

From Pokémon to the Real Deal

UNH student is N.H. Soldier of the Year

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Adam Wong's very first pair of dog tags had Pokémon on them. He doesn't remember how old he was, just that he wanted to be a soldier someday. That was always the game he and his cousin played when they had their cap guns blazing.

Today, Wong '16 doesn't have to pretend. The Portsmouth native has been a member of the New Hampshire National Guard since 2012. Earlier this year he was named the

state Soldier of the Year after vying for the title in the three-day northeast regional Best Warrior Competition at Fort Devens, Mass.

“I was competing against the best in the area,” Spc. Wong says. “I was pretty shocked that I won. The joke in the unit was ‘just do your best but don’t come back if you don’t win,’” he says.

To claim the title, Wong had to beat out his fellow guardsmen in such challenges as hand-to-hand combat, firing weapons and navigating a course in the dark using a map and compass. There was a 6-mile march with a 35-pound pack on his back (it took Wong an hour and 35 minutes), a question-and-answer session with top brass and a physical fitness test that included sit-ups, push-ups and a 2-mile run, which Wong finished in 14 minutes.

“I did OK on the physical fitness test but the run was hard. A lot of us got blisters on our feet from the march so it made it hard to run. I had brought moleskin with me but it didn’t help,” he says.

Wong is a radar operator with Echo TAB, 197th Field Artillery Regiment. He spends one weekend a month with the unit and two weeks during the summer. His initial tour goes through 2018 but soldiering is in his blood now. After he graduates next year, the [information technology](#) major hopes to land a job in cybersecurity. Last year he worked at UNH’s [InterOperability Laboratory](#) testing hardware. His dream situation would be to have a job in the private sector while staying a member of the National Guard.

“I love the Army. I want to stay in if I can. There are a lot of moving pieces but I hope they’ll all come together,” Wong says. “Being in the Guard means so much to me. It’s like a family. That’s why being chosen Soldier of the Year was such an honor. It wasn’t just for me — it was for everyone in my unit. It’s a reflection on all of them.”

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360 EXPERIENCE



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