

THRILLS AT Z-HILLS



The 2024 USPA National Collegiate Skydiving Championships

A USPA Staff Report



A typical winter break for a college student might involve sipping on eggnog or sleeping in their childhood bed. But for 88 collegiate skydivers at Skydive City Zephyrhills in Florida, winter break meant competing at the 2024 USPA National Collegiate Skydiving Championships. December 28-January 2, the drop zone hosted competitors from eight colleges around the United States: Students from three service academies—The U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Military Academy at West Point and U.S. Naval Academy—joined students from Clemson University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Iowa State University, University of Connecticut and Western Michigan University. In the 67th annual collegiate meet, students matched skills in formation skydiving and sport accuracy landing.

Skydive City Zephyrhills pulled out all the stops in order to host a memorable competition. They provided nightly dinners to the competitors (sponsored by Advanced Aerospace Designs Vigil, Para Gear and Sun Path) and featured keynote speakers Curt Bartholomew, Jeannie Bartholomew, Ian Bobo and Shannon Pilcher. On New Year's Eve, the drop zone rang in 2025 with an impressive display of fireworks.

"I just got my license two months ago, so it was really cool to meet and compete with lots of other people in the sport." —James Turcotte, University of Connecticut

The competition itself had its share of fireworks, too. The 4-way open class of formation skydiving saw an exciting skirmish between two Air Force teams, Gambit and Halo. After battling through multiple tied rounds, Gambit secured the gold medal by just a single point, while also setting a Florida state collegiate record for highest average round, at 20 points.

Similarly, the 2-way FS open class saw a battle between teams from the same school. West Point's Feng Shui and Lightweights went back and forth over the three rounds of competition, with Lightweights surviving a third-round surge from Feng Shui in order to hold onto gold, also setting a Florida state collegiate record with an average of 16.6 points per round. The advanced class was neck-and-neck, as well, requiring a tiebreaker jump-off for the silver medal between Air Force Chef's Kiss and Navy Mermaid Man & Barnacle Boy. It was Chef's Kiss who pulled out the tiebreaker, finishing second in the class to their fellow airmen, Air Force Tumbleweed.

Vertical formation skydiving saw the records continue to pile up, with Air Force Funky Town taking gold and setting new national and state collegiate records for longest sequence (27 points) and highest round average (16.5 points). Last for FS was the 6-way speed event, where Air Force Mixtape outperformed the field—with two screaming-fast rounds of less than nine seconds—putting them atop the podium.



ANNA MCCLURE

“I didn’t really know what to expect, being my first competition and all, but it was so awesome. It’s rare to have that many college-aged students together at the DZ competing and just having fun.”

—Aidan Wright, University of Connecticut

Finally, it was time for the definitive collegiates event—sport accuracy landing. Eighty-four competitors gave their best shot at hitting the 16-inch-diameter target, and throughout the competition, judges recorded 39 dead-center scores. Joe Palenapa of the U.S. Air Force Academy was responsible for two of those dead centers on his way to winning the open class. Mary Root of the U.S. Naval Academy had two perfect scores of her own, winning the advanced class, while Amy Elwell of West Point cruised past the intermediate-class field to win her own gold medal. For the team event, Air Force Heros to Zeros (Cole Castillo, Preston Havenor, Joe Palenapa and Chase Powers) finished atop the standings.

When all was said and done, Chase Powers of the U.S. Air Force Academy took the honors of Most Competitive Collegiate Skydiver, having performed excellently in sport accuracy, 2-way VFS and 6-way speed. As a student of a service academy, he was unable to accept the associated André Istel Memorial Scholarship, which he graciously passed along to the jumpers of Clemson University.

Skydive Arizona in Eloy, Arizona, will be hosting the next USPA National Collegiate Skydiving Championships, from December 28, 2025, to January 2, 2026. Both undergraduate and graduate college skydivers are eligible to attend. Competitors can find details about the event in Chapter 7 of the Skydiver’s Competition Manual and at uspanationals.com.



