

Twenty-two athletes have dedicated their lives the past two years to not only serving the country as Air Force members, but hopefully as representatives of their country at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece, in August, where the ancient games originated.

Olympic Dreams

Air Force athletes compete for Olympic slots and dreams

that opportunity, to represent their country has been the driving force as they trained and competed as part of the Air Force World Class Athlete Program.

Airman features five of these athletes whose recent accomplishments have made them the most likely contenders to join the 2004 Olympic team, and includes all who have given their best. After the Olympic trials, and possibly the games in Greece, they'll return to their Air Force careers. They may not return wearing medals around their necks, but they can hold their heads high for what they've accomplished personally and professionally.

Many of these officers and enlisted men and women are chasing Olympic dreams that began in childhood. Facing the best competition the world has to offer, most won't succeed in their efforts to make the Olympic team, and fewer still, if any, will win Olympic medals.

But their desire to give their all for that chance,



Athlete Profile Capt. Eli Bremer, Modern Pentathlon

Eli Bremer is a 2000 graduate from the Air Force Academy and entered the World Class Athlete Program in November 2001.

Hometown: Monument, Colo.

AFSC: 64P3, Contracting Officer

Age: 26

Height: 6 feet

Weight: 170 pounds

Event stats:

Shooting, 175 to 180 points (out of 200 possible)

Fencing,

A-rated fencer

Swimming,

2 minutes to 2:01 for 200-meter long course

Riding,

1,200 points (out of 1,200 possible)

Running,

8 minutes 35 seconds to 8:40 for 3,000 meters

Hobbies:

Fixing up his home and reading Tom Clancy's books and the "Left Behind" series

Usually an officer's primary weapon is the M-9 Baretta pistol. But for one captain, his weapons of choice are an air pistol, an epee, a pool, a horse and running shoes.

Ever since he was a kid, Eli Bremer has wanted two things. Now at 26, he's accomplished one of them — graduating from the Air Force Academy — and is working hard on the other — being an Olympian.

Through the World Class Athlete Program, Captain Bremer represents the Air Force as a modern pentathlon athlete, currently ranked third in the country. The sport consists of five events — shooting, fencing, free-style swimming, equestrian show jumping and cross country running.

"It's very emotionally draining," he said. "One minute you're doing a passive, calm event like shooting, and then the next is an action event like fencing."

Captain Bremer grew up riding horses and was on both the swimming and fencing teams at the academy. But it was during his sophomore year in high school after meeting a pentathlon athlete that he

first took a hard look at his own possibilities in the sport.

"I never even knew what the pentathlon was, but once I heard of the events I figured I was already doing three of them, so I had nothing to lose."

Today, Captain Bremer eats, sleeps and dreams training. When he's not spending 10 hours a day at the Olympic training center in Colorado Springs,

Colo., he's putting on his blue uniform and representing the Air Force around the world. He never forgets he's still a full-time military officer.

"Being an athlete is merely an extension of my job as an officer," he said. "Sports allow us

to 'touch' people as role models and ambassadors to our country."

With the help of many family and friends, Captain Bremer has the support behind him to reach his dream.

"I've had a lot of good competitions, but until you make the Olympics, all the rest don't matter. Once you're an Olympian, you're always an Olympian. No one can ever take that away."

Follow Captain Bremer's journey to the Olympics at www.usapentathlon.org.

— Capt. Christine L. Kunz

by Master Sgt. Efrain Gonzalez



by Master Sgt. Efrain Gonzalez



Capt. Kevin Eastler, Race Walking

While other kids in Farmington, Maine, were heading to Little League practice, 9-year-old Kevin Eastler was moving to the beat of a different drum.

He was following in the footsteps of his father and older sister, Gretchen. They were race walkers, and he knew that if he, too, worked and paid his dues, the sport of race walking could ultimately lead to competition in, what seemed to him at the time, distant lands such as Florida where he flew for the first time to see his big sister compete.

Now, almost 20 years later, the Air Force captain continues the journey that could lead to Athens. His Olympic chances look good. He currently holds the fastest time among U.S.

race walkers and is holder of the second-fastest time in U.S. 20-kilometer race walking history with a time of 1 hour, 22 minutes, 25 seconds.

"That would be the best thing. That's what I've been training for," said Captain Eastler, who trains full time in Aurora, Colo., as part of the World Class Athlete Program. His recent success makes him a heavy favorite to qualify for a position on the Olympic team, but he's tak-

by Master Sgt. Efrain Gonzalez



by Master Sgt. Efrain Gonzalez



ing nothing for granted. Soon after graduating from the Air Force Academy in 1999, he was ranked fifth in the nation and finished second at the Olympic trials but was about three minutes off the qualifying time.

