



## *Manifest Destiny !!*



To paraphrase Winston Churchill, “*Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so few to so many!*” Although the references differ and the issue not so grave, that sentiment set the stage for the USNAPT when the leadership began planning for the

### **2021 USPA National Collegiate Skydiving Championships**

and held true right to the end of the event. ... The ‘conflict’ loosely relates to the competition; the ‘many’ are all proponents of the image and pride of the Naval Academy, U.S. Navy, and USMC, plus the TEAM donors, and those welcome guests that appeared at Lake Elsinore, CA with TEAM support. The ‘few’ were the United States Naval Academy Parachute Team.



*USNAPT completes round 3 of 6-way speed star event at Collegiate Nationals in Lake Elsinore, CA. The 6-way team consisted of Brittany Holden-Rhodes, David Petrovich, Mitch Jorgensen, Kevin Borman, Ryan Grafman, Brian Flaherty, and Vince Tenebro.*

*(see video of speed star)*

The ‘manifest’ refers to that of Skydive Lake Elsinore. ... The manifest is the central control of skydiving operations at any drop zone (DZ), the entity through which all aircraft and jumpers are directed when skydiving is taking place.

Four features of human interest will emerge with the telling of this tale: competition, generosity, teamwork, and elation. These notions will emerge at various junctures in the narrative, expressing what motivates and reveals the stellar character of all individuals mentioned.

**T**his expedition was an illumination of one of the most ambitious journeys by Midshipmen aviationists in the history of the Academy, traveling cross-country to illustrate their skydiving prowess to a multitude of contentious rivals who represent their respective institutions. The event is one of the two major missions of the United States Naval Academy Parachute Team, and this particular occasion proved to be an immense success. The USNAPT comported themselves as exemplary diplomats of the USNA military establishment; in appearance, skill, brotherhood, and behavior. In every way, those who witnessed the TEAM for the duration commented on their excellence. The ‘few’ have responded with a fitting reward for the confidence and contributions of the ‘many’.

At the outset, the United States Naval Academy Parachute Team (TEAM) was pointing west to compete with 11 other colleges and universities in the championships. A total of 14 Midshipmen and 4 team volunteers were to spend 8 days at one of USPA’s premier events. Many other key personalities also came, to be a part of the TEAM effort to represent the brigade on a national stage, with 85 competitors from all over the U.S. In advance, TEAM personnel had established an agenda of preparation for the competition events. There were 4 of interest: Sport Accuracy, 2-Way & 4-way Formation Skydiving, and 6-Way Speed Star.



*3/C Ambria Piphio tracks off after her A-License check dive, clearly demonstrating her required proficiency. Photo by: Matt Cecala, edited by Bill Boniface.*

It’s always a muddle to schedule TEAM travel from all over the country, arriving in coordination at a common destination; especially just after Christmas, over New Year’s, when families exert so much influence on travel times, either because of lack of precious time together, or disparate geographical home locations. Somehow, though, it all came to pass. First, prior to the trip, there was a concerted effort to establish credentials of eligibility for participating in the affair; i.e., pursuit of the A-license, the minimum qualification for Sport Accuracy and 2-Way FS, and B-license for 4-Way and Speed Star. 3/C Ambria Piphio, Nate Basford, and Gavin Kim were down to the wire, as of a week before, with only one or two jumps left for qualifying,

**T**he primary spotlight is focused on generosity. Without the largesse of the many contributors, the degree of involvement by the

TEAM would be miniscule compared to that which occurred.

Midshipmen pay their own way, contrary to USAFA and USMA, in order to achieve the necessary credentials to participate in skydiving activities, and to reach safe performance competence. TEAM administrators are volunteers, in contrast to the other service academies which employ full-time professional coaches. Gentlemen such as CAPT Bill Boniface, USN-R, Alumni Representative and Fundraiser, CAPT Donald Kennedy, USN, Officer Representative, MAJ Mike Davidson, USA-R, Head Coach and pilot, CAPT John Gats, USMC, Asst. O’Rep, and MSGT Nikolas Mitchell, USMC, Team E-Rep., and others, spend time on TEAM affairs with only personal gratification as remuneration. And yet, as TEAM member and supporter RDML Robb Chadwick, USN, former USNA Commandant says, ***“Thanks for sharing. Further evidence that the Parachute Team provides more relevant lessons for future military service (and life in general) than probably any other activity on the Yard.”*** He was reacting to a TEAM demonstration skydive into Worden Field, honoring the Commandant, USMC, which he attended.

