

Features



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Local Guys 'N Gals Participate in Tough Mudder

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Written by Zach Hedrick, SMT Writer

Poplar Bluff, Missouri - On Saturday one of the most popular events sweeping the nation came to the Bricks Off-Road Park near Poplar Bluff. The Tough Mudder physical endurance race is a grueling, physically demanding team sport that requires tremendous dedication by individual athletes combined with a strong sense of team. This is no simple event, but is an obstacle course that teams enter to test their toughness and teamwork.

Noted as "*Probably The Toughest Event on the Planet*", the Tough Mudder is a hardcore 10-12 mile obstacle course designed by British Special Forces that tests a persons all around strength, stamina, mental grit, and camaraderie. The obstacles are named according to their challenge with some of these being "The Berlin Wall", "Kiss of Mud", "Firewalker" and "Jesus Walk". Other more humorous names of obstacles included: "Arctic Enema", "Electroshock Therapy", "Funky Monkey" and "Mud Bog Jog". [Click here to see a map of the course.](#)

</images/2012 Article Pics/Features/TME - Obstacle List.jpg>

Several area teams from Dexter were formed to participate in the event, including the

Team Virtus pictured above. Members of one half of the team pictured above are Matt Mills, Bonnie Howard, Jason Comfort, Brett Dorton, Darrin Hillis and Missy Hoggard. Other members of the group included Lori Fuqua, Meagan Masters, Chris Robinson, Josh Robinson, Johnny Porzelt and Rich Jones.

</images/2012 Article Pics/Features/TME - Mills on the Wall.jpg>

Some area residence trained with this group

but were committed to other teams at the event. One particular training partner was Ed Gargas. As a Lieutenant Colonel in the Missouri National Guard, Ed joined his group to give the guard his representation.

Tough Mudder is not a marathon, nor is it an individual competition. Neither is "The Mudder", as most regulars call the challenge, a race. There is no winner and time is insignificant to the overall goal. Tough Mudder is all about finishing and helping everyone else finish.

Many of the obstacles are physically impossible

</images/2012 Article Pics/Features/TME - Meagan Masters.jpg>

to accomplish on one's own. The obstacle called "Everest" is a gigantic sloped wall that requires the participants that are at the top to help the others up that are at the bottom. It becomes a team sport, where members of the same team, and of other teams, assist all participants in getting through the challenge.

Team Virtus began their training this past spring and remained dedicated to a tough regimen of skills in preparation for this past weekend's event. Initially, the distance running became the focus of the group to get their cardiovascular stamina increased, followed by weight training. As the event got closer, the team began to meet at a rural farm where similar event challenges were setup for practice and training.

Josh Robinson became involved with the group both as trainer and a participant. Josh has been involved with the physical fitness of many individuals in the community as a personal trainer. This became more of a group project from his normal private session.

</images/2012 Article Pics/Features/TME - Gargas.jpg>

"Our training regimen was 5-6 days per week with special focus

on crossfit drills that relate to the Tough Mudder events," noted Josh. "We also ran 4-6 days per week anywhere from 2 to 6 miles."

The "Funky Monkey" was a notable obstacle

</images/2012 Article Pics/Features/TME - Dorton in the Eel.jpg>

for the team with some team members loving it and some finding it more of a challenge. Much like the monkey bars on the playgrounds of old, this challenge certainly tested their pre-training, requiring a tremendous amount of upper body strength to negotiate.

With estimated crowds of 10,000 to 12,000 people this weekend, area law enforcement was beefed up to make certain the weekend went smoothly. This event is quite a boost to the area economy. Traffic control plans were made by officials to make County Road 484 that enters into the Brick's Off-Road Park one-way in hopes of creating a good flow of traffic.

Family members of the Dexter teams reported that traffic was smooth but did require a 3 to 4 hour wait just to get into the Brick's facilities and find parking.

Participants began to arrive at 8:00 AM on Saturday for the opening start times. Team Virtus were to begin at 9:45AM. Filled with anticipation and months of work leading up to the event, the group was inspired to reach their goal to complete the race and earn the ceremonial orange headband.

"The atmosphere was amazing," noted Meagan Masterson. "People helping and encouraging you wherever you turn."

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The experience was one of personal reward to the participants. The great sense of accomplishment was shared by all members.

Unanimously, the "Arctic Enema" was one of the most memorable obstacles to many of the members of the Team Virtus. The obstacle was simply a large trash dumpster filled with ice and water. Participants were required to jump in the container, swim underwater underneath a board obstacle and out the other end of the container.

"The Arctic Enema was a lot colder than I thought it would be," commented Jason Comfort.

"The only obstacle I didn't enjoy was the Arctic Enema. Nothing could have prepared me for the shock that my body experienced," shared Josh Robinson. "I jumped in the ice and immediately my lungs began to spasm, and my limbs seemed to move without my control. But I'm so thankful that we all stared into the face of adversity and jumped right in."

"... the Arctic enema (was the obstacle liked least)!! It was the closest thing to death I have ever experienced." noted team member Lori Fuqua.

The "Electric Eel" was equally as tough for Jason Comfort. The "Eel" was an obstacle

that required members to crawl through a mud pit underneath wires hanging down closely overhead. It was a good idea to keep your head down.

"I somehow took an electric shock to the back of my head and face planted myself after that and busted a lip and took five stitches to the upper lip, busted nose and chin," recalled Comfort. "However, I was fortunate enough to put a piece of gauze on it and finish the race and get my orange headband."


"You all should know that the  medical staff wanted to pull Comfort out as they could see the degree of his injury," commented Brett Dorton. "But he was 9-miles into the course and was determined to finish the race, even with a mouth full of gauze."

Most of Team Virtus speaks openly about the strong feelings of accomplishment. The fear of the unknown seemed to drive the preparation of the team to a level of being over prepared for Saturday's event.

"The course itself was fairly easy to us," added Comfort. "Matt Mills and I talked about going back to run the event again on Sunday."

A great sense of accomplishment overwhelmed participants. Whether that was the personal motivation of Josh Robinson who watched his brother Chris conquer the "Everest" obstacle, or the individual achievement when he ran straight up the wall without hesitation, or the team spirit of helping other "Mudders" up the hill, the event brought so much satisfaction personally to all of these participants.

"My brother and I then turned around on top of the wall and proceeded to pull up Mudder after Mudder until our arms were dead," said Robinson.

 Meagan Masterson said, "I can't put it into words as this was one of my greatest experiences by far. The feeling of accomplishment makes me smile just thinking about our team."

When asked if another Tough Mudder event is in their future, Team Virtus was quick to answer that they would definitely be looking for other events.

"In a heart beat!!!" noted Lori Fuqua. "I recommend everybody at least once in their life try it!!!"

"There will definitely be more Tough Mudders in our future that we will participate in,"

said Comfort.

Wrapping up a great accomplishment was best done by Darrin Hills, who captured the essence of the event in his words.

"There were thousands of warriors on the course, and you had the feeling that any of them would pick you up and carry you to the finish line if you were unable to continue," related Hills. "I had the fortunate opportunity to train and compete with a great group of people, and we all ran as a team. That gave you a great feeling of pride and accomplishment to all finish together."

"It was just an awesome, awesome experience and I look forward to doing another Mudder with my teammates," closed Hillis.

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