

Sapper Stakes 2012

By Capt Mike Demaiter

CFB GAGETOWN - Sections from 4 Engineer Support Regiment competed in a section level competition known as SAPPER STAKES on 5 and 6 June 2012. The second annual iteration of the competition saw the Regiment building on the previous year's success by expanding the competition to practice additional skill sets ranging from basic soldier skills to section level tasks.

On the first day of the competition the teams competed in eleven different stands, each of one hour in duration. Stands focusing on all arms training included: field expedient tire changes, setting up of a communications mast, building wire obstacles and conducting personnel and vehicle searches. Combat Engineer specific training focused on the construction of a simple Medium Girder Bridge, clearing an area of unexploded ordnance, basic carpentry, building a gin and shear, utilizing the hydraulic tools trailer, laying out class 60 track way and establishing a protective minefield. Once the teams finished up the training they headed to squadron level hides for a few hours of forced rest before the following day's navigation challenge.



Commander Canadian Army, LGen P.J. Devlin, addresses 4 ESR at the conclusion of SAPPER STAKES 2012

The navigation challenge was a 10 km route which took most teams about six hours to complete. It saw the teams conduct cross country navigation through a variety of swampy and thickly wooded terrain. Penalties were assessed for missed navigation points, and roving patrols drove the roads to assess penalties for teams using the roads and thus forcing them to use a tactical posture. Needless to say, the soldiers were wet and exhausted by the time they crossed the finish line.

The exercise ended with a visit by the Commander Canadian Army, LGen Devlin, who praised the Regt's accomplishments and operational posture before he took questions on several issues of concerns to the soldiers: namely the future of the Land Duty Allowance and the impact of budget restraints on the Regiment.

Overall, Sapper Stakes was a great success. Many soldiers commented on the fact that the stands refreshed important skills and provided a valuable venue for mentoring and developing junior leaders. Next year's competition will surely continue to raise the bar by including new and more challenging training.



The 4 ESR SAPPER STAKES participants pose in front of a Buffalo