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COMPETITION STAFF

Meet Director: Bill Wenger

USPA Controller: Amanda Owens

Chief Judge: Marylou Laughlin

Judges: Ali Bawden, Kevin Drivas, Rina Gallo, Dave Grabowski, Cris Howard, Rhonda Kaletz

Scoring System: OmniSkore!HD

A detailed scoreboard is available at omniskorehd.com

SPORT ACCURACY



ADVANCED

RANK	NAME	TOTAL	RANK	NAME	TOTAL
1	Mary Root	3.91	19	Sophia Casler	37.97
2	Kwabla Boateng	4.23	20	Luke Schlimm	38.10
3	Caden Zippwald	9.20	21	Wyatt Cyprow	42.73
4	Conner Mollberg	9.46	22	Brody Boggs	43.33
5	Faith Riccobene	10.53	23	Joe Gourley	46.81
6	Manolis Tsavaris	10.82	24	Storm Stern	47.62
7	Wade Parkes	12.80	25	Simone Olden	50.58
8	Chris Wilson	14.09	26	Gabriella Czajkowski	56.33
9	Katherine Clayton	14.24	27	Maeve Carrigg	56.90
10	Katelin Marin	16.01	28	Darion Milner	57.24
11	Ethan Clarke	16.25	29	Colette Coffey	64.30
12	Aaron Mendiola	18.72	30	Erin Ward	70.21
13	Myles Hall	26.30	31	Jason Lenning	70.88
14	Malachi Greman	26.48	32	Bre Newberg	93.52
15	Lauren Pennington	28.19	33	Grace Dailey	97.17
16	Henry Borthwick	30.00	34	Logan Purkiss	115.27
17	Thomas Snead	30.85	35	Brandon Yu	126.80
18	Kevin Kucik	33.06			

INTERMEDIATE

RANK	NAME	TOTAL
1	Amy Elwell	20.26
2	Ryder Thompson	31.01
3	Jake Chun	38.76
4	Jerry Lu	49.74
5	Luke Wordelmann	53.38
6	Bjorn Rian	66.57
7	Karsten Hansen	69.77
8	Sebastian Gorgone	72.79
9	Alan Schoenecke	73.22
10	Mytchell Hagan	80.94
11	Henry Rasmussen	91.19
12	Samuel Baisden	91.22
13	Teresa Metz	93.22
14	Michael Hoefler	94.32
15	Nathaniel Lovera	94.57
16	Ryan Luetjen	94.61
17	Eri McClain-Yu	104.16
18	Lucy Nash	110.63
19	James Turcotte	114.68
20	Markus Espinal	120.00
21	Yiming Guo	121.72
22	Aidan Wright	133.96
23	Muhammad Siddique	135.00



OPEN					
RANK	NAME	TOTAL	RANK	NAME	TOTAL
1	Joe Palenapa	0.72	14	Ella Arendale	32.24
2	Chase Powers	0.89	15	Alexis Komisza	33.23
3	Caleb Sheyda	1.57	16	Abby Halasi-Kun	40.23
4	Jacquelyn Gwynn	2.15	17	Zachary Pyle	45.12
5	Cole Castillo	9.92	18	Garrett Lauterbach	46.50
6	Landon Coker	12.71	19	Brett Dumais	47.00
7	Luke Sapio	13.24	20	Pierson Ederle	50.24
8	Isaiah McNeilly	18.75	21	Issac Musselman	51.00
9	Micah Duerk	20.38	22	Preston Havenor	61.21
10	James Anhalt	21.05	23	Kate Cardinal	76.40
11	Garrett Longstaff	21.70	24	Riley McGary	95.41
12	Katy Felix	25.13	25	Ali Henderson	102.44
13	Sudie Hall	25.70	26	Julia Ahrendt	150.00