It's been a long four years filled with ups and downs as he prepared again for the Olympics. For a while, he had to combine training with his job as a missile combat crew commander at F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyo., before joining the World Class Athlete Program. Juggling career and training was tenuous at times, but he said it's also given him a better perspective.

"I think that's made me a better athlete because it made me appreciate the time I now have to train, and has made me more efficient with my time," he said.

And if he makes the team, he'll stand at the starting line in Athens with realistic expectations. Going

for the gold isn't his primary goal. Although he doesn't rule out the possibility, he said he'd be happy with a top-10 finish. He's what you might call quietly optimistic. "I'm pretty confident about it if everything keeps going well."

Follow Captain Eastler's journey to the Olympics at www.usatf.org.

— Master Sgt. Chuck Roberts

Athlete Profile

Kevin Eastler is a 1999 graduate from the Air Force Academy and entered the World Class Athlete Program in December 2003.

Hometown: Farmington, Maine

AFSCs:

Primary: 62E, Developmental Engineer; Duty: 13S, ICBM Combat Crew Commander

Age: 26

Height:

6 feet 1½ inches

Weight:

170 pounds

Event stats:

Second fastest 20-kilometer race walker in U.S. history with a time of 1 hour, 22 minutes, 25 seconds

Hobbies:

Playing video games and reading



Athlete Profile 1st Lt. James Parker, Hammer Throw

James Parker is a 2001 graduate from Utah State University and earned his commission through Officer Training School. He entered the World Class Athlete Program in January 2003.

Hometown: Layton, Utah

AFSC: 34M3, Services Officer

Age: 28

Height: 5 feet 11 inches

Weight: 245 pounds

Event stats: Placed first in the USA Track and Field Indoor National Championships weight throw, ranked first in the hammer throw in America and 34th in the world

Hobbies: Spending time outdoors and with his infant son, J.W.

He spins so quickly the 35-pound metal ball at the end of the wire makes a hollow, swishing sound. Bystanders instinctively step back a few paces for safety.

"If I let go at the wrong time, the hammer could kill someone," said 1st Lt. James Parker while practicing on an inactive runway at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mont.

A 35-pound steel ball traveling 50 to 60 mph could kill a human. It's a good thing he's in the sport for the distance, not the body count, because he's the best America has to offer in the sport of hammer throwing. Like most throwing events, the competition is decided by who can throw the ball the farthest.

Historians believe the sport's origins date to European Celts who would toss chariot wheels attached to axles. It evolved in Scotland, where they tossed sledgehammers. The ball used in today's

by Staff Sgt. Cherie Thurlby



photo illustration by Staff Sgt. Cherie Thurlby and Master Sgt. Lance Cheung



Olympics weighs 16 pounds. The lieutenant practices with 35-pounders before switching to the regulation weight.

By competitive standards, Lieutenant Parker is small. But that's a good thing, he thinks. It's all about spinning, speed and lift.

Spinning: His small stature allows him to spin like a Tasmanian devil.

Speed: Since he can spin quicker, his hammer gains more momentum at the time of release.

Lift: Letting go at the precise moment and at the correct angle allows the ball to travel farther.

"Because I'm smaller, I have to be technically better and faster," Lieutenant Parker said.

Before entering the World Class Athlete Program, the lieutenant was Malmstrom's director of sports and fitness. It's a job he'd like to keep once he completes his stint in the program.

Follow Lieutenant Parker's journey to the Olympics at www.usatf.org.

— Tech. Sgt. Orville F. Desjarlais Jr.

2nd Lt. Seth Kelsey, Fencing

He thought at first Kung Fu was his sport. Then it was baseball. Then track. After trying out for several sports at the tender age of 11, he finally met his match — fencing. But no one expected this sport to take him through 11 years of competitions, the Air Force Academy and now, two Olympic spots this year.

But that's exactly where 2nd Lt. Seth Kelsey is today — training at the Olympic training center in Colorado Springs, Colo., to represent the Air Force at this year's Summer Olympics in Athens.

"Fencing is different than the physically driven sports," he said. "It's a skill-based sport, like a physical chess where you have to be patient and use your head to win."

As a 2003 graduate from the academy and an ambassador in blue, Lieutenant Kelsey has definitely learned to use his head.

"You have to be dedicated," he said. "Fifteen points is a long period to be focused. There might be some action, but most of it your opponent does and you're just reacting."

by Master Sgt. Scott Wagers



by Master Sgt. Scott Wagers



With one-time offers of full scholarships to colleges like Penn State and Notre Dame, Lieutenant Kelsey had his pick of where to go to school. But he chose the academy instead.

