



For more information, contact Maj. G. A. Canedo, Sports & Athletics, Semper Fit, MWR and Business Operations Division, HQMC, at (703) 784-3898 or e-mail: canedog@usmc-mccs.org

10/17/11

Marine Gunny is Military Champion at Ironman Kona

HQMC (MR), QUANTICO, VA. — Gunnery Sergeant Robert Hilton of Oceanside, Calif., was the first U.S. military service member across the finish line at the Ford Ironman World Championship in Kailua-Kona, on the “Big Island” of Hawaii on Saturday, Oct. 8, 2011.

Hilton is assigned to the 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion at Camp Pendleton, Calif. He finished the race with a time of nine hours and 19 minutes, beating the other U.S. military service representatives to win the title of 2011 Military Division Champion. “Being in the special ops community, I’ve never really had a chance to dedicate time to racing and training like this,” said Hilton. “But this year I was assigned to a training course, and with the time at home I decided to go for it. The intent was always to go to Kona. But once I was asked if I’d race for the Marines, how could I say, ‘no?’” Hilton qualified to race in the Ironman World Championship by competing and attaining a qualifying time at Ironman France.

“I was hoping that, at some point, I’d find my space in the water and be able to develop a rhythm, but it was a fight the whole way. Even getting out of the water seemed like a big mess, so I was feeling the chaos coming into transition. Everything on the bike was the way people said it would be, though. It was hot. It was windy. It was hilly. I just worked through the gears and made it happen.” The Ford Ironman consists of a 2.4-mile open ocean swim, 112-mile bike ride and 26.2-mile run. The race at Kailua-Kona is the World Championship and is one of 26 Ironman competitions held each year in various countries around the world.

- more -

“It’s hard to do this in a way. My unit just has phenomenal leaders and incredible Marines. I’m talking about courageous guys—absolutely no fear in them. I love being where I am, and sometimes I feel like I’m missing out on it to take time to come to Kona,” said Hilton when asked about what inspires him during the race.

Hilton is a member of the All-Marine Triathlon team. The team consists of the twenty best Marine triathletes chosen from across the Marine Corps. Athletes on the team compete individually in a variety of amateur races across the country each year and come together as a team to compete against the other Services at the Armed Forces Triathlon. The next Armed Forces Triathlon Championship will be held at Naval Base Ventura County, Point Mugu, Calif., June 24, 2012.