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Abe Sailors gear up for their return to homeport

By MC3 Rialyn Rodrigo
Penny Press Staff

USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) Strike Group is finally on its way home and currently in the 7th Fleet area of responsibility after completing Maritime Security Operations (MSO) in the U.S. 5th Fleet AOR supporting Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Life away from home for seven months is not easy; it changes the daily routine for Sailors on board and also for families back home.

The Fleet and Family Support Center is scheduled to send a team of people to come on board to provide classes during the transit to Hawaii. Abe's Command Chaplain Cmdr. John Swanson, a native of Stanwood, Wash., will also be teaching some of the classes to help Sailors adjust getting back to their old routines.

Photo by MC2 James R. Evans

Sailors man the rails as the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) pulls into its home port at Naval Station Everett, Wash., in July 2007.

Some of the classes that will be offered are: Return and Reunion for Couples, to understand, gain new insight into the upcoming reunion and learn hints for making it the best reunion; Returning to Children, to help deployed parents understand their children reactions when they return home; and New Parents of Infants will provide strategies for fitting in with new mothers and babies.

Other classes to improve personal and financial improvement will also be offered, like Car Buying, Money Management and Singles Homeward Bound. These will help Sailors to improve relationships, personal safety and learn to save money.

Swanson said when Sailors have been away from home for seven months, there's going to be a transition period to get back to the routine or life back home.

"A lot of people think when you go back home after seven months of deployment you just pick up where you left off; it doesn't work that way," said Swanson. "If you've been on the ship for certain period of time, you get used to a lot of things. The noise, the people and the work schedule. People change, grow and learn. We are not exactly the same people we were when we left. Going back home to reunite to our families is a bit of a challenge that's why we offer some classes to help Sailors adjust."

For some Sailors getting a car out of storage, looking for an apartment or getting a barracks room are some of the things needing to be taken care of when they get home, while others will get some time off to spend time with families.

Electronics Technician 3rd Class (SW/AW) Nina Ricci Gabona, assigned to Combat Systems CS2 Division, a native of Oak Harbor, Wash., plans to spend time with her

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Mass casualty drill preps Abe for worst

By MC2 Brad Wages
Penny Press Staff

"Everybody wants to be a Yellow Shirt, but nobody wants the responsibility."

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) First Class (AW) Dionicio Garza, of Los Fresnos, Texas, knows about responsibility. As a Yellow Shirt aircraft director and Fly 3 Petty Officer on board USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), he is required to know every inch of the flight deck, and ensure the multi-million dollar aircraft operating on its non-skid are doing so with maximum safety.

Garza's ability to maintain order topside was put to the test Thursday, during a combination mass casualty, fire and barricade drill that took place on the flight deck.

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Local Stories

CASUALTY

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As on-scene leader for the drill, Garza was right in the middle of the action.

"Air Department had guys on hoses, bearing stretchers, manning the elevators, doing everything up there," he said. "My job was to coordinate with everyone involved. All of Air Department - V-1, V-2, V-3, V-4 and Health Services Department, we all had to act as a single team to be successful. We had to come together."

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Second Class Chad Whitta, of Clemson, S.C., said the complex drill simulated a specific scenario.

"The idea of the drill was that an incoming aircraft couldn't get its landing gear down, so we set up the barricade rig to catch it. When the aircraft lands, the rig catches it, but a missile accidentally fires, hitting another aircraft, and sets off a chain reaction of explosions and fires," Whitta said. "We had a lot going on up there - guys fighting the fires, guys assisting the victims, all over the flight deck, trying to manage the chaos."

Photo by MC3 Ronald Dallatorre

An Air Department V-2 Division Sailor directs flight deck personnel as they rig barricades during a drill aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72). For more photos turn to pages six and seven.

Garza said when the drill was complete, evaluators graded Air Department's performance as excellent.

"The whole evolution went well. Everyone up there knew where they needed to be, and what to do. The drill was graded afterwards and we did outstanding."

Garza said working on the flight deck, being safety conscious 24/7 is the rule and drills like the one Thursday keep skills sharp.

"This was just a drill, but up on that flight deck, anything can happen, anytime. We're always thinking of the 'what if?' scenario," he said. "We're in the middle of the water -- if something goes down, we have to be the fire department."

Whitta has the same philosophy when it comes to safety.