RDML Chadwick is a recipient of the U.S. Navy’s **James B. Stockdale Award for Inspirational Leadership**. He expresses this opinion while currently serving as Commander of Carrier Strike Group Nine at San Diego, ... and as a licensed skydiver pursuing advanced credentials. Ever the progressive participant in modern activities, he is also an experienced SCUBA diver. ([See video at end of article](#))





**USNAPT Event Contingent:** Standing; l to r – RDML Robb Chadwick, 3/C Nick Froude, Mike Schultz, 1/C Dave Petrovich, 3/C Gavin Kim, 1/C Mitch Jorgensen, 2/C Brian Flaherty, 3/C Eric Lim, CAPT Donnie Kennedy, 2/C Ryan Grafman, Chris Schrier; Kneeling: MAJ-R, Mike Davidson, 3/C Ambria Pipho, 2/C Kevin Borman, 2/C Meg Welch, 3/C Jackee Gwynn, 3/C Aron Sobers, 2/C Vince Tenebro, 1/C Brittany Holden-Rhodes, CAPT-R Bill Boniface.



1/C Mitch Jorgensen posing with Gold Medal for first-place finish in Intermediate Division of Sport Accuracy, bracketed by 2 West Point cadets, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>. Mitch is a preeminent team performer in all TEAM activities, justifying confidence of supporters. .

In the meantime, he has elicited major contributions to these Championships; chief among these being the generous provision of lodging at Lake Elsinore for the Mids from Chris Schrier, an honorary TEAM member, and funds for entry fees and practice jumps for the Mids, plus lodging for the TEAM administrators.

**T**he real action began on 29DEC, with Ambria Pipho's completion of her A-License on a checkout dive, attended in freefall by RDML Chadwick and videoed by LT Matt Cecala, USN, Class of '15, and former TEAM member, enabling her to enter the competition. Gavin Kim had finished A-License qualification over Xmas leave in GA. Nate Basford had finished his at Skydive Sebastian in FL the previous Thursday, but then discovered he couldn't afford the airfare to CA. The ticket price at the last minute in a holiday period was beyond his means. Being out of touch during the holiday, the TEAM

**W**hile the TEAM's midshipmen are skydiving, Bill Boniface (CAPT B) is reaching out to the extended USNA family, consisting of relatives, alumni, and other patriots, to accumulate the necessary funding for supporting activities. This is an endless task, but is the lifeblood of the desired advancement of the team, to reach parity with the other academies and provide some financial relief for the Mids. The current objective is to add a permanent full-time TEAM Coach, which involves raising a quarter million dollars to establish the position. He's about halfway there. This effort will be a major achievement in instituting the highest possible standards of safety and competence for the TEAM.

administration was not aware of this. This is regretful, since there were several supporters, including the TEAM administration, who would have stepped forward. From the very beginning, it was expressed that as many TEAM Mids as possible would be invited to compete. Essentially, it reflects the burden that the Mids carry when considering the economics of TEAM membership. An effort is underway to rectify this deficiency.

CAPT B has made an ardent effort to mobilize resources to ensure the Academy is represented by its best people by way of financial subsidy, to reinforce the TEAM progress in equipment acquisition and loft training facilities. A goal of superior Academy support for the skydiving schedule has been achieved by CAPT Kennedy since he became O'Rep in 2020, allowing future operations to be more efficiently realized. Mike Davidson has retired as a PA at a Salisbury, MD hospital, enabling him to be more involved in TEAM affairs. All in all, the groundwork is in place for a significant step forward by the TEAM.



**TEAM Admin Group:** l to r – CAPT Donald Kennedy, USN, O'Rep; CAPT Bill Boniface, USN-R, Alumni Rep; MAJ Mike Davidson, USA-R, Head Coach; RDML Robb Chadwick, USN, Supporter; Mike Schultz, Instructor/Advisor.

