



The Marauders:

A Small-Scale Joint and Multinational Operation

By Major Ted Read

Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, is the home of the Army's Engineer, Military Police, and Chemical branches, and it is also home to a championship rugby side (team). The Fort Leonard Wood Rugby Football Club—the Marauders—is the 2003 Missouri Rugby Football Union Division III Champion, and on 14–15 May, the club became the 2004 Western Region runner-up. The Marauders have earned the Missouri Rugby Football Union a No. 2 seed in next year's Western Region Division Championship Tournament.

These are outstanding accomplishments for a military side. The Marauders are one of the smallest (in weight) and most mature (in player age) clubs in Missouri and definitely the smallest and oldest club with a large portion of first-time players in the Western Region Division III Tournament. In short, the club is old and slow, but also young (inexperienced) and skinny. Despite this, it went on to win in Division III and played in one of only seven regional championship matches in the nation. The club's success comes from technique, teamwork, and a large dose of heart.

The Fort Leonard Wood international community contributes greatly to the club's success by assisting with the development of techniques, thorough up-to-date drills, and practices. There are Australian, New Zealand, British, Canadian, and American players, as well as family members and supporters of the side. The club's president is a British colonel who has played on the English National 7s. Last year's vice president was a British military police major, and the club's on-field captains in the Western Region Division championship game were a major from Australia and a warrant officer from New Zealand. In short, the club is a minicoalition that puts aside national and personal differences to share sweat, pain, and blood in the middle of Missouri.

The team is living proof that joint and allied interdependence is, in the micro, a reality. Both the American and international players and the coaches have put aside branch and service baggage to attain a higher goal. The team is truly a combined arms outfit, with engineer, military police, chemical, medical, aviation, and judge advocate (No, he is not on retainer!) soldiers on the rolls.



2003 Missouri Rugby Football Union Division III Champions

The team is also joint—with Army, Marine, and Coast Guard members. The team relies on everyone's blended backgrounds to ensure success.

Nothing in America can be done without community support. The mid-Missouri area has contributed greatly to the club in both financial and moral support. The club has sponsors and supporters from Rolla in the east, Springfield in the west, Lake Ozark in the north, and St. Robert in the south. All of the players, coaches, and family members send a heartfelt “thank you” to the community for all it does, not only for the club but for all soldiers in general.

The greatest attribute of the team is its heart and spirit. One of the members—a 60-year-old man who has battled throat cancer—puts every ounce of his energy into the time he is on the pitch (field). When he steps onto the pitch, the complexion of the game changes completely. No pain is felt by the Fort Leonard Wood side, because he feels more pain walking up the stairs than the rest of the club does after a three-match (game) day. To commemorate this “fire,” the club has created an award that bears his name—the Heart Award. You can see the award in the club's trophy case on the second floor of Lincoln Hall, at the Maneuver Support Center, Fort Leonard Wood.

The magnitude of this award can be seen in this year's recipient. Early in the season, one of the players was in a terrible automobile accident that he miraculously survived. However, he was told that he would not get out of the hospital for months and would probably never walk again. But he surprised everyone 6 weeks later when he willed



2004 Western Region Runner-Up Team

himself, his body, and his walker across a quarter mile of uneven terrain to be on the sideline at an away game in St. Louis. Three months later, he walked completely unassisted to watch the club's last home match. Three weeks after that, the Army could not keep him away from his job teaching soldiers how to fight, win, and survive to fight again on the battlefield. The club's players and supporters have nothing but admiration for these two phenomenal people. They are an inspiration to all.

Even though the club is old, inexperienced, small, and from a patchwork of disciplines and nationalities, it has a reputation of being tough, gritty, aggressive, and team-driven. It also has a reputation of being a well-rounded side where no grudges are kept and both sides meet afterward for an outstanding meal (from one of their sponsors) and a drink or two to ensure that the brotherhood of rugby (players, supporters, and families) lives on. The key to this positive reputation in the rugby and Ozark communities is heart. Heart comes in all shapes and sizes and in all nationalities. Fort Leonard Wood has that heart, which comes from the community—civilian and military, international and American—and it has a tough, disciplined rugby club to prove it.



Phase play against a Galveston team

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