"On the ship, the biggest enemy is fire. If we don't do the training, who else will come to the scene? For the drills, we practice like we fight, as if it were real," Whitta said.

HOME

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family when she gets back home.

"I don't have too many preparations for coming home, at the moment," said Gabona. "I just want to enjoy the free time that I have with my family."

Gabona said she learned a lot of things from this deployment and it has changed her.

"This deployment has made me a more mature person," said Gabona. "I learned how to deal with different kinds of people in close quarters, from my work center, berthing or anywhere around the ship."

Being away from family is part of deployment and the Navy provides help for Sailors to get their old lifestyle back.

"It takes a little bit of time to adjust that's why we offer different classes," said Swanson. "It might take a couple of weeks, maybe four to six weeks to get back in sync with family members again, especially with married people. Since the spouse back home is doing everything; they also get used to having their own routine and when we get home our first temptation is to jump in and take over, that's a bad thing. We need to take it slow to gradually merge back in the family life again," said Swanson. "If you go home and things don't feel the same, just give it time; it's a challenge."

Local Stories

FMF warfare top-ranked among Corpsmen

By MC3 Geoffrey Lewis
Penny Press Staff

Hospital Corpsmen serve the world over, treating Sailors and Marines for just about every ailment, from a random headache to major surgery and everything in between. There are a select few, however, who have earned the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) warfare pin and the special title for people in the medical field, "Doc."

"It's a humbling experience when someone calls us 'Doc,'" said Chief Hospital Corpsman (AW/FMF/NAC) Curtis Trull Jr., of San Antonio, a search and rescue corpsman assigned to the "Golden Falcons" of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (HS) 2. "When I'm with my Marines and they call me 'Doc,' that's a sign of respect that they trust that I'm going to take care of them and be there for them 24/7. You know that you're going to do everything for them, especially when they say, 'corpsman up!' and you're on the go. You know that one of your Marines is down and you're going to do everything in your power to get to him and take care of him."

Photo by MC3 Geoffrey Lewis

Hospital Corpsman play a vital role in USS Abraham Lincoln's (CVN 72) mission readiness. At the beginning of deployment, Lincoln vaccinated Sailors for Small Pox and Anthrax.

The name "Doc" is used by many when talking to or referring to someone in the medical field. Corpsmen are sometimes addressed as such, but most feel a true "Doc" is someone who has served with Marines and has earned their FMF pin.

"Many people think because you are stationed or were stationed with Marines you're considered a 'Doc,'" said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class (FMF) Brandon Atencio, of Colorado Springs, Colo., operating room technician and field medical technician, assigned to Lincoln's Health Services Department, Medical Division. "While among corpsmen that's almost true, without the pin you aren't considered a true 'Doc.'"

One of the biggest prerequisites to acquiring the FMF pin is to spend some time out in the field with Marines. For some, it can be a fun and exciting time; for others, it can be frightening.

"I've been stationed with Marines in Iraq before," said Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class (FMF) Michael Johnson, of Los Angeles, a central sterilization technician assigned to Lincoln's Health Services Department, Medical Division. "It can be scary if you don't know what's going on. You just say to yourself, 'I'm just trying to make it to the next day.' I feel like I've accomplished something really big, like I could go up to the Marines and say, 'I know what you know.'"

Johnson said one of his scariest experiences in the field with the Marines was when his base was attacked by Scud missiles.

"My first couple nights in Iraq, we were attacked and all you can think of in situations like that are, 'Is this thing going to hit me? Is it coming in?' You grab everything you have right there and run out to the hole you've dug, surrounded by sandbags and hope the Scud doesn't make it. You're just trying to survive."

In order to go out into the field with Marines, Sailors must first go to Corps School and then Fleet Marine Force Service School, said Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class (AW/SW/FMF) Jeremy Maddox, of Greenville, Miss., aviation medicine specialist assigned to Lincoln's Health Services Department, Medical Division.

"It's pretty much a Marine boot camp," Maddox said. "You have a corpsman that's already FMF qualified and a gunnery sergeant there to teach you the Marine way of living – how to eat, sleep, shoot, all that stuff. You go out into the field and learn field navigation, how to use a compass, a radio; it was a lot of fun."

