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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

<http://healthcenter.uoregon.edu> • appointments: 346-2770Ruddell: Training exercises,
battle drills part of cadet life

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third-year military sciences students and takes a full load of regular course work.

It seems Ruddell's hard work has paid off, as he's on-track to graduate in June as one of the top ROTC cadets in the nation. His goal: an infantry officer position in the U.S. Army.

He said his enthusiasm to be a soldier goes back to his days as a kid playing with little green army action figures.

"I've always wanted to do it since I was little," he said. "I wanted to go into the service, which was contrary to my parents, what they wanted."

The idea of service touched a nerve with Ruddell.

"I think it's this image of the soldier that really caught me right off the bat," he said. "This guy is going out there, and he's putting his ass on the line for someone he doesn't even know. He's going out there and he's doing what he believes is right ... for someone that he might have never met. I've always thought that that's just awesome."

The "set a goal, then reach it" mentality is what kept Ruddell interested in the Army throughout his childhood, he said. His desire to be a soldier was cemented when he was a sophomore in high school, in part because of his involvement in athletics.

"I'm not projecting this on anybody else, but personally I felt like, 'If I'm an athlete and I'm capable of serving ... there's no real good reason why I shouldn't,'" he said.

Service is a common theme in Ruddell's career aspirations. He's also considered being a firefighter or police officer.

"I actually enlisted, in high school, in the reserves," he said. "Then ROTC grabbed me."

The ROTC program gave Ruddell a chance to attend college and leave as an officer. He discharged from the reserves and was contracted into ROTC.

"It's a contract that says, 'as long as you're in ROTC, you're getting paid,'" he said. "If you break that contract, then they can take that money back that they paid you."

Ruddell said he gets a \$400 per month stipend, tuition assistance and help with books and housing.

"But everybody I've talked to in ROTC is not about the money. When I came in, I had enough money to take care of college; that wouldn't have been a problem, but I'd always wanted to do it. The fact that they're paying me to go to school is just a nice perk."

There's a progressively higher workload for cadets as they go through the

four years of ROTC.

"MS one- and two-years basically just have fun," Ruddell said. He said first and second year cadets learn and train for their third year, but aren't worked too hard.

"The juniors need somebody to command and practice their leadership skills on," he said. "The ones and twos serve that purpose."

A cadet is evaluated during his or her junior year, when the workload increases, Ruddell said.

Each year, several activities pull ROTC students away from the daily grind of school. One example is Field Training Exercises, or FTX, which cadets attend once each term at a military training camp or wooded area somewhere in the Northwest. FTXs include obstacle courses, target practice, war games and battle drill practice.

Ruddell defined battle drills as actions that occur without thinking.

For instance, "you hit a bunker and you get fired on — it's a battle drill that's designed to react to that situation," Ruddell said. "So, automatically everybody knows, OK, alpha team is going to be suppressing fire, bravo team is going to flank around to the left, and bravo team is going to clear that bunker."

For war games, cadets will battle in a wooded setting using paintball guns or a type of high-tech laser tag.

"You put it on your weapon and you fire blanks, and you have sensors that tell you whether or not you've been hit," Ruddell said of the laser tag.

One of the most important off-campus activities that ROTC students participate in is the Leader Development and Assessment Course, an advanced leadership course that serves in part as the ROTC version of the LSAT. A cadet's performance in the month-long course, which takes place during the summer between his or her junior and senior year, is evaluated.

Activities at the LDAC include situational training, patrolling, chemical warfare, repelling, confidence building and physical training. Cadets are required to qualify in activities such as land navigation and hand grenade assault.

Ruddell achieved the second highest physical training score in the nation and earned a distinction called "RE-CONDO" for his performance in the other training events.

"It's stressful," he said. "Especially to get RECONDO. Most people, they miss one event."

Ruddell has had several exclusive opportunities over his collegiate career. He was granted a slot to earn

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