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# 'Very driven' Marana man seeks Best Warrior crown

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Photos by Sgt. Felix R. Fimbres / U.S. Army

Spc. Bryce Parker, far left, a civil affairs specialist, is competing with 12 other soldiers in the Army's Best Warrior competition.

14 hours ago • By [Patty Machelor](#)

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Becoming one of the U.S. Army's best warriors means you have outwitted, outlasted and outdistanced the other soldiers — several hundred thousand of them.

Marana's **Bryce Parker** is in Virginia this week to find out if he's that soldier.

After winning two of the Army's preliminary competitions already — he was named the Army Reserve's Soldier of the Year in May — Parker, 26, is now undergoing four days of grueling tests. There are push-ups, sit-ups, written exams and a 25-mile "rough march," complete with a 50-pound pack. There's also urban warfare simulations, board interviews and battle drills.

Described as the Army's "Super Bowl," the Best Warrior competition, at Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia, includes 13 noncommissioned officers and 13 soldiers.

"He's just one of those guys who does so much," Staff Sgt. **Isaias Moreno** said of Parker. "He's a top soldier in our battalion. He's very driven, especially when he has a goal in sight."

Competitors are tested on military leadership, current events, history, survival skills, weapons, the U.S. Constitution and land navigation. There will also be a mystery event to test the soldiers on how quickly they react and adapt to something that takes them by surprise.

In the end, there will be two winners: the Army's Soldier of the Year and its Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

As Parker's sponsor, Staff Sgt. **Davina Spoonemore** said she's come to realize just how much Parker is capable of accomplishing. She's known him since December 2014 and has been helping him train.

"He's actually fairly new to the military, so for him to be doing so well at these competitions is really amazing," she said. "He's a self-starter. You tell him what needs to be done and he takes care of it. You don't have to tell him twice."

Spoonemore said she wasn't sure how he'd do in the first competition, but when he won the second one last spring, she said "it was like he was supposed to win it."

"He's one to watch. I think he's going to win the next level and that he'll be the Soldier of the Year for the whole United States Army," she said.

In fiscal year 2014, there were more than 1 million soldiers in the Army, including more than 500,000 on active duty, some 200,000 in the Army Reserve and nearly 355,000 in the Army National Guard.

Parker went to basic training in January 2014. He attended Amphitheater High School and transferred to Marana High School.

After graduation, he served a two-year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Boise before returning to play and coach soccer for Pima Community College.

Parker has been attending school off and on, first at Pima, then the University of Arizona and now at Mesa Community College. He plans to become a mechanical engineer and a pilot.

Parker was nervous before he left on Saturday, mostly about the mystery test.

"It's mostly about the unknown, but I know what I can do," he said. "It gives me a sense of pride in myself, in those who have trained me and where I come from. Once we start going, I get into that competitive mode and then it's full-steam ahead."




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