With the academy in the past and the Olympics in his future, Lieutenant Kelsey realizes he represents the Air Force now more than ever.

"My job is to get results for the Air Force every time I compete. This isn't a two-year break from active duty, but a constant performance I have to give over the entire two years."

Although training comprises the majority of Lieutenant Kelsey's days, he's constantly working in an educational capacity every time he competes.

"I'm a liaison for the Air Force," he said. "I talk to people, tell them what we do and help create a more educated public."

Having traveled to numerous countries in the world, Lieutenant Kelsey has had many opportunities to spread the Air Force word. And now he'll bring Air Force blue to Athens in August.

Follow Lieutenant Kelsey's journey to the Olympics at www.usfencing.org.

— Capt. Christine L. Kunz

Athlete Profile

Seth Kelsey is a 2003 graduate from the Air Force Academy and has been in the World Class Athlete Program since June 2003.

Hometown: Vancouver, Wash.

AFSC: 34M3, Services Officer

Age: 22

Height: 6 feet 4 inches

Weight: 200 pounds

Event stats: Qualified to compete in both the individual and team events in Athens, ranked first in the country and 24th worldwide, 2003 NCAA champion and Senior Division I Mens Epee champion

Hobbies: Takes pottery classes at a local craft store



Athlete Profile
Lt. Col. Bill Roy, Skeet Shooting

Bill Roy is a 1981 graduate from the Air Force Academy and entered the World Class Athlete Program in February 2004.

Hometown: Colorado Springs, Colo.

AFSCs: Primary: K11F3Q, Fighter Pilot; Duty: 84H0, Historian

Age: 45
Height: 5 feet 10 inches

Weight: 165 pounds

Event stats: Only active shooter in this discipline to have shot 100 straight targets in competition 10 or more times — he's performed this feat 13 times

Hobbies: Family and outdoor activities

It all started with an advertisement at the Air Force Academy and may culminate in Olympic gold.

In his third year as a cadet at the Air Force Academy, Lt. Col. Bill Roy saw an advertisement reading simply "Free Shooting." It turned out that he was trying out for the cadet skeet and trap team.

He made the 1979 team and has been shooting ever since, rising in world class ranks to become one of the top skeet shooters in the world. Since then, Colonel Roy — An Air Force reservist working in North American Aerospace Defense Command's history section at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo. — has competed in five world championships, three Pan Am Games and the 1996 Olympics. Now he's set to make a run at the gold again.

Although he grew up hunting and shooting, he credits the World Class Athlete Program with making him a better competitor and shooter. The

program helps the colonel balance a busy life, family, two careers and his Olympic goals by allowing him to devote up to eight hours a day five times a week to shooting. In a typical day, he'll fire off 750 rounds, do some physical conditioning and work on "mental conditioning."

"In this sport, we are our own biggest competitors," he said. "Since we're not grappling hand-to-hand or face-to-face as in many other sports, we must learn to defeat the inner demons of self-doubt that beset us all."

Currently, the colonel is ranked first in the U.S. team trials, with a good chance for making the Olympic team. And if he doesn't do as well as he believes he can, there's always another Olympics down the road.

"I have several Olympic goals, the foremost of which is to win an Olympic gold medal," he said. "I reckon I'll keep trying to make Olympic teams until I reach my goal."

Follow Colonel Roy's journey to the Olympics at www.usashooting.com.

— Tech. Sgt. Mark Kinkade

by Staff Sgt. Cherie Thurlby



by Staff Sgt. Cherie Thurlby



courtesy photo



Staff Sgt. Jacob Hey (top) Greco-Roman Wrestling; Years in Air Force, 7; AFSC, 3P051, Security Forces; Age, 29; Base, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.; Recent accomplishment, fourth at 2004 World Team Trials

Capt. Richard Harrison (center left) Shot Put; Years in Air Force, 7, with an additional 7 years in the Navy; AFSC, 34M3, Services; Age, 34; Base, Onizuka Air Force Station, Calif.; Recent accomplishments, 2002 Air Forces of Northern Europe Shot Put Champion, qualified for Olympic trials

Maj. Dominic Grazioli (center right) International Trap; Years in Air Force, 18; AFSC, 33S4, Communications & Information; Age, 40; Base, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas; Recent accomplishment, 2003 Inter-Service Champion

Capt. Eric Mack (bottom left) Marathon; Years in Air Force, 8; AFSC, 14N3, Intelligence; Age, 29; Base, Indian Springs Air Force Auxiliary Field, Nev.; Recent accomplishment, qualified for Olympic trials