**S**an Diego's USNA Alumni chapter made a great contribution to the Lake Elsinore trip by subsidizing rental of two vans for TEAM use while in the Golden State, and 1Lt Ken Levens, USMC, was magnanimous with his provision of a pickup truck. Obviously, a contingent of 20 people would need transport for themselves and their mountain of skydiving gear. Ken, former TEAM Capt., '18, was also a welcome skilled videographer, jumping video for special support events; some of which are included in this article. He is among those alumni who so strikingly dignified the element of generosity.

**C**ompetition began with the 4-way Formation Skydiving event, a day late, due to weather. One round was completed before the descending ceiling forced the switch to Sport Accuracy. Originally, the chart below specified the TEAM training configuration prior to the Meet. However, fate made its usual foray into the happenings, with some adjustments later required due to circumstance.

#### Potential Event Teams

#### Roster

					<b>1/C Brittany Holden-Rhodes</b>
4-Way A	Dave	Brittany	Vince	Mitch	<b>Mitch Jorgensen</b>
4-Way B	Kevin	Brian	Ryan	Pickup	<b>David Petrovich</b>
					<b>2/C Brian Flaherty</b>
2-Way	1 Eric	Aron			<b>Ryan Grafman</b>
	2 Meg	Jackee			<b>Vince Tenebro</b>
	3 Ambria	Gavin			<b>Kevin Borman</b>
	4 Nick	Nate			<b>Meg Welch</b>
Sport Accuracy	All hands				<b>3/C Nick Froude</b>
					<b>Jackee Gwynn</b>
					<b>Aron Sobers</b>
					<b>Gavin Kim</b>
					<b>Ambria Pipho</b>
					<b>Eric Lim</b>
6-Way Speed	All B-License				<b>Nate Basford</b>





Returning from Rd. 1, 4-way FS: Mitch Jorgensen, Brittany Holden-Rhodes, Vince Tenebro, Dave Petrovich.



4-Way Team Exiting at 13,000 ft.

[\(see 4-way video\)](#)

It was at this juncture that adjustments had to be made. Unfortunately, Vince Tenebro experienced an ankle injury on his first accuracy round, forcing him to withdraw; not only from accuracy, but from 4-way and 6-way as well. By Meet rules, moving Brian Flaherty to 4-way Team A eliminated that team from medal competition. They henceforth had to be considered as a Guest team for purposes of Meet administration. That effectively eliminated the 4-way B team. Also, Kevin Borman now would be jumping with the 6-way team. With Nate's absence, and Nick Froude having to mate up with a USAFA cadet, the final FS event team configuration looked like this: (note naming whimsy)

<u>4-way</u>	Round 1	Vince, Mitch, Brittany, Dave	] Navy Gold
	Rounds 2 - 6	Brian, Mitch, Brittany, Dave	] (Guest)
<u>6-way</u>	Mitch, Ryan, Brian, Brittany, Dave, Kevin	] Navy Geets	
<u>2-way</u>	Nick, Luke (USAFA)	] JF Skull	
	Eric, Aron	] Bumblebee	
	Meg, Jackee	] Cookies & Cream	
	Ambria, Gavin	] The Motley Tue	

Meet Director Randy Connell and Josh Hall,  
Lake Elsinore DZ General Manager



**N**ow in Sport Accuracy,

aircraft operating momentum increased, with each lift carrying up to 16 entrants, exiting 4 on each overhead pass. This brought all spectators to the target area to watch individual landing measurements in meters. USNAPT had two dead centers, Mitch Jorgensen and Brian Flaherty, The next closest TEAM strike was by Gavin Kim, at 0.82 meters. Since there were 4 rounds, the cumulative total by Mitch was the only medal. However, his performance was the best since 2011 by a Midshipman for a completed



Dead Center by Mitch Jorgensen.



Brian Flaherty Dead Center.



Gavin Kim just Misses  
[see video of Mitch & Brian](#)

event. At that 2011 Collegiates event, 1/C Sam Prescott, now CAPT, USMC, had 4 dead centers, a record which can't be surpassed, although the modern version of the event requires the competitor to stand up within a 30.4 meter circle, a rule which didn't exist at that time.

