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Herman, Navy Gold Take the 20th Bridge Run/Walk

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By JO1 Chris Halsey - Combat Camera Group Pacific

CORONADO, Calif. - Billy Herman loves to run. He has run in numerous cross country championships around the world including the 2006 World Military Cross Country Championships in Tunis, Tunisia; the 2005 U.S. Cross Country Championships in Vancouver, Wash.; and the University of San Diego Cross Country Invitational, where he placed second overall.

He also earned seats on the Navy and Team USA Running Teams. Last year Herman, a Navy hospital corpsman and surgical technician at Naval Medical Center San Diego, took first place overall at the 19th Annual Coronado Bay Bridge Run/Walk, running the four-mile course in 21 minutes, 34 seconds. This year, Herman, nearly missed the fun as San Diego's Navy Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) kicked off the Original 20th Anniversary Bay Bridge Run/Walk 2006.

"I was recovering from an injury a few weeks ago and wasn't sure I would make the race," said Herman. "I'm also getting married next weekend and didn't know if I would have the time to run and get ready for the wedding."

Herman made the run and maintained his first place standing for a second year, finishing the race in 21 minutes, 50 seconds.

"The hardest part is running up that second mile," explained Herman. "With Navy sports, we do a lot of trail runs through Balboa Park and other parts of San Diego that are hilly. That helped me prepare for that steep incline up the bridge."

The 28-year-old corpsman also led his running team, Navy Gold, to a first place standing in the military team category. The five-man team had a combined time of 1 hour, 32 minutes, 49 seconds with four of the five members finishing the course in less than 25 minutes.

Cmdr. Jim Felty, the commanding officer at Commander, Naval Surface Forces San Diego and Navy Gold's team leader, said, "It's always good to win, but anything we can do for MWR is a good thing. Many of us drive over the bridge everyday to go to work. We love going over the bridge, it's a great, fun race."

The Navy was well represented at the annual MWR event. Besides the hundreds of local Sailors and Marines who gave their Sunday morning for the cause, several local commands such as Expeditionary Warfare Training Group Pacific, Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Unit North Island and USS Howard (DDG 83) participated in the run. According to Chief Communications Technician (SW/AW) Theresa Vagnoni, the race coordinator for Howard, 86 of the ship's 320 Sailors came out to run the source.

"It's never hard to get our people to run this event," explained Vagnoni, the leading chief petty officer for Howard's OT Division. "We love to present the Howard. This is our second year running the race and I imagine we will keep running it for years to come."

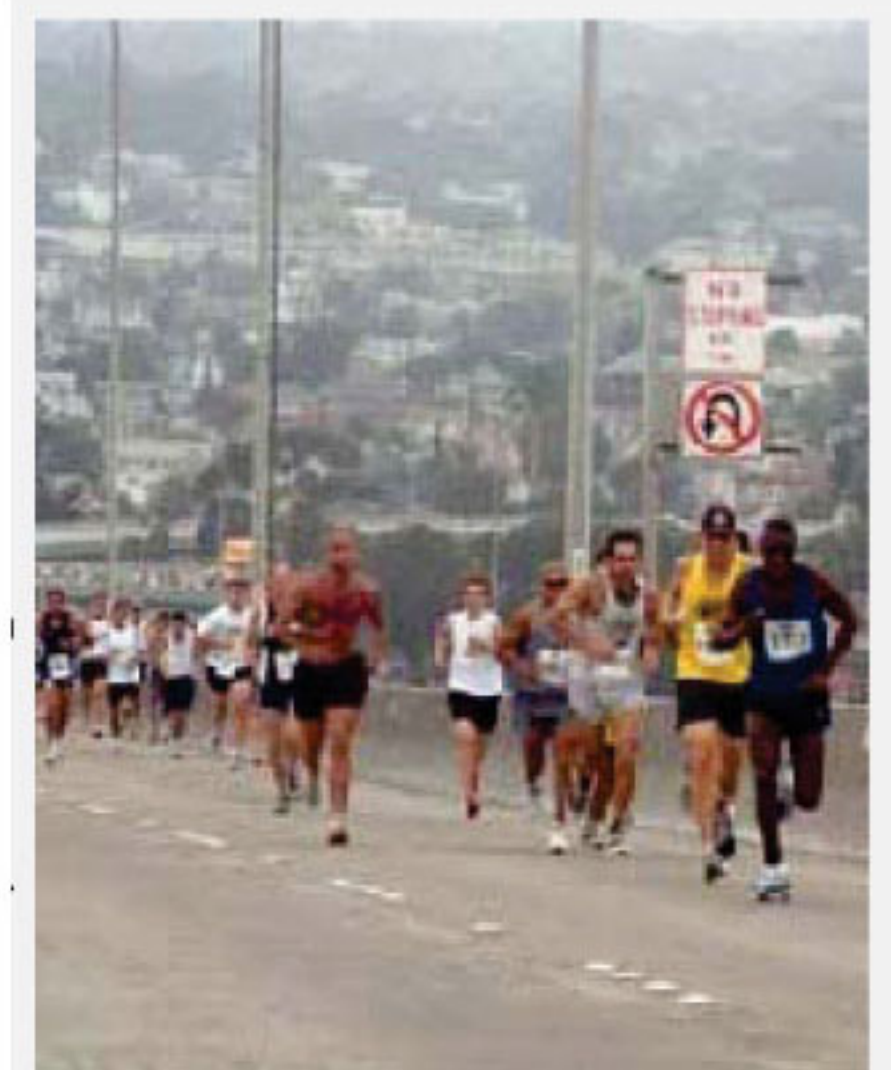
According to John Waterman, the person responsible for creating the event 20 years ago, the Bridge Run attracted more than 5,800 people to the start block in the historic Gas Lamp District, a huge improvement to the 300 people who ran during the inaugural event.

"There is no way I could have ever imagined this event lasting for 20 years," explained Waterman, the former athletic director at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado. "Everyone who volunteered did a superb job. I look forward to being here again in 20 year."

In the end however, the biggest winners were the San Diego Navy's MWR Program and ultimately the Sailors who benefit from their support.



HM3 Billy Herman and the rest of "Navy Gold" lead the pack as the Original 20th Anniversary Bay Bridge Run/Walk 2006 kicks off in downtown San Diego. The annual event was presented by the San Diego Navy's Morale, Welfare & Recreation program. Official U.S. Navy photo by JO2 Mario Quiroga



Residents from the greater San Diego area run across Coronado Bay Bridge during the annual Bay Bridge Run/Walk sponsored by MWR. An estimated 6,000 people participated in the event and over \$40,000 was raised in support of MWR programs. Official U.S. Navy Photo by PHAN James Seward