

# Peelle Takes "Boston Marathon in Iraq" by Storm

By Lt. Col. Severin Blenkush  
DCMA Iraq/Kuwait

The Boston Marathon is the oldest marathon in the world — and for the fifth time, the Boston Marathon Association sponsored Contingency Operating Base Adder, Ali Base, Iraq, for the event.

Nine members of Defense Contract Management Agency Iraq/Kuwait committed to run the marathon and, led by their commander, Army Col. Jeff Gabbert, travelled to Ali Base in Tallil to compete in the 2009 Boston Marathon, Iraq. The race was held on April 18, two days before the actual Boston Marathon.

Preparing for a marathon under ideal conditions is an involved, time-consuming process, but a deployed environment brings additional challenges to a training regimen. Long duty hours coupled with rough terrain and frequent dust storms truly test the commitment of anyone choosing to run the 26.2-mile race.



Air Force Maj. Harland Peelle receives a trophy for placing first in the 2009 Boston Marathon Iraq.

Two days prior to the race, the weather was hot and dusty, which concerned marathon participants.

Race organizers mitigated some of the potential heat problems with a 5 a.m. start time, and skies were clear on race day. The course was two laps around the base (there was also a half marathon where runners stopped after the first lap) and though it was far from

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Air Force Maj. Melissa Krambeck receives a medal for finishing her first marathon.

smooth, there was no “Heartbreak Hill,” as in the Boston route.

One hundred and twenty people finished the full marathon, with Air Force Maj. Harland Peelle, a DCMA deployee, taking first place. DCMA runners took four of the top 16 spots and six of the top 31. Those who finished in less than six hours automatically qualified to run in Boston’s 2010 race.

“I’ve participated in several marathons before,” Peelle said. “When I heard about this one, I wanted to come out and compete. It’s pretty nice being this year’s overall winner, but I did it for fun.”

Other DCMA members who completed the marathon were: Army Col. Jeff Gabbert, Air Force Lt. Col. Severin Blenkush, Air Force Maj. Harland Peelle, Army Maj. Kevin Moore, Air Force Maj. Jesse Warren, Air Force Maj. Bill Shum, Air Force Maj. Melissa Krambeck and Kurt Robinson. Air Force Maj. Kristi Lowenthal completed the half marathon. **C**



Army Maj. Kevin Moore, Army Col. Jeff Gabbert, Kurt Robinson, Air Force Maj. Jesse Warren, Air Force Lt. Col. Severin Blenkush and Air Force Maj. Kristi Lowenthal pose with their medals.



Air Force Lt. Col. Severin Blenkush, Air Force Maj. Melissa Krambeck, Air Force Maj. Harland Peelle and Army Maj. Kevin Moore pose for a picture at a pre-race pasta dinner.