

BLUE BERET

Troops tough it out in the heat at Sector 2's Sports Day

Like modern day gladiators under the summer sun, troops from Sector 1, Sector 2, sector 4, the Mobile Force Reserve (MFR) and UNFICYP HQ gathered on the morning of 24 June 2016, all determined to claim glory in Sector 2's Sports Day. Sector 2's Commanding Officer, Colonel Richard Walker RE, welcomed the troops, spurring them to aim for excellence in their athletic endeavours.

The day's activities were designed to challenge contestants, with some disciplines new to many of the participants. Disciplines included football, basketball, volleyball, "strong soldier", a "chain of command" relay, a "tug-of-peace", golf, a swimming medley and potted sports, designed to entertain and exercise the players' physical and mental skills.

By the official start of the day's events, temperatures had reached a sweltering 40 degrees, but contestants powered through, hydrating regularly and displaying an admirable spirit of sportsmanship and competitiveness. LCpl Brown captained Sector 2's football team to the top, while Sector 1 and Sector 2 clinched joint first place in the chain of command relay, which saw personnel sprinting 800m around Route Julio to fight for the top spot.

Contestants in the tournament at the UNPA golf course played just 11 holes due to the heat and limited time allocated; Maj Gurung and A/Cpl Wilcox drove Sector 2 to victory, A/Cpl Wilcox impressing spectators with the longest drive of the day.

Sports Day organiser Capt Ankers RE sourced six fine calibre soldiers to push the "proowler" – a 140kg weighted sledge – to victory. Capt Ankers, LCpl Allen, LCpl Taylor, LCpl Parsons, Spr Bukovensky & Spr Birdsall made up the strong soldier team. Battling with the heat and the proowler's weight, they gave Sector 2 its fourth win of the day, despite a time penalty due to LCpl Parsons removal of a weight to get across the finish line.

In a highly competitive atmosphere, Sector 1 emerged triumphant in volleyball, beating Sector 2, who despite hours of practice ahead of the day, failed to win a single game.

Before the final challenges, Force Commander Major General Kristen Lund gave a motivational speech, re-igniting flagging spirits and injecting enthusiasm into the remainder of the event. After a break from the heat and a chance to refuel, the tug-of-peace was where all the big men achieved greatness; the troops from Sector 2 hauled themselves to victory. Sector 2 further proved their mettle with a victory in basketball.

Potted sports threw a spanner in the works for all sectors; consisting of four sports - table tennis, darts, crazy golf & 8-ball pool – some of these sports were a new experience for many of the contestants, leaving the playing field wide open. Sector 1 had an ace up its sleeve however, unleashing ex-international players to win the table tennis tournament; Sector 2 continued its impressive streak with wins in darts, crazy golf and 8-ball pool.

The final event, a swimming medley, took place by the poolside, and saw four personnel from each team swim two lengths of the pool, each with a different stroke: back stroke, breast stroke, butterfly & freestyle. Sector 2's swimmers – Spr Steele, Capt Ankers, Spr Taylor and Spr Birdsall – brought home the final win of the day.

After an arduous day in the Cyprus heat, the army chefs at Ledra Palace Hotel served a scrumptious chicken dinner to the gallant, if exhausted, athletes and spectators.

Dinner demolished, the troops gathered at the trophy table, anxiously awaiting the results of the day's exertions from QMSI SSgt Mick Asher (APTC Corps). Commanding Officer Colonel Richard Walker RE presented trophies to the top three placed teams. Team captains of each sport received trophies, while each player of the winning teams received a 36 Engineer Regiment Commanding Officer's commemorative coin.

Sector 2 emerged the clear winner of the day, followed by Sector 1, Sector 4, MFR and UNFICYP HQ.

Hearty congratulations to Sector 2 on a well-earned victory! Credit must also go to all participants, volunteers who officiated on the day, kitchen staff, spectators and of course the organisers



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