Johnson said corpsmen learn how to read maps and plot themselves through potentially dangerous areas, programming and using their radios tactically, and shooting an azimuth. They also participated in several marches with distances ranging from two to 15 miles while keeping pace with the Marines. They even wear the same gear as their Marine counterparts with the exception of their weapon.

"The same rucksacks the Marines carry, you carry," Johnson said. "The only thing that's different is instead of the M-16 they carry, you've got a 9mm pistol on your side. As far as being 'Docs' in medical, if we have to use our weapons, something's wrong because the Marines are the front line, that's what they do."

During their land navigation at night, corpsmen go through Chemical, Biological, and Radioactive (CBR) training to ensure that they're on guard while on patrol. When the instructor shouts out, "gas, gas, gas!" the students have to don their masks in the required nine seconds or they fail and have to start the exercise over, said Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (FMF/SW/AW) Edgar Saavedra, of Manila, Philippines, a biomedical repair technician assigned to Lincoln's Health Services

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Weekly Wrap-Up

Lincoln performs UNREP, preps for pose-off

By MC2 Arianne A. Anderson
Penny Press Staff

USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) left the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility this week in preparation to head home to her homeport in Everett, Wash., but the crew remains on task performing their day-to-day duties. This week Lincoln took Underway Replenishment (UNREP) to the next level, and Sailors geared up for a bodybuilding competition and the nation's upcoming presidential election.

Supplying fuel and cargo supplies to a carrier while at sea is a vital, yet dangerous maneuver and that takes many hands to support. Lincoln decided to take Underway Replenishment (UNREP) to the next level by transferring supplies using six stations at the same time as opposed to the original five stations.

Photo by MC2(SW) James R. Evans

Fast combat support ship USNS Rainier (T-AOE 7), Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser USS Mobile Bay (CG 53), and fast combat support ship USNS Bridge (T-AOE 10) steam alongside USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) during an underway replenishment.

Lt. Cmdr. John L. Regelbrugge, from Esparto, Calif., First Lieutenant and Deck Department head, said the UNREP went well.

"This is the first time that Abraham Lincoln has ever attempted six stations at the same time," said Regelbrugge. "The USNS Rainier, which the ship received supplies from, has only done it once before."

The recent UNREP used three cargo stations and three fuel stations at the same time to maximize efficiency and timeliness of the job.

"The fuel stations were what we call a 'dry hookup' for training," said Regelbrugge. "We connected the fuel rigs and went through all of the fueling UNREP signals. Once that was complete, we broke the rigs down and sent the fuel rigs back to the USNS Rainier and continued transferring supplies on the cargo stations."

Regelbrugge said Lincoln is capable of supporting an UNREP with six stations. However, it is the ship supporting the UNREP that makes the call.

"We can, at anytime, do this six-station setup as long as the UNREP ship can support it," said Regelbrugge. "The true 'Achilles heal' now is the UNREP ship being able to support our ship. Lincoln can support any and all times whenever called to do so."

Regelbrugge said "this truly allows for the fastest and most efficient means of Underway Replenishment. It equates to being able to receive 12 pallets every two and a half minutes and 18,000 [gallons per minute] of fuel at max pressure. That's huge in the UNREP world."

With the cooperation and assistance of USNS Rainier, the six-station UNREP was accomplished.

Lincoln's Supply Officer, Cmdr. Martin F. Fields, from Albany, Ore., said Lincoln's mission will benefit from a six-station UNREP in many different ways.

"It was a great, successful training evolution," said Fields. "This type of UNREP will help the ship refuel and replenish its supplies more rapidly. It allows the ship to be ready to conduct operations sooner and continue with its mission. It's a huge help overall."

An UNREP is considered a workout with the moving of so many pallets, but some Lincoln Sailors are working out multiple times a day in preparation for Lincoln's Mr. and Ms. Lincoln Pose-Off challenge.

According to the official memorandum about the competition, there will be five weight classes. The first is bantam weight for those competitors who weigh 143 pounds and under. The second class is light weight for those weighing in at 143.5 pounds to 154 pounds. Third is the middle weight class for those in the 154.5 pound to 176 pound range. Fourth up is the light heavy weight class, featuring competitors weighing 176.5 to 198 pounds. The final weight class is the heavy weights, weighing in at 199 pounds and above.

