

Running Head: PHYSICAL FITNESS TRAINING

The Army Physical Fitness Test

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Abstract

The Army Physical Fitness Training program establishes standards and provides incentives designed to motivate Soldiers to exceed the Army standards. However, the human factor is greatly involved while administrating and setting the guidelines concerning “The Army Physical Fitness Test”, especially when it comes to the senior ranking individuals’ performances throughout the United States Army.

Ethics is the principles of conduct governing an individual or group; concerns for what is right or wrong, good or bad. FM 21-20 regulates the Army Physical Fitness Training Program. Soldiers' different interpretation of this regulation leaves many doors open as to whether a Soldier is or is not meeting the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) goals. As leaders if we are allowing this to happen, we are contributing to the downfall of our great military. I am not saying we should be down on our hands and knees or harassing Soldiers while administrating the APFT. I'm simply saying we should grade Soldiers according to their merit not their rank. I can't count the number of times I've seen an APFT administered that caused me to flat out question the grader wondering "What the hell is that grader looking at". I believe many graders become intimidated when grading PT tests, especially when it comes to grading senior officers and noncommissioned officers.

A true leader sets the ethical climate for their unit, and it's up to us as senior NCOs to set the proper environment in our battalions or sections. Where there is an ethical problem, there is also a solution. When you know your Soldiers will be dealing with senior personnel during an APFT, your mere presence and your clear communication with the Soldiers what the standards require will make it a better testing environment. In addition, we have situations when a Soldier is not meeting the standards within the Army Physical Fitness Program and they are not flagged or placed on the special population PT Program. Many times leaders reason that SGT Joe Blow superior job performance greatly enhances the overall unit readiness or leaders feel they will hurt that individual's career. This is when you may run into an ethical dilemma according to the seven Army Values and the Army Physical Fitness Test.

The unit has just conducted an APFT and PFC Smith failed the sit-up event during APFT, but because of his superior job performance a blind eye is turned and he is not flagged or placed on the special population PT Program. PFC Smith earned the Army Physical Badge during the last APFT and has received several awards for his job performance during your time as the First Sergeant. He is counseled about the situation and ensure you he will pass the APFT in 30 days with no problem. At the same time SPC Forever does not meet the standard for the APFT and is immediately flagged and placed on the special population PT program. SPC Forever is a below average Soldier and does not try to exceed the standard when it comes to his job performance. Is there an ethical problem in the above situation? Is the First Sergeant being loyal to the unit by protecting one Soldier who failed to meet the standard on the APFT and punishing another who also failed to meet the same standards?

Another APFT is conducted and this time First Lieutenant Weak does not meet the requirements for the APFT and has failed his push-ups again. The commander is notified about the situation and wants a closed door session concerning flagging and placing Lieutenant Weak on a special PT program. The commander does not want to ruin the Lieutenant's career, and the Lieutenant's father is the FORCOM Commanding General. Lieutenant Weak is an average worker, but he is an exceptional runner due to the fact he spends the majority of his time running. The Lieutenant is a member of the division ten miler team, and the company commander is feeling pressure from his superiors to ensure the Lieutenant remains eligible to compete. SPC Forever was placed on the program by the commander, why not the Lieutenant?

These scenarios are not easy to decide because we want to retain good Soldiers in our Army. When faced with these dilemmas the right decision may not be the popular one. In addition, cheating may be kept to a minimum if Soldiers were given classes on how to properly grade the APFT. I have heard many people stating that, "I cannot tell if the push-up is correct." Many people do the push-ups correct, but are moving so fast that it's very difficult to ensure proper grading. Another factor in why unethical behavior occurs is that so many Soldiers are overweight and do not know how to eat right. Healthy eating habits are essential in lowering weight which is a factor in passing PT test.

In conclusion, it is important to sustain a health Army, but at what cost? It is also important to have dedicated Soldiers that excel in their MOS. There is no cookie cutter solution to the problem of unethical behavior during APFT, but continued education could be effective in curtailing how much. It starts in basic and has to be upheld by the NCOs and Officers. I would rather have a Soldier that is a little short on his or her push-ups and is an effective Soldier over someone that is a mediocre Soldier and can pass his or her PT test, but that is an ethical situation. I would still have to flag my good Soldier and work with them to ensure a successful PT test the next time. It is important to maintain standards, but do not go overboard so it is impossible for Soldiers to pass.