

NO CUSHY CAMP



Dina Arévalo/Valley Morning Star

Delta Company campers run through the obstacle course at Marine Military Academy Saturday morning. The four-week-long camp plays host to boys from 12 1/2 to 17 years old. Members of D Company are 15 year olds.

Annual MMA summer camp going strong

"The lifestyle of the typical camper is not necessarily an outdoorsy kind of guy."

Ford Kinsley
Sgt. Maj.

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HARLINGEN — Step one, climb up 6 feet of a tall wooden pole using tiny metal footholds. Step two, balance your way across a wooden beam. Step three, climb about 8 feet on a yellow rope web. Step

four, climb down a rope line into a bed of hay. Do not slip. That obstacle sits at the Marine Military Academy's Confidence Course located at the north end of campus. It is aptly named The Tough One.

The youths engaging The Tough One Saturday afternoon were campers at the annual MMA summer camp, which started last week and lasts through Aug. 8.

"(The Weaver) is the best obstacle out here because there's no real technique," Staff Sgt. Josh Camarena, 18, of Southern California said.

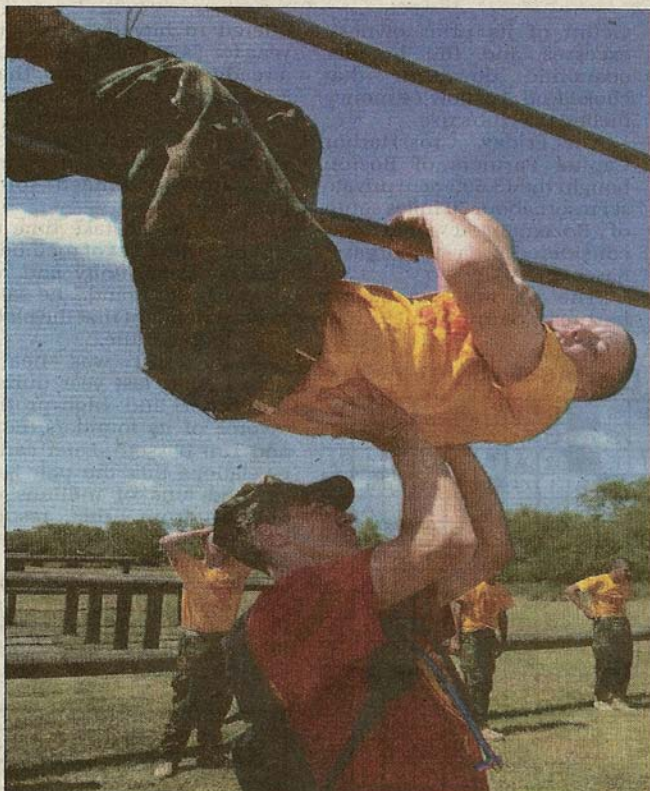
"It's just about brute strength."

The Weaver is a series of horizontal wooden rows that vary in height. Campers would spin around each column then climb to the next higher row.

The summer camp is not a cushy lake vacation spot where youths sit around and roast marshmallows. They are engaging in obstacles that real Marines train on, but everything is age-adjusted, Debbie Wieland, MMA public affairs officer, said.

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MMA



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An MMA cadet helps a Delta Company camper make it over a pole in the obstacle course at Marine Military Academy Saturday morning.

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"The lifestyle of the typical camper is not necessarily an outdoorsy kind of guy," Sgt. Maj. Ford Kinsley said. "He's someone who has probably spent his younger years sitting on the couch playing video games. For the first time in their life they're getting in shape."

The camp includes 315 campers from 29 states and five foreign countries, Wieland said. Campers' ages range from 12 to 17. Ten campers represent the Rio Grande Valley this year, Wieland said.

Admission to camp costs \$3,750, according to the MMA Web site. All campers are invited to join the campus for the school year, Wieland said. About one-third of campers join the school.

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