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Weekly Wrap-Up

WRAP-UP

Continued from Page 4

On the day of the pose-off, spectators will be treated to an introduction to the competition by Lincoln's Fitness Coordinator, LJ Eve, as well as the parading of the colors and the national anthem. Afterward, the judges will be introduced and a description of how the competitors will be judged will be read by Chief Master-at-Arms Marcus Blackwell, a native of Reidsville, N.C. The male competitors will have the chance to show off their skills, followed by the female competitors. Soon after, the judges will compile scores and there will be an awards presentation.

Blackwell said anyone is welcome to participate, but to keep in mind that this is a serious event intended to show the hard work and dedication of the Sailors on board.

"So many people have really just put forth a lot of effort to get in shape, or to better their physical fitness. This is a chance for them to show that off," said Blackwell.

The competition will be held Sept. 19.

With the 2008 political campaigns moving into full swing and USS Abraham Lincoln's (CVN 72) overseas deployment coming to an end, many members of Abe's crew are planning on supporting their candidates upon their return home.

Abe and embarked Carrier Air Wing 2 Sailors are reminded that there are important legal and policy restrictions regarding contact with the presidential campaigns and engagement in political activities for active duty servicemembers.

"Our rights to free speech have to be weighed against giving the impression that the military is choosing sides," said Abe's Assistant Command Judge Advocate Lt. Paige Ormiston, of Snohomish, Wash.

Abe Sailors can register, vote and express a personal opinion on political candidates and issues, but are reminded not to act as representatives of the Armed Forces, according to the directive.

They may also promote and encourage others to exercise their voting franchise, join a partisan or nonpartisan political club and attend its meetings when not in uniform.

Lincoln Sailors can even serve as election officials, if such service is not as a representative of a partisan political party, does not interfere with the performance of military duties, and is performed when not in uniform.

Activities forbidden by 1344.10 include participation in partisan political fundraising activities, rallies, conventions, management of campaigns or debates without respect to uniform or inference or appearance of official sponsorship, approval or endorsement are not allowed.

The use of official authority or influence to interfere with an election, affect the course or outcome of an election, solicit votes for a particular candidate or issue, or require or solicit contributions from others is also prohibited by the directive.

Performing clerical duties for a partisan political committee or candidate during a campaign, soliciting or engaging in fundraising activities in Federal offices or facilities, marching or riding in a partisan political parade or displaying large political signs on private vehicles or at a private residence on a military installation is not allowed.

"We can put bumper stickers on our cars and attend political rallies in civilian clothes because we are doing that as private citizens," said Ormiston. "If we live in non-government housing, we can put signs in our yards. What we can't do is ever give rise to an appearance that the military officially supports a specific candidate or party."

Ormiston encourages everyone on board to vote in the upcoming election.

"We all should vote," she said. "Most organizations don't have the opportunity to choose their leaders. We do. We are led by career military leaders, but decisions about our funding and where, when, how and why we deploy are made by civilians."

Lincoln is currently on a scheduled deployment in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of responsibility. Operating in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean, the U.S. 7th Fleet is the largest of the forward-deployed U.S. fleets covering 52 million square miles, with approximately 60-70 ships, 200-300 aircraft and 40,000 Sailors and Marines assigned at any given time.

Photo by MC3 Quinn Liford

USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) Sailors prepare for the Mr. and Ms. Lincoln Pose-Off competition to be held on Sept. 19.

Photo by MC3 Ronald Dallatorre

Photo by MC3 Ronald Dallatorre

Photo by MC2(SW) James R. Evans

Photo by MC3 Ronald Dallatorre

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Photo by MC3 Ronald Dallatorre

Photo by MC2(SW) James R. Evans

Mass Casualty Drill

onald Dallatorre

Clockwise: Flight deck personnel line up to rig barricades during a drill aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

An Air Department V-2 Division Sailor directs flight deck personnel as they rig barricades during a drill aboard Lincoln.

Crash and salvage Sailors evacuate injured personnel during a mass casualty drill aboard Lincoln.

Flight deck personnel line up to rig barricades during a drill aboard Lincoln.

A simulated casualty waits to be assisted during a mass casualty drill aboard Lincoln.

A simulated casualty waits to be assisted during a mass casualty drill aboard Lincoln.

Crash and salvage Sailors remove a simulated casualty from the crash area during a mass casualties drill aboard Lincoln.