Staff Sgt. Corey Farkas (bottom right) Greco-Roman Wrestling; Years in Air Force, 8; AFSC, 3E251, Pavement & Construction Equipment; Age, 29; Base, Air Force Academy, Colo.; Recent accomplishments, second at 2003 U.S. Open, qualified for Olympic trials

courtesy photo



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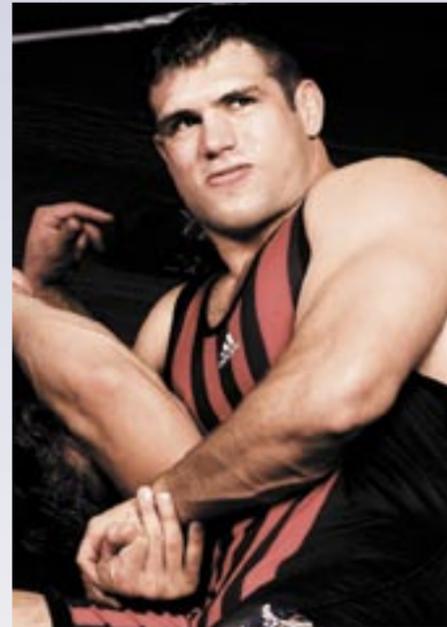


courtesy photo



(right) **1st. Lt. Philip Johnston**
Greco-Roman Wrestling; Years in Air Force, 4; AFSC, 63A1, Acquisition Manager; Age, 27; Base, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.; Recent accomplishment, second at 2003 U.S. National Championships

courtesy photo



(below) **Capt. Camilla Stock**
Triathlon; Years in Air Force, 6; AFSC, 36P3, Personnel; Age, 28; Base, Air Force Academy, Colo.; Recent accomplishment, 12th at 2003 World Military Championships

courtesy photo



(bottom right) **Airman 1st Class Carlos Mendez**
Judo; Years in Air Force, 2; AFSC, 4C031, Mental Health Service; Age, 31; Base, Yokota Air Base, Japan; Recent accomplishment, seventh at 2003 Military World Games

(left top) **Senior Airman Aaron Sieracki**
Greco-Roman Wrestling; Years in Air Force, 8; AFSC, 2T231, Air Transportation; Age, 29; Base, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.; Recent accomplishments, second in 2004 Dave Schultz Memorial International Tournament, qualified for Olympic trials

(left middle) **Master Sgt. Warren Kelly**
International Pistol; Years in Air Force, 16; AFSC, 2A651A, Aero-

space Propulsion; by Master Sgt. Lance Cheung



Age, 34; Base, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.; Recent accomplishment, fourth at 2004 U.S. National Championships

(left bottom)
Capt. Deena Wigger

International Rifle; Years in Air Force, 9; AFSC, 34M3, Services; Age, 37; Base, Andrews Air Force Base, Md.; Recent accomplishment, third at 2004 International Women's Air Rifle



courtesy photo



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Capt. Robert Sadler *(left)*
Shot Put; Years in Air Force, 6; AFSC, 64P1, Contracting; Age, 28; Base, Los Angeles Air Force Base, Calif.; Recent accomplishment, qualified for Olympic trials

Capt. Nicholas MacFalls *(below top)*
1500 Meters; Years in Air Force, 9; AFSC, 36P3, Air Force Academy Liaison Officer; Age, 30; Base, Onizuka Air Force Station, Calif.; Recent accomplishment, sixth at 2004 Seattle Invitational

courtesy photo



Capt. Michael Herman *(below center)*
International Trap; Years in Air Force, 18; AFSC, 33S3, Communications & Information; Age, 41; Base, Schriever Air Force Base, Colo.; Recent accomplishments, second in the initial 2003 Pan Am Team Trials, sixth in U.S. Nationals

courtesy photo



2nd Lt. Kevin Hoy *(below bottom)*
Greco-Roman Wrestling; Years in Air Force, 5; AFSC, 92S0, Student Officer Authorization; Age, 22; Base, Air Force Academy, Colo.; Recent accomplishments, fifth at 2004 Nationals, qualified for Olympic trials

Staff Sgt. Paul Nelson

(bottom left)
Tae Kwon Do; Years in Air Force, 9; AFSC, 2T131, Transportation; Age, 28; Base, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.; Recent accomplishment, second in 2003 Pan Am Fight-Off

courtesy photo



Tech. Sgt. Steven Woods *(bottom right)*
Greco-Roman Wrestling; Years in Air Force, 13; AFSC, 2S071, Supply Management; Age, 30; Base, Air Force Academy, Colo.; Recent accomplishments, fifth at 2003 World Cup Cuba, qualified for Olympic trials

