

Aerial porters polishing their act for Rodeo



photos by Staff Sgt. Michael

Senior Airman Mark Anderson (left) and Loadmaster Staff Sgt. Eric Habenick, 17th Airlift Squadron, team up to secure a vehicle during Rodeo practice.

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Practicing for Rodeo 2000 is hardly monotonous for the 437th aerial porters on the C-17 engine running offload team.

The five-member team will compete in five events at Rodeo, set for May 8-11 at Pope AFB, N.C.

Events include:

with a forklift.

manifest of cargo onboard an aircraft and transmit the information to headquarters Air Mobility Command at Scott AFB, Ill., once the aircraft takes off.

that will be deployed, making sure it is "air transportable" and meets Air Force regulations. Any hazardous material must be certified, pallets are inspected for reliability, and the center of balance of vehicles on



Senior Airman Brandon Hutchins tightens a tie down chain connected to a two-and-a-half ton vehicle.

board the aircraft must be correct.

Members of the team are Staff Sgt. Daniel Smith (team chief), Senior Airmen Brandon Hutchins, Jonathan Conner and Mark Anderson, and Airman 1st Class Seth Soine. Each team member will participate in at least three events.

The team has been getting in shape to meet the rigors of the obstacle course and the other areas of Rodeo competition. They're training regularly at the obstacle course at Fort Jackson, S.C. and run twice a day on McComb's Way, the CAFB's jogging path. They also take part in aerobics classes three times a week.

Earlier this week, the team joined with the C-17 Rodeo crew to practice loading two-and-a-half ton vehicles onto a C-17 as quickly and efficiently as possible. After each run, the crews discussed ways to streamline the process.

On Saturday, the aerial porters will travel to Hunter Army Air Field, Ga., to practice with the Army vehicles that will be used in the Rodeo event.

"The tie-ons are in different places and they're a little lighter than Air Force vehicles, but there really isn't much difference," Smith said.

For the Rodeo driving course event, a pitcher of water is placed on a two-by-eight wooden plank resting on the forklift tines. The drivers must navigate in and out of 12 cones in a figure-eight shaped course without spilling the water. After a driver completes the course, another driver must back through the course without the pitcher of water. "That's the one we're having the most fun with," Smith said.

To prepare for the Joint Inspection portion of the Rodeo aerial port event, team members are brushing up on regulations, such as handling hazardous material aboard an aircraft.

"So far, everything is going great," Smith said. "The team is very eager, and the C-17 crew is, too. They want to win. I think our chances are really good. We're working on improving everything we do."