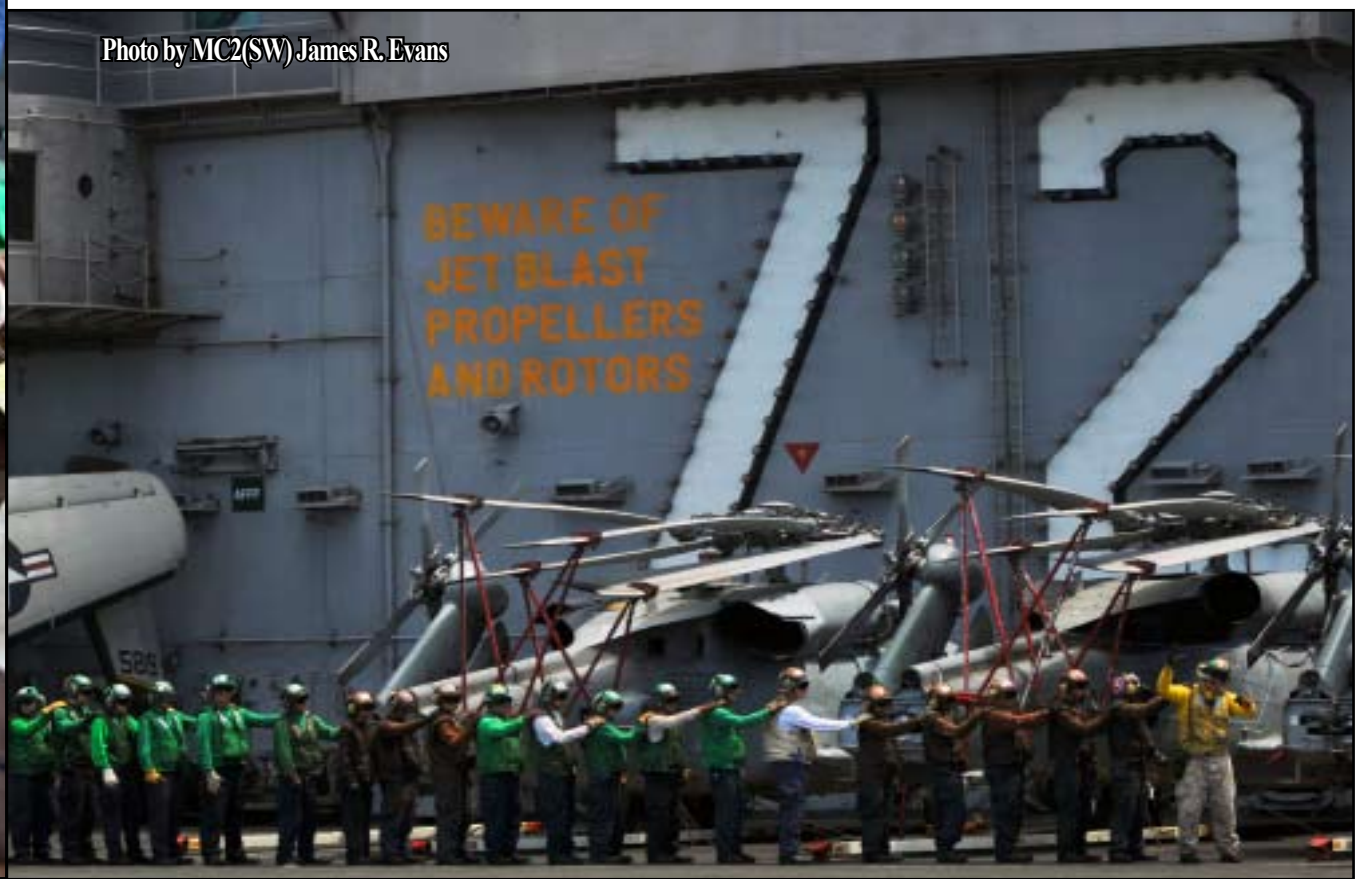

Photo by MC2(SW) James R. Evans

Photo by MC3 Ronald Dallatorre

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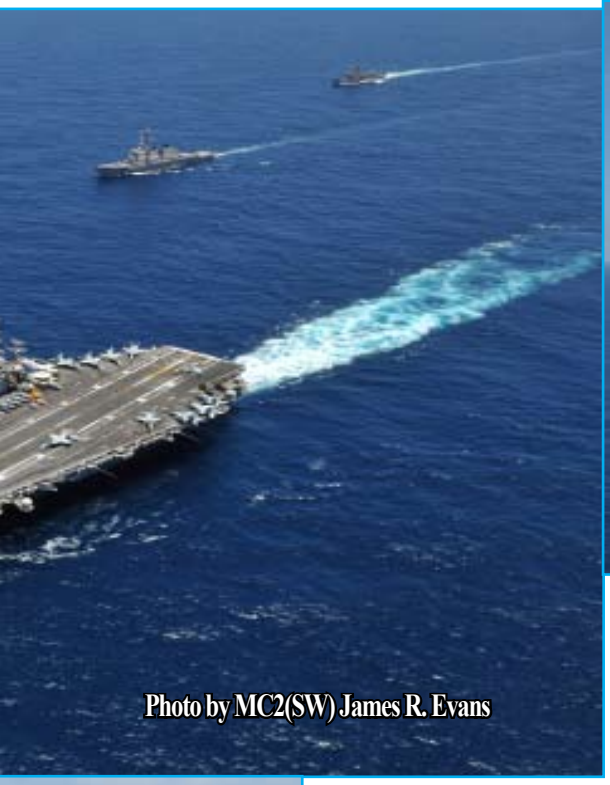


‘Come Sail Away’

Photos by Lincoln’s Media Department

Clockwise: (From foreground to background) Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Russell (DDG 59), Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Momsen (DDG 92), Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser USS Mobile Bay (CG 53), and Oliver Hazard Perry-class guided missile frigate USS Curts (FFG 38) take part in a photo exercise alongside USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) underway in the Indian Ocean alongside Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Russell (DDG 59) and Oliver Hazard Perry-class guided missile frigate USS Curts (FFG 38).

USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) leads ships from the Abraham Lincoln Strike Group in formation as they transit the Indian Ocean.

The Oliver Hazard Perry-class guided missile frigate USS Curts (FFG 38) underway in the Indian Ocean with Abraham Lincoln Strike Group.

USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) underway in the Indian Ocean alongside Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Momsen (DDG 92) and Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser USS Mobile Bay (CG 53).

Sports Analysis/Opinion

Bournes' Breakdown

Mid-majors will no longer be ignored

By MC2 James Bournes
Penny Press Staff

Week one is in the books, and as usual we had some blowouts and some upsets. Traditionally the first couple weeks of the season the larger conferences play the smaller conferences as tune-up games before the start of their conference schedule. However, in years past this might have been true, but now the gap between the talent level of the Bowl Championship Series, or BCS schools and mid-majors is narrowing.