TEAM		
RANK	TEAM NAME	TOTAL
1	Air Force Heros to Zeros	32.96
	Cole Castillo, Preston Havenor, Joe Palenapa, Chase Powers	
2	Naval Academy EB	47.81
	Conner Mollberg, Mary Root, Thomas Snead, Manolis Tsavaris	
3	West Point Bear	63.95
	Landon Coker, Alexis Komisza, Garrett Longstaff, Isaiah McNeilly	
4	Air Force Mr. Rick	83.51
5	West Point Various Construction Workers	87.17
6	Naval Academy Loads	87.96
7	Solos	103.73
8	Naval Academy T&B	108.63
9	West Point No Bear	109.68
10	West Point Golden Girls	117.33
11	Air Force Eclipse	130.05
12	Air Force Midnights Angels	130.12
13	Air Force CVR	155.89
14	West Point Flo Ridas	158.16
15	Naval Academy YN Accuracy	193.80
16	Georgia Tech Vibe it in	248.37
17	West Point Vector	276.04
18	Last Minute Call	286.46
19	Air Force Glammor	292.59
20	Air Force Sport Acc Team 7	305.98
21	UCONN & Friend	320.88



FORMATION SKYDIVING

2-WAY OPEN

RANK	TEAM NAME	TOTAL
1	West Point Lightweights Jake Chun, Amy Elwell	50.00
2	West Point Feng Shui Nathaniel Lovera, Ryder Thompson	49.00
3	West Point Jerry-Go-Round Jerry Lu, Teresa Metz	43.00
4	West Point Splash and Dash	42.00
5	West Point Kardi-B	36.00
6	UConn	28.00



2-WAY ADVANCED

RANK	TEAM NAME	TOTAL
1	Air Force Tumbleweed Eri McClain-Yu, Lucy Nash	38.00
2	Air Force Chefs Kiss Markus Espinal, Henry Rasmussen	33.00
3	Mermaid Man & Barnacle Boy Samuel Baisden, Luke Wordelmann	33.00
4	Silly Geese	9.00
5	Pop Tart Champions	4.00
5	Too Fast Too Furious	3.00



4-WAY OPEN

RANK	TEAM NAME	TOTAL
1	Air Force Gambit Micah Duerk, Preston Havenor, Isaac Musselman, Joe Palenapa	120.00
2	Air Force Halo Julia Ahrendt, Abby Halasi-Kun, Allison Henderson, Riley McGarry	119.00
3	Air Force Voodoo Gabiella Czajkowski, Katelin Marin, Breanna Newberg, Luke Schlimm	89.00
4	West Point Cutbustion	86.00
5	Air Force Fortune	74.00
6	West Point DLab	73.00
7	Naval Academy Duma	44.00
8	Georgia Tech Grip it and Rip it	13.00





4-WAY ADVANCED

RANK	TEAM NAME	TOTAL
1	West Point Trucks Katherine Clayton, Lauren Pennington, Faith Riccobene, Storm Stern	57.00
2	West Point Leftovers Sophia Casler, Wyatt Cyprow, Aaron Mendiola, Wade Parkes	54.00
3	Naval Academy Skuzz Ethan Clarke, Myles Hall, Kevin Kucik, Jason Lenning	27.00
4	Naval Academy Getz	25.00



2-WAY VERTICAL

RANK	TEAM NAME	TOTAL
1	Air Force Funkytown Cole Castillo, Chase Powers	66.00
2	Air Force Bad Boys Chris Wilson, Caden Zippwald	54.00
3	Air Force K2 Kate Cardinal, Katy Felix	51.00
4	Air Force Monarch	40.00



6-WAY SPEED

RANK	TEAM NAME	TOTAL
1	Air Force Mixtape Cole Castillo, Micah Duerk, Preston Havenor, Isaac Musselman, Joe Palenapa, Chase Powers	28.03
2	Air Force Email Julia Ahrendt, Kate Cardinal, Katy Felix, Abby Halasi-Kun, Ali Henderson, Riley McGary	41.31
3	Air Force Attitude Ella Arendale, Grace Dailey, Malachi Greman, Darion Milner, Chris Wilson, Caden Zippwald	44.10
4	Been Barreled	45.74
5	Air Force Labyrinth	45.98
6	DT	57.58
7	Big Tom Fan Club	66.88
8	Naval Academy Gettysburg	68.86
9	Grip it and Rip it	84.43



Most Competitive Collegiate Skydiver
Chase Powers (U.S. Air Force Academy)