Over the next couple of days, the event focus switched back to 4-way FS, then to 6-way speed, then to 2-way, and back to 4-way. Total, there were four rounds of accuracy, six of 4-way, three of 2-way and three of 6-way. Luckily, the weather had gradually improved, operations ran smoothly, and the Meet was completed. Interspersed in the competition agenda was an awards ceremony and a banquet. The TEAM utilized the off time to socialize with the supporters who were on hand throughout to provide the friendship atmosphere that is so important to the competitors.

**T**he central group of on-hand supporters were: Lisa & John Jorgensen, Mitch's parents, with grandmother Kay; Katie Lim, Eric's mom, her sister Andy, and Eric's uncle; Toy Sobers, Aron's mom; Dave Petrovich's father, John; and Kirk Michael, '72. Along with Chris Schrier and Ken Levens, they were hair-trigger ready to provide whatever was necessary to make the atmosphere more amenable to comfort and pleasance. Kirk Michael came from Texas to spend a few days observing his handiwork of being a part of CAPT B's 'steering committee' in the labor and strain of dragging funds out of contributors to the Coach Fund. Adding to the spiritual brightness was the appearance of 1Lt Meghan Brophy, USMC, a former USNAPT member, Class of '18. There was also the visit from CAPT Brian Holloway, USMC, Class of '15, once a TEAM member, who is now flying Ospreys for the Corps. As previously mentioned, LT Matt Cecala, USN, '15, past OIC of the Navy's Leap Frogs, was on hand early to jump with RDML Chadwick and to film 3/C Pipho's A-license qualification dive. [\(see photo above\)](#)

John & Lisa rented a BnB about 10 minutes from the DZ, hosting two evenings of a delicious repast, complete with ice cream and chocolate syrup. Everyone was invited, and everyone came, to experience a few hours of enjoyment in a social environment. John, a skydiver, was also on hand at the DZ to fun jump, exercising some video freefall skills in service of the group. [\(see video of BnB\)](#)

An eminent visitor to the TEAM room at the DZ was Jay Stokes. Jay is a past president and chairman of the board of USPA, and has the distinction of holding a couple of world records: Most skydives in a 24-hour period (640) and the largest night skydive formation. Jay is a staff member at Skydive Elsinore, the Military Manager.



*CAPT K, USN, '93 & Holloway, USMC, '15*



*Jay Stokes sporting a USNAPT T-shirt*



*CAPT B, USN-R, 1Lt Ken Levens, USMC, past USNAPT Captain, Class of '18; & Chris Schrier*





*LT Matt Cecala, USN*



*Dirt diving on creepers*



*Mike D coaches 4-way team.*



*2/C Meg Welch & 3/C Jackee Gwynn, aka Cookies & Cream, exit Twin Otter at 13,000 ft. in sidebody configuration, 2-Way FS event.*

[\(see 2-way video of Bumblebee team\)](#)

**S**ome real enthusiasm attended the conduct of the 2-way FS event. For 3 rounds, the 3/C, along with 2/C Meg Welch performed aerial contortions that will someday make the Blue Angels envious. Most of them were involved in their first formal competition event, quickly becoming enamored with the joy of creditable performance. Consider that these young Mids only started skydiving a year ago. An observer could detect the obvious elation of having overcome the nervous anticipation, or 'butterflies', that exist in the abdomen when an observed performance, to be evaluated, is imminent. It's also obvious how the camaraderie between teammates acts as a boost to morale.

**A** wonderful example of team effort was evinced when the meet admin decided to expedite the finish of the 4-way formation skydiving event. There were only 5 teams left, with 3 rounds to completion. The aircraft lift situation was accelerated, such that additional pressure was put on the 4-way team members to pack faster. In general, being in a hurry to pack a parachute does not enhance reliability of opening. To compensate for this, TEAM members stepped up to assist Brittany, Mitch, Dave, and Brian by packing their parachutes for them, allowing them time to debrief the last dive and dirt dive for the next block of formations. The gesture illustrates the confidence and trust existing between teammates.

