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USS Peleliu Sailors, Marines Compete in Half Marathon/5K on Flight Deck

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Andrew Dunlap, USS Peleliu Public Affairs

USS PELELIU At Sea - Nearly 400 Sailors and Marines ran in the "Lady Ace" Half Marathon and 5K races while USS Peleliu (LHA 5) transited the Pacific Ocean to its homeport of San Diego, Dec. 6-13, after a seven-month deployment.

Helicopter Marine Medium Squadron – 165 Reinforced (HMM-165 REIN), sponsored the event and named the race with their call sign, "Lady Ace."

Marine Corps Capt. Anthony Hatala organized the run and more than \$3,600 was raised from the event, which goes directly to the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund.

"The race was our opportunity to raise money for the Semper Fi Fund in a fun and unique way while at sea," said Hatala.

Runners ran the 820-foot long flight, circling the Marine Corps AV-8B Harrier jets at each end. Half-marathon runners completed 46 laps on a rainy Dec. 6, while 5K runners completed 12 laps under better weather conditions Dec. 13.

1st Lt. Michael Buckley, with a time of 1:28:48, and Lance Cpl. Chenee Pacheco, with a time of 1:50:47, were the top male and female runners, respectively, in the half marathon.

The first 5K race was for competitive runners, the second race was a medium-paced run and the final race was a fun run and walk, in which many family members and friends participated in as part of the ship's Tiger Cruise.

The top male, female and Tiger runners from the competitive 5K races were awarded with Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund memorabilia from the organization.

Hatala reached out to organizations back in the states and compiled prizes for the event.

"The contributions from these sponsors helped build up the excitement for the race, and it really added to the competition," said Hatala. "We did everything we could to put on an authentic event, like a normal road race to include personalized bibs, t-shirts, a water station, prizes and race photographers."

Volunteers were in attendance to count laps, distribute water to the runners and time the race.

"We wanted to make sure everything was organized so the runners could focus on the race," said Lt. j.g. Beth Gauck. "The whole experience was as close to a professionally coordinated event as you would participate in back home. The main difference was the huge sense of camaraderie and pride on a warship in the middle of the ocean."

Sailors and fellow Marines lined the flight deck to encourage the runners and enjoy the festivities. Because the 5K was held after the arrival of Tigers, many civilian spectators cheered the runners, too.

"It was a beautiful day for a race and a great cause to raise awareness for," said Jude Desnoyer, USS Peleliu fun boss. "Having Tigers aboard to cheer and participate made it all the more special."

For more news from USS Peleliu (LHA 5), visit www.navy.mil/local/lha5/.



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PACIFIC OCEAN (Dec. 13, 2010) Sailors and Marines participate in the Lady Ace 5K run on the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Peleliu (LHA 5). The race was sponsored by Helicopter Marine Medium Squadron (HMM) 165 (Reinforced) and raised more than \$3,600 for the Semper Fi Fund to help support injured Marines. Peleliu is the flagship for the Peleliu Amphibious Ready Group, which is transiting the Pacific Ocean to homeport at San Diego following a seven-month deployment. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Edwardo Proano/Released)

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