

## Airport firefighter responds to international challenge

By SALLY FRENCH - Manukau Courier | Tuesday, 5 June 2007

**Auckland airport response officer Steve Fairweather will take on the world at the World Firefighter Combat Challenge in Las Vegas in November.**

Mr Fairweather proved his fitness, skills and endurance are up there with the best when he came fourth in the individual section of the New Zealand Firefighter Combat Challenge in Feilding recently.

More than 150 firefighters took part in the inaugural national competition.

Mr Fairweather also helped the Auckland airport response unit to win the national team event.

The team's other members were Brent Hannam, Tony Scott and Graham Langford.

Combat challenges are designed to show physical strength and fitness and test skills that are critical to being a firefighter.

The games began in the United States where, Mr Fairweather says, a lot of prestige goes alongside winning state titles.

The event has physical and practical tests that firefighters carry out while wearing full firefighting gear and breathing apparatus.

Activities include carrying hose reels up six flights of stairs, a rapid stair descent, completing an obstacle course and dragging an 86kg dummy a distance of 35 metres.

Mr Fairweather says he was shocked to hear he had been selected for the representative team.

"Our finishing times were kept secret until an awards and dinner evening. I couldn't believe I'd done so well.

"My lungs were screaming; it was very challenging."

He has been watching footage of the Feilding competition to see how he can improve his techniques.

Three of his new team members are from the Auckland region and one is from Otorohanga.

The team will meet fortnightly and, among many different training regimes, will practise on the Air New Zealand hangar stairway.

"We will continue to build up our fitness and then three months out we'll really start going for it," Mr Fairweather says.

"I'm confident we'll do well," he says.

As well as having a regular gym routine, Mr Fairweather enjoys playing sport, especially Aussie Rules and squash.

He has not been to the United States and is looking forward to meeting firefighters from all over the world.

The competition begins on November 4.

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**BRING IT ON:** Steve Fairweather has been selected to take part in the World Firefighter Combat Challenge in Las Vegas.

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