



PFQ Challenge 2021

BY GREG AMUNDSON

Officer Jason Payne of the Westchester County Department of Public Safety accepts the award for top score in the NTOA's PFQ Challenge at our 2021 conference in Kansas City, MO.

(l-r) Officer Jason Payne, Chairman of the Board Luke Sherman and Executive Director Thor Eells.

Research has shown that despite a police officer's oath to serve and protect other people, law enforcement personnel often are the most vulnerable people in society. Academic and clinical studies on stress, depression, anxiety and mental health among police officers have yielded troubling results.

Sadly, there is an abundance of evidence demonstrating that officers have an increased rate of developing mental and physical health-related issues. This is due to sustained trauma exposure and certain maladaptive coping strategies still supported by police culture.¹ The challenges facing officers are significantly higher than those facing the general public and include a disproportionate rate of depression, heart disease, relationship conflict and divorce, alcoholism, post-traumatic stress and suicide.²

How are specialized units and individual operators to respond? The above-mentioned unsettling findings underscore the well-known contention that police work (not to mention SWAT and ERT operations) is a high-risk calling. They also highlight the need for an effective, coordinated response from the law enforcement, mental health, physical fitness, and chaplaincy communities that are directed toward assessment, prevention, intervention and transformation. To this end, operators who lead from the front within their departments by a demonstrated high level of physical fitness present a valuable effort that can not only help counteract the toxicity of a long-term policing career but also serve as an objective, measurable and repeatable component in such a comprehensive effort — thus the PFQ!

Operators have a responsibility to themselves, their teammates and their departments to indoctrinate themselves into the culture and ethos of the warrior archetype (intangible and subjective attributes of an operator) while simultaneously preparing for the most demanding standards of physical readiness possible (tangible and objective attributes of an operator: i.e., the PFQ and other measurements of marksmanship, combatives, O-course, etc.). Although the outer accoutrements and weapon systems issued to operators protect their physical body from attack, research has demonstrated that what matters most is the space between their ears. In this sense, oftentimes the first step to victory (both on and off duty) is for operators to embrace a warrior mindset. Operators who relate to themselves as a mighty warrior in a cosmic battle of good versus evil are predisposed to navigating a career in law enforcement and special operations with greater agility, courage, resilience and faith in a positive outcome.

SWAT and ERT operators are astonishing men and women who have a strong sense of purpose in life. Through rigorous classroom and field training, crucible tests of

endurance and willpower, and strenuous measurements of work capacity across broad time and modal domain, operators learn how to drive forward with mission focus and serve with meaning, clarity, and intention. Objectively speaking, operators are trained to run toward the sound of danger and are equipped to thrive when they engage the source of danger. (Remember the Hollywood adage, “Who do the police call when they need help? SWAT!”) Operators help the public and members of their own department feel safe, valued, respected, and important contributors to society. That being said, law enforcement departments and society at large tend to sense that operators are peacefully dangerous. In other words, the public intuitively knows that operators are capable of responding to danger precisely because operators understand danger — how it works, and how it can be mitigated and overcome.

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PFQ APRIL CHALLENGE

During the month of April 2021, the NTOA introduced the first PFQ Challenge. All operators who successfully maxed the test with 50 points are listed on page 65.

Additionally, the top 10 scores received a formal certificate of achievement from the NTOA on their accomplishment.

The agency or SWAT team that submitted the highest overall score received a plaque commemorating their achievement.

It is with great pleasure that the NTOA Physical Fitness section acknowledges and celebrates the best-of-the-best within our nation's ranks of ERT and SWAT operations for their remarkable achievements on the NTOA PFQ. These people have stood out as possessing levels of strength, endurance, speed, and fortitude that set them apart and position them at the tip of the spear. In other words, these people are able to run toward the sound of danger and thrive when they engage the source of danger a little bit faster and better than everyone else.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Special recognition is in order for Operator Jason Payne of Westchester County Department of Public Safety on the overall highest PFQ score of 150 total points (Fittest Operator Award) and to Malden (MA) Police Department ERT on their Fittest SWAT Team Award. Over 180 operators achieved the gold standard of 50+ points on the PFQ and 21 operators achieved over 100 points.