In the first week we saw Utah defeat Michigan in the Big House, and we saw East Carolina give Virginia Tech a taste of its own medicine with a late-game blocked punt return for a touchdown to upset the Hokies. The mid-major conferences can't be taken lightly, not after having teams like Boise State and Hawaii play competitively in BCS bowl games. Here's a look at some of the top schools from the mid-major conferences.

Courtesy Photo

BYU Quarterback Junior Max Hall.

Brigham Young Cougars – BYU returns most of their offensive starters from a team that went 11-2, last year. If they can make it through a tough early schedule, they may be this year's mid-major BCS invader. MVP – QB Max Hall

Fresno State Bulldogs – The preseason favorite to win the Western Athletic Conference, or WAC, they got off to a good start by defeating Rutgers 24-7 last week. Very tough non-conference schedule will force Bulldogs to earn their way to a possible BCS game. MVP – QB Tom Brandstater

Utah Utes – Started off with defeating Michigan last week. Although this isn't your typical Michigan team, it was a significant victory for the Utes. They have a fairly easy schedule the rest of the way. 12-0 is not out of the question. MVP – RB Darrell Mack

Tulsa Golden Hurricane – No more Paul Smith at quarterback, but coaches say David Johnson has the capability to put up similar numbers. The defense needs to learn how to stop opposing teams. Overall an easy schedule, toughest test comes November 1 at Arkansas. MVP – WR Trae Johnson

Boise State Broncos – Did not win the WAC last year, so this young team will play with a chip on their shoulder in 2008. Some players have BCS game experience from two years ago when they defeated Oklahoma. Big game on September 20 at Oregon. MVP – RB Ian Johnson

