flickr link** includes an event album with the complete selection of full-resolution, free downloadable images. (May not be accessible from all military computers.)  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/albums/72157696070892102>
3. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/285030/no-snow-no-problem-these-beginner-biathletes>
4. **DIVDS Video link.** <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/614379/no-snow-no-problem-these-beginner-biathletes>

Photos, next page



Alaska Army Guard Lt. Col. Safiya Ingram, left, Joint Force Headquarters deputy judge advocate, practices trigger pull and sight picture techniques with her Anschütz .22 caliber biathlon rifle with instruction from Vermont Air National Guard Tech Sgt. Travis Voyer, a coach for the National Guard Biathlon Program, while attending a novice biathlon summer camp at the Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt., July 10, 2018. Twenty-six biathletes from across the Guard were selected to learn the fundamentals of marksmanship, skiing and range procedure in preparation for the upcoming season. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Balinda O’Neal Dresel)



Alaska Army Guard Maj. Mike Moore, a chief nurse case manager with the Medical Detachment, uses a scope to analyze his paper target while zeroing his Anschütz .22 caliber biathlon while participating in a novice biathlon summer camp at the Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt., July 10, 2018. Twenty-six biathletes from across the Guard were selected to learn the fundamentals of marksmanship, skiing and range procedure in preparation for the upcoming season. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Balinda O’Neal Dresel)



Alaska Army Guard Staff Sgt. Balinda Dresel, a public affairs specialist with the 134th Public Affairs Detachment, learns how to navigate roller skis by engaging her core to maintain balance during a novice biathlon summer camp at the Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt., July 10, 2018. Twenty-six biathletes from across the Guard were selected to learn the fundamentals of marksmanship, skiing and range procedure in preparation for the upcoming season. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Maj. Mike Moore)