In addition to the objective data collection that the first round of PFQ testing provided, there were also incredible testimonies of increased unit cohesiveness, trust, esprit de corps, and operational readiness. Over the next several months, the NTOA physical fitness section will be meeting to further review the objective data in addition to the recommendations of areas where the test and testing administration can be improved.

ENDNOTES

1. As a case in point, in 1999 while serving as a law enforcement officer in Santa Cruz, CA, my field training officer introduced me to the post-shift ritual of "Choir Practice." This nightly activity involved gathering around the trunk of a marked patrol vehicle, drinking beer, and lamenting about the stress of the job.

2. Bryan L. Steinkopf, Kori A. Hakala, and Vincent B. Van Hasselt, "Motivational Interviewing: Improving the Delivery of Psychological Services to Law Enforcement," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 46, no. 5 (2015): 348-354, accessed July 25, 2019, <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2015-36244-001>

Greg Amundson is the NTOA's Physical Fitness Section Chair.

**ON BEHALF OF THE NTOA AND THE
PHYSICAL FITNESS SECTION,
THANK YOU
TO EVERYONE WHO PARTICIPATED IN
THE TEST, AND CONGRATULATIONS ON
YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS.**

**CONTINUE TO TRAIN AS IF YOUR LIFE
DEPENDS ON IT — BECAUSE IT DOES!**

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PFQ TOP SCORES 2021

Listed alphabetically

J. Atkinson - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Allan Barnes - Saint Joseph County Police Department/Metro SWAT

Dan Bedoya - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Jeremy Befus - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Ryan Bertrand - Sioux City Police Department

Brenden Bonnett - Oshkosh Police Department

Daniel Bourque - Malden Police Department

Kevin Boyce - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Alan Brooks - Northwest Montana Regional SWAT

Bryan Cage - Aberdeen Proving Ground Police Dept.

* **Scott Carroll** - Malden Police Department

Tyler Catterton - Germantown Police Department

Desmond Chan - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Rick Cockrell - Texarkana Arkansas Police Department

Jesse Conyngham - Laurel Police Department

James Cooper - Paragould Police Department

Richard Cordo - Germantown Police Department

Luis Correa - Anaheim Police Department

* **Rich Correale** - Malden Police Department

Aaron Cox - Germantown Police Department

Garrett Cross - Anaheim Police Department

Jesse Cruz - San Francisco Police Department

Paul Cusano - Westchester County Department of Public Safety

Kevin Cyr - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Cory D'Entremont - Malden Police Department

Bo Dahlberg - San Francisco Police Department

Taylor Daigle - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

* **Lucas Dailey** - Tennessee Highway Patrol Special Operations Unit

Doug Decker - Port Huron Police Department

Paul "Diddy" Delgado - Anaheim Police Department

Chris Dibblee - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Louie DiNuzzo - Colonie Police Department

Richard Doherty - Malden Police Department

John Duval - Klamath County Sheriff's Office

Brian Emberly - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Sean Engles - Charleston Police Department

Will Farley - Germantown Police Department

Ian Ferster - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Carl Fisher - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Josh Fleckenstein - Sioux City Police Department

* **Wyatt Flickinger** - Bettendorf Police Department

Chris Foreman - Chelan County Regional SWAT

Brent Frank - Chelan County Sheriff's Office

Jason Fries - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Jesse Geiken - Rockford Police Department

Nick Godwin - Germantown Police Department

Nicholas Godwin - Port Huron Police Department

Ever Gomez - Malden Police Department

Kevin Graves - Germantown Police Department

Greg Gremillion - Shelby County Sheriff's Office

Amanda Grenier - Malden Police Department

Stephen Gritsch - San Francisco Police Department

Matthew Guthrie - Anderson Police Department

Kevin Hall - Aston Township Police Department/Central Delco Tactical Response Team

