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Firefighter Challenge team takes second; earns national ranking

By **TRACY CHESNEY**
Herald-Banner Staff

GREENVILLE — The solution to rack up more awards is to keep on racing until they get to the top of the world.

Team RackSolutions, the Greenville Firefighter Combat Challenge team, won second place in the Tyler regional on Sept. 1.

"And they set three consecutive team records along the way," said team captain Jeff Jameson. "With the strong outing, Team RackSolutions is now ranked ninth in the United States out of more than 100 teams."

Jameson said that Sam Squad of Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo took home first place and the El Paso Fire Department received third place.

Sponsored by RackSolutions, the parent company of Innovations First, the team includes five Greenville firefighters who compete against other firefighters in a fire scenario relay. Competing this year are firefighters Jameson, Jeremy Powell, Stephen Langford, Derek Sheets and Rusty Erwin.

Langford also ran his first individual race on Aug. 31 in one minute and 47.4 seconds, which was the ninth fastest out of 67. Langford is now qualified for the World Challenge XVI in Las Vegas in November.

During the relay competition, the firefighters are required to wear full bunker gear and a SCOTT air-pak breathing apparatus as they simulate real-life firefighting tasks. The relay tasks include climbing a five story tower while carrying a 42-pound high-rise pack; the hose hoist with a 42-pound donut roll to the top of the tower; the descend from the tower; a forcible entry in which a firefighter uses a nine-pound shot mallet to drive a steel beam the distance of five feet; the serpentine, where a firefighter runs through a 140-foot slalom course without knocking over any hydrants; the hose advance in which a firefighter runs with a hose line for 75 feet and spraying a stream of water at a target; and the victim rescue, which includes dragging a 175-pound mannequin backwards for 100 feet.

Jameson said that the team started with a seeding round run of one minute and 22.57 seconds, which defeated Team Reservoir of Mississippi, whose time was two minutes and 11.51 seconds.

"The round ended with Team RackSolutions having the fastest time, enabling them to receive the only bye of the tournament," Jameson said.

During the quarterfinal round, RackSolutions teamed up against Hudson Bend Fire Department.

"We turned up the heat by beating Hudson Bend by more than three seconds with one minute and 17.60 seconds run," Jameson said. "The quarterfinal run advanced our team to the semi-finals as they finally broke into the elite 'sub-80' second fraternity."

During the semi-finals, the RackSolutions squared off against the El Paso team.

"The El Paso team led going into the final even of the race," Jameson said. "Our team's dummy dragger, Stephen Langford,

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scorched his competition getting to the finish line only inches ahead of the other team. The race times were incredibly close, as El Pas stopped the clock at one minute and 17.48 seconds, and our team crossed the line at one minute and 17.08 seconds.

During the championship round, RackSolutions matched up against the fifth ranked Sam Squad, who led coming out of the tower.

"But RackSolutions blistered through the ground evolutions setting with another team record of one minute and 16.82 seconds," Jameson said. "The impressive run by RackSolutions wasn't enough, however, as a determined Sam Squad stopped the clock at one minute and 14.82 seconds."

The team's hose hoister, Derek Sheets, said they will continue to work on several things in an effort to run under 75 seconds.

"We're right there," Sheets said. "We're chasing that error free race."

Jameson said that Team RackSolutions has qualified for the world even, but their next competition is the United States National Championships in Atlanta, GA in mid-October.

"The team is energized by the second place finish, but the bigger accomplishment is being the United States ninth ranked team," Jameson said.

Team RackSolutions practices every Saturday morning in downtown Greenville beside the old Cadillac Hotel, which is located in between Lee and Washington Streets. The public is invited to attend the practices.



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