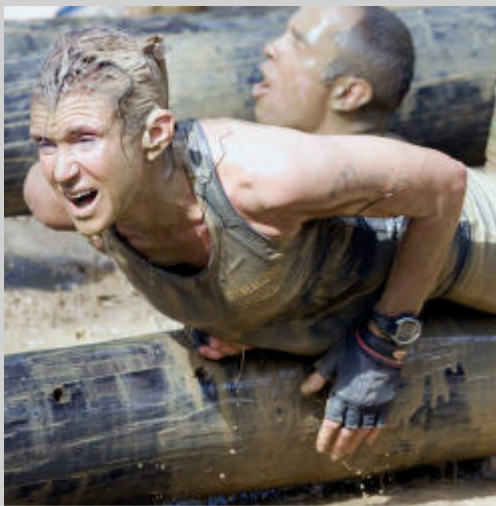


## Mud, sweat, and cheers

Story and Photos by David Martin



**Competitors navigate the Log Hole, a mud pit crossed with logs which had to be crossed by going over one, then under the next, and so on. Getting dirty was a requirement on this obstacle. (See more pictures on page 9)**

On September 20, 2008 the Greater Columbia Marine Foundation hosted the 15th annual Marine Corps Ultimate Challenge Mud Run at McCrady Training Center. Each year this event is the largest of its kind in the Southeast and this year was no different, with over 1200 teams competing on the 4.2 mile obstacle course. The race is held as a fundraiser to support Marines and their families who have been wounded or killed on active duty from the Columbia area and to provide money for local college scholarships named after Marines. This year's participation doubled the numbers from last year and that meant more muddy people everywhere you looked.

The course is 4.2 miles long through the woods and around the training center, but the distance isn't the hard part. The hard part is navigating the 29 obstacles along the way. The course is

broken up into sections which are named after significant battles, places, and items from Marine Corps history such as Belleau Wood, Mt. Suribachi, Funchilin Pass, and A Shau Valley to name a few. Obstacles in each area range from six to ten foot hills made of dirt and mud similar to a BMX track, water holes up to five feet deep, trenches, culverts, as well as more traditional Marine Corps obstacles like "stairway to heaven" ladder climbs and a cargo net climb. While many compete in this event each year to win, most compete just to complete the course.

Organization for the event was well done, as you would expect for something planned by Marines.

One of the busiest areas of the event was the Pollywog Course. This was a mini mud run for the kids and it was well received; some kids ran the course over and over. It was no clean version either. The start was a two foot deep mud pit with a large mound of dirt to climb over to get out. Also along the course were culverts filled with muddy water, water filled trenches underneath a HumVee , and three- to four- foot, slick, muddy hills to climb over. Each child who completed the course received a mud run t- shirt and a completion certificate, and most of all, one heck of a muddy and fun time, all with parental permission.



**Photos by David Martin West Columbia native Shelby Martin slides into the final mud hole on the Pollywog run, a kids version of the mud run. The children seemed to have a great time but their clothes will never be the same.**



**Teammates from team Semper Fidelis Ut Fimus complete the course. The last event was a team carry event to the finish line with teams either carrying teammates in a stretcher, fireman's carry, or piggyback.**

The event appeared to be a huge success. Thousands of people came to compete and thousands more to watch, many of which said they were now planning on competing next year. The race demands teamwork and it showed as teammates assisted each other through the course. It also created a sense of camaraderie amongst the competitors as many helped members of other teams along. After completing their race, many teams could be found scattered around the course cheering on the other teams. The teams were started 20 seconds apart over a six hour time span which made it impossible to tell who was winning but that didn't seem to matter much, as every team seemed to be greeted by cheers at the finish line as if they had won.

The top three teams this year all finished with quicker times than last year's winning team. Coming in first overall with a time of 36:25 was the team named "The Competition" headed by Team Captain Tripp Davis. Second was "Strictly Mud Running" with a time of 38:40 lead by Captain Steven Johnson. Jeff Dixon led the third place team named "Fleet Feet Sports" with a time of 40:13. The JROTC division saw 77 teams compete with Chapin High School sending 14 teams with team #12, led by Kayla Gearhart, placing 10th.

Complete results can be found at the mud run web site <http://www.usmcmudrun.net> as well as more information about the event. If you like running, getting dirty, and having a great time, keep an eye on this site and give it a try next year. If my wife has anything to say about it, I'll see you there.



**A competitor tries to relax a bit while crossing the Pusan Perimeter, a large trench filled with water. Some tried to walk through, some swam, some tried a bit of both.**