[\(see TEAM packing video\)](#)



*I to r: 2/C Megan Welch, 3/C Ambria Pipho, 3/C Gavin Kim, 2/C Ryan Grafman, returning from Team Accuracy jump.*



*Pre-jump: RDML Chadwick with 1/C Mitch Jorgensen, Brittany Holden-Rhodes, and Dave Petrovich.*

[\(see video\)](#)



John Jorgensen



Kirk Michael, USNA Class of '72



John Petrovich

There will be a wider description of the other participants and events of the Collegiates in the upcoming issue (March) of PARACHUTIST. This article is naturally focused on the more familiar elements involving the USNAPT. It's intended that a more detailed look be given to the Navy in consideration of their current status of progress, and to pay homage to the role of the supporters in allowing the TEAM to increase their public profile in the role of recruitment, and to raise their image on the Yard.

**W**hen the Meet was finished, some of the Mids remained for a day or two to continue skydiving, seeking that next skill or rating plateau, anticipating their further adventures on the TEAM. Those further adventures are viewed by the administration with considerable optimism; especially in light of the impact this experience will have on the future. In the recent past, the TEAM has performed both of their primary missions as representatives of the USNA: demonstration and competition skydiving. Those missions were symbolized by the CUSMC Parade Demo and the Elsinore USPA Collegiate Championships. Both events have revealed the USNAPT to be a magnificent adjunct to the mission of the USNA, which is military leadership development. Their performance at this meet is serving the broader acceptance of these young women and men as prime athletes. They actually exceed the general opinion of the varsity or intramural athlete in the fact that their athleticism exceeds the bounds of the definition: "A person trained in activity requiring strength, skill, stamina and speed." Their arena is much broader than the field or court, and the disciplinary demands upon their prowess is far in excess of the boundary lines of the typical game; not to mention the mental toughness required to function in the aviation environment, under the duress of uncertain operating conditions, weather vagaries, topographical variations, unfamiliar aircraft, critical equipment maintenance, need for instantaneous assessment and correct reaction, etc. These men and women are already demonstrating the qualities required for leadership in other than the quiescent atmosphere of a peacetime military.

**T**he entire TEAM contingent at Elsinore, with all supporters, presented a tableau of the highest caliber of patriotism and integrity of citizenship which, when properly illuminated, will serve to excite additional support and elevate the TEAM's identity to a much higher level.

An excerpt from CAPT B's report on the Meet specifies the next step taken:



VADM Sean Buck

*"" A week after we returned, I hosted the Supe and the team's O Rep, CAPT Donnie Kennedy, for lunch at the team's loft. Our private 90-minute lunch discussion was focused on team support, and it was productive and highly informative. I can sum our meeting up by saying he can be counted as an advocate for the team and he'll be following our progress closely. ""*



For now, the TEAM is focused on a new group of plebes, who have begun their AFF training program, with expectation of a joint training session with USAFA and USMA at Sawtooth, Arizona in March. This program is being coordinated by Coach Davidson, assisted by CAPT Gats, with hopeful expectations of traveling with USMA to AZ for a week, hosted by USAFA. Mike will travel with the TEAM, overseeing the plebe introduction to the sport, while continuing to mentor the existing TEAM in their development. Many exciting events are on the agenda, all designed to coordinate the safety, skill, and confidence of the Mids with their all-important education and emergence as our country's military leaders. The entire calendar of plans is being directed by CAPT Kennedy, who, if the past is prologue, will see to it that the best interests of the USNA and the USNAPT are maintained.

To coin a metaphor, "every vehicle requires an engine for motive power." In this case, the engine appears periodically in the loft in the person of CAPT-R Bill Boniface, the TEAM's Alumni Rep. His tireless efforts on behalf of the TEAM are the primary reason for its current successes. It's our fervent desire that all persons who have an interest in the future of the TEAM, or who can find some satisfaction for joining the campaign of future progress will respond positively to his entreaties for contribution in general, and especially to the COACH FUND. Your help is the lifeblood of the effort; and, to all those currently on board, a heartfelt *"Thank You"*.

[Support USNA Skydiving](#)

Video Addenda:

[Elsinore Omnibus](#)

[CUSMC PARADE Demo](#)

[A Skydiving Trip I Will Never Forget](#) *RDML Robb Chadwick, former USNA Commandant*  
[Skydive or Bust](#)