Chris Hammer - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Paul Haye - Philadelphia Police Department

Chance Henderson - Austin Police Dept

Les Henderson - Yakima Police Department

Sam Henderson - Germantown Police Department

Davis Herdon - Germantown Police Department

* **Art Hoffman** - Plymouth Police Department

Chris Irwin - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

San Jeong - Korea National Police Special Operation Unit

Luke Johnson - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Shaun Jones - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Eric Jones - Yakima Police Department SWAT

Jon Joseph - Central Delaware County Tactical Response Team

Brad Junker - Lincoln Police Department

Michael Kaldon - Charleston Police Department

Matthew Kennell - Staunton Police Department

Mike Kizinkewich - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Nicolas Laffredo - Central Delco Tactical Response Team

Alex Levesque - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Brian Lewis - Chelan County Sheriff's Office

Robert Lohnes - Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office

Adam Looney - Western Virginia Regional Jail

Cory Magnuson - Rockford Police Department

Dave Malone - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Adam Massart - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Seth McCloud - Montgomery County SWAT Team

* **Lawrence McGahey** - Malden Police Department

Gage McLaren - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Elijah McNeal - Malden Police Department

Newly McSpadden - Stillwater Multi-Jurisdictional Special Operations Team

Steve Meador - Medford Police Department

Ali Misaghi - San Francisco Police Department

Brandon Mullins - Anaheim Police Department

Mike Muzechka - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Andrew Nelson - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Justin O'Mahony - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Robert Orr - Tennessee Highway Patrol Special Operations

Brandon Owens - Germantown Police Department

Josh Page - Tennessee Highway Patrol Special Operations

Dustin Parent - Gilford Police

James Park - Anaheim Police Department

Mark Parker - Petoskey Department of Public Safety

* **Jason Payne** - Westchester County Department of Public Safety

David Pierce - Tennessee Highway Patrol Special Operations Unit

Ryan Potts - Broken Arrow Police

Kevin Presley - Winter Springs Police Department

Michael Reed - Grand Rapids Police Department Special Response Team

Travis Reed - Port Huron Police Department

Darcy Rowe - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

David Ruiz - Mishawaka Police Department

Mike Ryan - Broken Arrow Police

Robert Schenk - Germantown Police Department

Ryan Schroeder - Calgary Police Service Tactical Unit

Winson Seto - San Francisco Police Department

Ben Sharp - Germantown Police Department

Matt Shaw - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

* **Christopher Signore** - Newtown Township Police Dept/Central Delco Tactical Response Team

Dustin Sola - Anaheim Police Department

Timothy Sonnek - Lake Minnetonka SWAT

Kevin Sosa - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Jason Spielman - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Colton Stepper - Yakima Police Department

Mike Stewart - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Ben Stonecipher - Germantown Police Department

Michael Talley - Jonesboro Police Department

Joe Taylor - Tennessee Highway Patrol Special Operations Unit

Steven Thomas - Montgomery County Sheriff's Office

Austin Thomen - Montgomery County Sheriff's Office and Montgomery County Multi-Jurisdictional SWAT Team

Jim Thomson - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Casey Turner, MD - Yakima Police Department

Stuart Tyson - Anaheim Police Department

Alex Ungureanu - Anaheim Police Department

Ryan Velich - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Joe Villeneuve - Charleston Police Department

Rob Wadland - Malden Police Department

Brent Wantke - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

* **Kenneth Watkins** - Malden Police Department

Zachary Whitehead - Tennessee Highway Patrol Special Operations Unit

Clay Williams - North Tarrant Regional SWAT

Kyle Winslow - Lower Mainland District Emergency Response Team (RCMP)

Anna Woodring - University of Georgia Police Department

Johnathan Worthge - San Francisco Sheriff's Office

* Top 10 scores