



In his own words...Mike Martino

The entire raider experience was an all out "gut check." I remember sitting in the hallway by the cave discussing the prospects for the male team with CSM Collis. I was on the seventh name when I was cut off by the Sergeant Major, "and you, that makes eight." Here I am a second year raider (having been an alternate just the year before) with a 14:30 two mile, being given command of the most physically and mentally fit team the academy could possibly muster. I stopped him and pointed out that "there are other guys ahead of me on that PT list, and I don't want to hold the team back." In response he said, "We need someone to lead this team. You have two months to get your run time down." That's where it all began. From that moment on, I had seven other guys to look out for. I had to set the example for them. I had to be able to PT with them. I had to know anything and everything about First Aid, Land Navigation, Rope Bridge building and the whole Raider Challenge. If the guys had a question, they would be looking to me for the answer. This responsibility made me a better raider and a better leader. It pushed me to my limits and I was able to improve in every facet. There was no choice, I had to run, I had to work out, I had to study and I had to make the decisions. It was hard work and my team was with me the entire way. We were one tight-knit group and our victories brought us closer. I am proud to have been a member of our championship team and I share a bond with those guys that I will not soon forget. Months of hard work and sacrifice had culminated into that one night when we were named State Champions. I do not see my personal improvements or my achievements during the meets as the success story, or as the payoff of this endeavor. But I find that the best feeling lies with the fact that my guys did it. They earned it with their blood, sweat and tears. They won it with their superhuman strength. And they did it for each other.