

# Surface Warfare

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DIGITAL FEATURE



## Readiness Beyond the Job: Training and competing in the 2024 Armed Forces Triathlon Championship

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NAVAL BASE VENTURA COUNTY, Calif. (June 29, 2024) – When most people think of Navy sports, what comes to mind is the legendary football rivalry between the U.S. Naval Academy Midshipmen and Army's West Point Cadets, or the academy's storied sailing team.

Those collegiate competitions spark friendly but often fierce interservice competition for military bragging rights. However, active-duty fleet Sailors also compete against their military brothers and sisters in arms, and the competition is just as tough.



Photo by U.S. Navy



Photo by U.S. Navy

The Navy Sports Program, sponsored by the Navy's Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) program, boasts competitive athletic teams for basketball, golf, rugby, volleyball, and more.

If selected, Sailors on these teams compete in U.S. Armed Forces championships and go on to military world championship competitions.



Photo by U.S. Navy



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One very successful team is the all-Navy triathlon team, consisting of individual male and female top performers who swim, bike, and run to Navy victory.

The 2024 Armed Forces Triathlon Championship, held at Naval Base Ventura County on June 29, marked another victory for the Navy's men's and women's teams.

For medical professional Lt. Cmdr. Pat Dougherty, the championships marked the seventh time he participated in the event as one of the Navy's team of motivated endurance triathletes.

By day, he's full-time as a research physiologist at Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet. But on his own time,

Dougherty prioritizes his physical well-being by training for triathlon competitions.

Dougherty, a native of Scranton, Pennsylvania discovered his love for triathlons when he was in graduate school at Texas A&M University.

"I'd been running for a couple of years for fitness, and then I had a bicycle to get around campus because it was a big campus, and I would swim to cross-train for running," said Dougherty. "So my roommate at the time suggested I go sign up for a triathlon since I'm basically training for one already."

That was in 2002, and Dougherty is still hooked today.





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His training regimen has evolved over the years, but Dougherty said he fits in about 10 to 15 hours of weekly training wherever he can.

"I typically train one to three times per day, seven days a week," he said. "I try to do four swims, four bikes, four runs, and two or three strength training sessions weekly."

While there are times when work can limit his time for training, he continues to prioritize staying fit and sharp because he believes they contribute to being an effective Sailor.

"I think physical activity is a hugely important component—along with things like sleep and nutrition—to maintaining overall physical and mental health and readiness," said Dougherty.

He explained that the Navy's team selection is a competitive process, and it all comes down to the numbers. "I've just been lucky to have some really good races, and I made the criteria to be selected for the team."

Dougherty contributed this year to yet another Navy championship win. The Navy's men's and women's teams both dominated, taking gold in the 2024 championship race.

The Olympic distance race consisted of a 1,500-meter open-ocean swim, a 40-kilometer bike ride and a 10-kilometer run.

On the men's team, Lt. Cmdr. Kyle Hooker took first place, and Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Kyle Warrick, a diving medical technician in San Diego, took second place, finishing in 1:49:28 and 1:53:54, respectively.

Hooker, who works on the Joint Staff at the Pentagon won the championship for the seventh time. The Navy team held half of the top ten places, more than any of the other branches.

Dougherty placed 13th overall and third in the Men's Masters category, which includes athletes over 40 years of age. His finishing time was 2:01:10, and he came in strong as the seventh Navy finisher.

Ens. Hannah Walz, from Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida won gold for the women, and Lt. j.g Carolyn Riggs from Naval Air Station Kingsville, Texas won bronze. Several other top placers contributed to a winning team score.

Dougherty felt privileged to be on such a talented team. "I'm proud to contribute to the team's success and humbled to associate with such an incredible group of athletes," he said. "I have made good friends through this competition, some whom I have been stationed with at past duty stations, so it was great to reconnect with folks from all the services, whom I have raced with over the years."

As for anyone considering joining a Navy sport, the opportunity is always there. Sailors can view available sports and download a program application by visiting [www.navyfitness.org/all-navy-sports-application](http://www.navyfitness.org/all-navy-sports-application).

Dougherty believes that every Sailor should have an outlet for physical exercise, as it contributes to their overall health and warfighting readiness.

He encourages Sailors to "choose their 'how'" by finding an activity they enjoy and sticking with it, whether swimming, cycling, rowing, group fitness classes, or the like. And if they can do it with the Navy team, that's an added bonus! ⚓







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