East Carolina Pirates – This emerging program got off to a great start with upsetting Virginia Tech. However, week two is even harder as they host West Virginia. Survive this week, and they could contend once again for the Conference USA title. MVP – QB Patrick Pinkney

Central Michigan Chippewas – Plain and simple, this offense can put up points, and dual-threat quarterback Dan LeFevour returns. He's only the second player in Football Bowl Series history to pass for over 3,000 yards and rush for over 1,000 in a single season. The favorite to win the Mid-American Conference, or MAC once again. MVP – QB Dan LeFevour

Florida Atlantic Owls – They return plenty of starters from last year's New Orleans Bowl championship team. A BCS game is most likely out of the question due to a very tough non-conference schedule. MVP – QB Rusty Smith

Ball State Cardinals – Will finish second to Central Michigan in the MAC. However, just like them, this offense can get in the end zone. Plus, they have a great quarterback and wide receiver tandem in Nate Davis and Dante Love. Defense will be their Achilles heel once again. MVP – QB Nate Davis

Hawaii Warriors – Last year's Cinderella team will have to move on after head coach June Jones left for Southern Methodist and quarterback Colt Brennan is playing in the NFL. Hopefully they can bounce back after losing big at Florida last week. Not much experience on either side of the ball. MVP – MLB Solomon Elimimian

This by no means is my predicted end-of-the-season finish, but rather a look at the preseason talent of the top teams in the mid-major conferences. Here are my conference champion predictions:

Mid-Major Conference Champions: Conference USA – Tulsa Golden Hurricane, Mid-American Conference – Central Michigan Chippewas, Mountain West Conference – Brigham Young Cougars, Sun Belt Conference – Florida Atlantic Owls, and the Western Athletic Conference – Fresno State Bulldogs

I don't want to forget the Independents either. So for you Notre Dame, Navy and Army fans I'll make it simple, expect a long season of defeats. Notre Dame will probably double its victories from last season, which isn't great since they only won three games in 2007. Navy will have to deal with having a new head coach who runs the same old system. They're not a bad team, however they play a tough schedule. They do have the best chance of making it to a bowl game. Army fans you have a very easy schedule, but there's only one problem, you might have the worst team in FBS football. Sorry, it's true.

This season is already off to a great start. For those of you who are fans of the smaller schools, be glad that when we return to the states with our hundreds of television channels, we will be able to watch our favorite teams compete. Finally, for those of you who are still undefeated, congratulations you're still in the BCS hunt. For those of us already feeling the agony of defeat, remember, it's still early.

Arts & Entertainment

'Who Are You People?' seeks fanatical explanation

By MCSN Kat Corona
Penny Press Staff

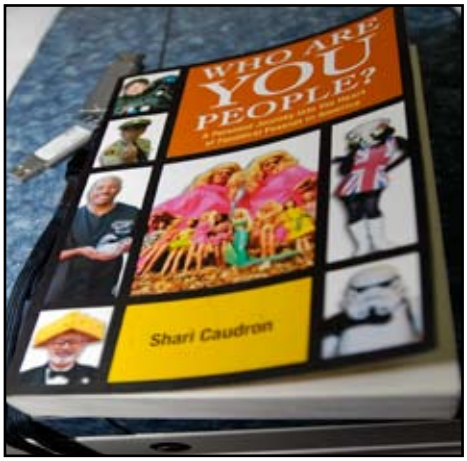
Almost every person I know is fanatical about something. My mother loves all things dog; my stepdad loves scale models – be it trains, planes or automobiles – and John Wayne; my brother, Sean, is said to collect broken bones and adrenaline rushes. Even I have dabbled in my fair share of novelties and collections. At one point my brother, Eric, and I collected basketball cards. I've also collected Mickey Mouse memorabilia, Buddha statues, recently it's been counseling chits (Just kidding editors) and have dabbled in yoga, belly dancing and knitting.

I'll bet you know someone who is passionately, fanatically, obsessively into something: a doll collector, a Star Wars fan or your Uncle Bill who loves anything Elvis. Have you ever wondered what makes these people so passionate?

Award-winning journalist Shari Caudron pondered the same question and was jealous. Not having such a passion herself, she set off to find out what these passionate fanatics had that she didn't.

