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Local firefighters compete in 2007 Firefighter Combat Challenge

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9NEWS VIDEO

Local firefighters compete in combat challenge. 9NEWS at 5 p.m. 7/28/07

WESTMINSTER - On a humid Colorado summer day, Courtney VanMarter along with a 181 other firefighters get ready for the most grueling minutes imaginable.

On top of enduring the physical pain of pushing their bodies to the limit, firefighters competing in this year's Firefighter Combat Challenge will do so in full bunker gear.

"They say the first time you do it it's hard to know what to expect, so they say just get through it," said Westminster Firefighter Courtney VanMarter.

VanMarter is the only woman who has ever competed in the event for the Westminster Fire Department.

"You think you're ready, then you see the course and you get a little stressed out about it," said VanMarter.

The course is the same for both men and women. Competition starts at the bottom of a five-story tower. Competitors carry a 45-pound hose up to the top while wearing bunker gear and an air tank.

"We're all bunked up and ready to go like we normally are," VanMarter pointed out.

The course is designed to put firefighters through a series of tasks to simulate what they do in their profession.

"It teaches you to push yourself farther than you thought you could go," said Westminster Firefighter Tiras Roach.

The course ends with a grueling dummy drag 100 feet to the finish.

"At one point you think you're almost finished and you're like, 'I still have to drag this guy,'" said VanMarter.

With her family and crew cheering her, the first-time competitor completed her first combat challenge.

"It was a relief and an accomplishment," said VanMarter.

The top firefighters in Saturday's event qualify for the world challenge in Las Vegas in November.

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