

Academy Skydivers Weekend at Suffolk

by Mike Schultz

The weekend of Dec. 2,3, 2017 appeared in weather forecasts to invite skydiving. This fact, coupled with a valiant effort by Chris Wagner to accommodate a contingent of Midshipmen at Skydive Suffolk, generated a M.O. (USNA Movement Order) by the USNAPT Leadership. That Leadership, consisting primarily of LT Rob Roy (USN), the team Officer Rep., Coach Mike Davidson (MAJ USA – ret.), plus 1/C Midshipmen Ken

Chris Wagner oversees 4-way exit practice with Eva Knoche, Phil Hanson, Derek Forand and Ken Levens



Levens and Simeon Brewster, had been coordinating with Chris Wagner, a veteran of the USA Golden Knights Competition Team, and CAPT Bill Boniface (USN – ret.), to fill a void in local DZ activity; Skydive Delmarva had closed and sent their Twin Otter to Skydive City at Z'hills for the winter.

As it turned out, the weather halfway cooperated. Several jumps were made by the Team, with coaching and videography by Chris Wagner, plus freefall assistance from Jessica Clausen, a USPA Coach. Some other Mids made the trip to pursue their skills development and license, completing requirements to attend the Collegiate Skydiving Championships in Lake Wales, FL over the Xmas/New Year holiday period.

The Team was very fortunate to have the skill level and generous contribution of a coach with the credentials of Chris Wagner. He jumped with the 4-way team on several occasions and gave selflessly to their efforts at improvement by in-depth debriefing, using his freefall video.

Additional jumps were made from lower altitudes when the ceiling interfered with achieving sufficient freefall time for formation skydives. On these occasions, canopy accuracy was practiced.



Jessica provided an important skill slot for training. It's always better to have an anchor of skilled personnel in a formation effort, by which the less experienced members can perceive some continuity and consistency of performance, measured against the stable platform of established craft; much preferred to grabass confusion.

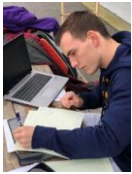
The highlights of the training effort found their value through the dive debriefs by Chris, using his laptop in the packing area. Dive performance evaluations were established by clipping through the video, stopping action to discuss details of technique and performance. The Mid flyers were glued to his handiwork and his comments, gleaning every tidbit that could enhance the next skydive. Chris' comments carried extra weight because he is also a competition judge. ([see video](#))



Chris at dive debrief

This group (see photo array below) came to learn and were clearly showing progress as the day progressed. It's also clear that this method of group activity is a valuable objective, on every training day. This kind of professional scrutiny, provided by Chris, and by John

Judy on previous training occasions, is the vehicle for conducting the journey from novice, to intermediate, to advanced skill levels in competition, and by Mike Davidson and John in demo practices, including their direction and guidance in pursuing the PRO skydiving rating.



Ethan Hardt

Some of the resolute Mids also managed to involve themselves in the most important aspect of Academy purpose: learning. Some downtime was dedicated to studying, aware that everything else proceeds from academic standing.

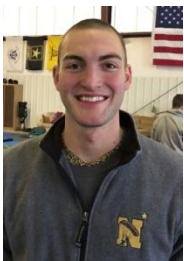
This event is a harbinger of future activities, designed to generate a team of skilled skydivers, capable of competition and capable of making demonstration skydives in public venues, advancing the image of the Academy as contemporary in aviation behavior.

We can all look forward to moments of pride which are sure to occur as these young, aspiring leaders polish their psyches and their personalities through diligent development of skydiving skills. As a team, they are newly established, revived in their quest to represent the battalion, hopeful of assistance by the administration, grateful for the continued assistance by USNAPT Supporters, especially the alumni through the efforts of Bill Boniface. An ongoing appeal is being conducted, with results from several equipment manufacturers, in the form of donations through the efforts of Chris Wagner.

Using a venerable cliché, it's 'Anchors Aweigh' for the USNA.

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USNAPT at Suffolk



Ken Levens
Team Captain



Simeon Brewster
Team X/O



Derek Forand
Ops. Officer



Eva Knoche



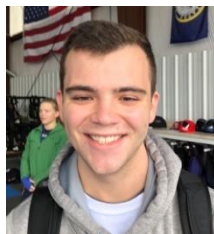
Phil Hanson



Tyler Hayes
PAO



Ethan Hardt



Chris Murray



Brennan Means



Jackson South



Phil Middleton



Trey Widmier



Coach
Jessica Clausen



Former USNAPT Member
LT (USN) Quentin Ledbeter