

## National FireFit Champion and World Firefighter Combat Challenge

Angela Florcke  
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What would possess a firefighter to don their full turnout gear, including a Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), and pit their skills in a grueling race against time when there's no actual fire to battle? A long-line of seasoned veterans, along with rookie firefighters, came together in Longueuil, Quebec, this past September to test their mettle in the 21st Canadian FireFit Firefighter Combat Challenge – a contest of strength, endurance, grit and determination – to demonstrate their firefighting prowess and know-how.

While the FireFit Challenge is the elite game of firefighters, it's all business when it comes to training and winning. The demands are punishing and require a level of fitness and stamina that demonstrate the commitment and motivation of individual firefighters to the contest, and to their craft. Therefore, a rigorous training regime prior to the event (which includes qualifying participation at the regional level) is a critical ingredient to achieving successful results on the FireFit race course. Consider some of the requirements (check out [FireFit.com](http://FireFit.com) for all of the details):

**The Individual Event** consists of fluently moving through a six-stage race course that simulates “firefighting tasks commonly performed in emergency situations”, while wearing full turnout gear. It has multiple categories, including Open Men, Open Women, Over 40 Women, Over 45 Men, Over 50 Men, and Over 55 Men.

**The NXG-3 Relay** is a two-person technical race that requires speed, concentration and teamwork through nine-stages of physical and mental endurance. This also involves wearing full turnout gear and features an air cylinder exchange at the halfway point.

**The FireFit Team Race** is a six-stage event that requires competitors (3 to 5 individuals from the same fire department) to wear the Scott NxG high pressure breathing apparatus. Participants must finish the race without running out of air.

At the most recent Canadian FireFit Championships, participants from CFB Gagetown and CFB Halifax ran impressive races and obtained stellar results – despite harsh conditions that included heavy rain.

**From CFB Gagetown**, Firefighter FR1 Jonathan Betts achieved a distinguished fourth place win out of 174 contestants in the Individual Event, with a time of 01:19. He, along with his teammate Platoon Chief David Nicolle, with a time of 1:40, moved on to win third place in the NXG-3 Relay Event, with an impressive time of 01:32. Other participants who ran in the Individual Event included Firefighters FR1 Jason Gallant, with a time of 01:56, and FR1 Steven Mcaleer, at 02:02.

**From CFB Halifax**, Corporal Paul Rowsell participated in the Individual Event, with a time of 01:36; however, he sustained injuries that precluded his participation in further events. Acting Captain Rob Clarke (who finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Individual over-40 category) and Firefighter FR1 Rene Alexander placed 3<sup>rd</sup> overall in the NXG-3 Relay Event (over-40 category), with a time of 01:51.

National Champions went on to attend the World's Firefighter Combat Challenge in Phoenix, Arizona, in November! Firefighter FR1 Jonathan Betts placed 9<sup>th</sup> out of 165 'combatants' in the Individual Event. In addition, he and his teammates Platoon Chief David Nicolle and Lieutenant Ryan Hallan (Fredericton Fire Station) won third place in the overall team time at the World's event. Firefighter FR1 Rene Alexander also competed at the World's event, achieving a time of 1:39 in the over-40 category.

Congratulations to all who participated in the National FireFit and World Firefighter Combat Challenge.

Hours, weeks and months of training leading to these notable wins no doubt brings with it an enduring sense of accomplishment and pride. One participant, Firefighter FR1 Jonathan Betts, said that the time they spent practicing and "*learning certain techniques*" to improve their time were instrumental in their success. Techniques such as learning to be "*fluid with every transition*" between stages in the race. This requires not only speed, but the need "*to be smooth*".

What he gets out of the Firefighter Combat Challenge? "*I like the team atmosphere. Everybody helps push each other.*" But, it's more than just a competition. "*You feel stronger when you're on the job ... you feel more confident in your firefighting skills.*" This, in turn, "*inspires the other guys to get to the gym and work out*". After all, it's more than just a job. It's a calling. And every part that goes into training, preparation, and superior performance can mean all the difference for firefighters and those they serve.