She went ice fishing in the Rockies, storm-chasing in Kansas, to a Barbie convention in downtown Denver, and was even indoctrinated in the land of "Grobanites" or obsessive fans of the singer Josh Groban.

Throughout her journey Caudron asked every fanatic the same question: what causes these obsessions? What makes someone a fanatic? She put her findings together in her account of



her three-year quest in her book "Who Are You People?"

She's witty, painfully honest, blunt and often times hilarious in her recollections of the people she met on her way; but the book is more than just a bunch of different stories weaved together. It's a look into Americans and how they live today. She discovered you can't talk about passion without also talking about identity, belonging, God, genetics, acceptance and communities.

I honestly had a hard time putting this book down. I'm a voracious reader and often finish a book in a few days, but even I was surprised at how quickly I ate up this nearly 300-page book.

Caudron has an amazing writing style that draws you in with the first few pages and leaves you hooked. She doesn't dawdle during her story telling, but goes straight to the meat with fantastic clarity. She has an uncanny ability to find the most interesting people no matter what the topic is, be it the man who has physically modified his body to make himself look more like a tiger to the wonderful "Woman in Red" who knows everything about "The Andy Griffith Show." She tells their stories with such grace and insight that leaves you feeling like you just met those people yourself.

Caudron even dives into the possibility that passion and fanaticism may be a genetic predisposition, which I think definitely explains why almost everyone in my family has their obsessions.

I loved this book. Of course, I feel strongly about most books I read, but this might be in the top three of the books I've read this deployment.

CORPSMEN

Continued from Page 3

Department, Medical Division.

"It's pretty intense for a corpsman who hadn't done it in about three to four years like me," Saavedra said. "Last time I did it was with a group and for this you had to do it by yourself. You have to finish the six-mile course in about half an hour. They give you the coordinates for all the check points, you just have to find them. There's no one to stop you except near the end, someone will show up in the middle of nowhere and scare you screaming, 'gas, gas, gas!' You've got to put on your mask and try to drink water through it. A lot of people try to tip the canteen up like a cup and it just doesn't work that way, because it works more like a straw."

Although Atencio knew a simulated CBR attack was coming, he said it still caught him off guard.

"I was doing mine and this guy just walked out from the bushes and started counting," Atencio said. "It took me a second to realize what he was doing and I scrambled to put my mask on."

During the training, some have difficulties adjusting to eating in the field, because everything you eat is prepared in a Meal, Ready to Eat (MRE) packages, said Johnson.

"If you get a good MRE, it's good food and you can make it last a while," Johnson said. "If you get the bad ones, you just went hungry,."

After the field training, FMF hopefuls must go through a mock board (similar to a murder board for surface and air warfare pins) and then a final board. Atencio said depending on your command's policy with the boards, applicants could expect to be there for some time.

"My mock board took two days; the majority of one workday, and about halfway into the next," Atencio said. "This was typical of that command though, at Camp Kinser in Okinawa, Japan. The real board only took about an hour. Each person asked two questions and there were only three people on the board. The final board wasn't easy either, but it wasn't too bad."

The FMF pin is not limited to just corpsmen. Religious program specialists, members of the Seabees, storekeepers, and personnel specialists may apply, said Atencio. The major factor is that Sailors need to serve with Marines in the field to be eligible for the pin.

"I think it's a big honor to wear this," Atencio said. "When you go out and walk through the passageways -- not many people can wear this -- so you'll get questions like, 'What pin is that?' 'How'd you get it?' It's an honor for me to say, 'This is my FMF pin, I went to war for it.'"

Final Thoughts

Shipmates

The strength of a warship lies in the hearts and hands of its crew.

Photo by MC3 Quinn Liford

Boatswain's Mate (SW) 3rd Class Jerumias Braga, of Hampton, Maine, recieved a captain's coin from Capt. Denny Wetherald, commanding officer USS Mobile Bay. Braga personally crafted 300 containment straps for the crew of Mobile Bay in the sail loft aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

Editor's Top 10

Things to do in our next port visit

10. Ride an elephant.

9. Find Buddha.

8. Shop, shop and shop.

7. Golf! Sign up at MWR before tomorrow.

6. Check out the sights. Explore.

5. Resort pools and 80-ish-degree weather.

4. Partake in the "cheap" refreshments and entertainment.

3. Relax.

2. Sleep in.

1. Have a blast, but be safe.

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