

# SKILL AT ARMS VICTORS: 2/1 RNZIR

By Lance Corporal Joshua Aitken, 2IC of the winning team

**Corporal Ricky Mongan was given one task by the Commanding Officer of 2nd 1st Battalion earlier this year – bring home the trophies.**

The CO, Lieutenant Colonel Mike Van Welie selected CPL Mongan to lead the team to Skill at Arms victory in Waiouru – and he did.

CPL Mongan had one mission, to win, and from there went straight to work to select the team who were going to help him accomplish his task. He soon selected LT Mark Whitaker as his SIG, followed by carefully selected personnel made up from Support Company, Alpha, Bravo and Delta Companies. These soldiers included PTE Winston Marshall, PTE Alexander Whatuira, PTE William Scott-Manktelow, PTE Jason McClintock, PTE Lehi Ramage, and PTE Davey Kengen. PTE Andrew Jones and PTE Connor Stent were selected as reserves.

The team was managed by CPL Kurt Ata for the Burnham phase, and SSGT Pio Ailao for the Waiouru phase.

Each team member was handpicked for their particular skillset, which collectively would give the team what it would need to win the competition.

In mid February, the team was brought together, introduced, and the goal was made clear. The soldiers went through each stand and what was required to obtain maximum points, and a plan of attack and training programme was set in place. Training was soon underway making use of every minute of each day to hone and improve personal skills, team compatibility and cohesion. On 5 March the team made their way to Waiouru.

After settling into Helwyn camp, the team was straight back to work, training day and night until a level of competency was reached that was required to win. The team used all the facilities Waiouru had to offer to better themselves in preparation for each stand. With the vigorous training set out, and the motivation and enthusiasm from everyone, the team was ready.

On 19 March all the teams arrived at the staging area. Stores were issued, water bottles were filled and safety briefs were given. With rifles zeroed, each team made their way to their first stand which they were to begin at first light the following day. 2/1 RNZIR was to start with wiring.

2018 Brigade Skill at Arms was underway.

The competition was made up of 13 stands over three days and two nights, completing six stands on day one, then six the following day.

The stands were wiring, section quick attack, communications, march and shoot, AFV recognition, Counter IED, all arms call for fire, all arms weapon dry and live firing training tests, treatment and evacuation of casualties, required kit inspection, night navigation circuit, low light pistol AWQ followed by the Falling Plate competition on the third and final day.



The team's positioning was fairly uncertain on day one after coming in slightly over time on the wiring, and a delay during the enemy advance and withdrawal shoot due to weather conditions making locating the targets difficult. None the less, the team kept their heads high and marched on throughout the night during the navigation circuit. At the end of day 1, unbeknown to the team they managed to place 2nd on 2 stands and 3rd on 3.

It rained for most of the competition however the team's morale was not altered; the weather worked in their favour keeping the body temperatures down during marching between stands and the physically demanding stages.

After no more than three hours sleep, day two began. After a quick bite to eat, a shave and cam re-applied, the team began their move to their next stand. The day went on, distance walked continued to add up, feet and muscles started to ache, however after receiving positive feedback from most of the stand controllers and smashing the pistol AWQ, day two drew to an end with a positive vibe, and the team knew it was going to be close and come down to the Falling Plate shoot.

The sequence of events for day three were given and the order of march was drawn. 2/1 RNZIR was to shoot the Falling Plate 7th. The shoot began and was producing some quick times, however having stripped and







Soldiers run in the Falling Plate event

assembled the new MARS-L continuously throughout training left the team quietly confident.

It was now the team's time to shoot. As the soldiers approached the 100m mound they stretched, got the blood flowing and talked through the sequence of the stand. The nerves started to kick in but were quickly brought back into check and breathing was controlled. The whistle sounded and the team was off, pushing through the pain barrier sprinting back to the 250m mark. Weapons were stripped, magazines loaded, rifles assembled and a mad dash to the 200m mound. Plates dropped in a fluid motion and the clock was stopped. Time 2.32.54. The team's time was the fastest so far by 6 seconds with one team to go. Everyone's eyes were fixed to their watches while the last team conducted their shoot. With 2/1 RNZIR's time pasted on the stop watch they knew they had won the falling plate.

After remaining ammunition was de-bombed and clearances were conducted, it was time for prize giving. The Falling Plate trophy was awarded to the 2/1 RNZIR team however it was still uncertain whether it was enough to put them at the top of the overall table. After a final tally of scores and protests, it was time to announce the top section. With a deliberate pause for effect, the team finally heard what they had been hoping for. The training had paid off and the team had placed 1st at four of the stands on day two giving them a complete score of 140 points for 1st place.

The team received their trophy and was announced winners of the 2018 Brigade Skill at Arms Competition.

Team members put their win down to relentless determination, correct training and motivation to win, fuelled by team cohesion and camaraderie.

