Meet the new
military sports coordinator

| *Yves Bélanger, Servir*

Dynamic and highly motivated, Vanessa McAlpine has been the new military sports coordinator since January, a position she has coveted since joining the Personnel Support Programs (PSP) - Montreal region. She shares her professional experiences with us and tells us about the new developments to come in her department.

Ms. McAlpine began working at the Saint-Jean Garrison in August 2020 as a fitness and sports instructor. She wanted to work with the military and has never looked back. Since then, she has taken part in two overseas deployments. The first was in Latvia, in 2022. The second was in Kuwait in 2023. "That's what delayed my arrival at the military sports department. I got my new job in June 2023, but a few weeks later I left for the Middle East. I returned to the country at the end of last year."

Photo: courtesy

Physical training sessions were part of Vanessa McAlpine's (on the bike) duties during her deployment in Kuwait.

A formative experience

The coordinator explains that the six months she spent in Kuwait were great practice for the job that awaited her on her return. "I arrived there and had to help organize Canada Day activities. For the occasion, I managed to set up a volleyball tournament, as well as physical training and recreation activities."

Immediately afterwards, she began planning a special activity. "Together with representatives from other nearby military bases, we set up inter-base games. Over 200 military personnel from Canada, the USA, Denmark and Italy took part in one of the disciplines on offer: soccer, hockey, volleyball, powerlifting, running, mountain running and basketball. "Each base hosted two of these competitions."

Ms. McAlpine was also tasked with registering players for the men's and women's teams. "I also had to find coaches and captains for each of the teams. It was very similar to what I have to do in my new job. It really familiarized me with this type of job."

As the only PSP fitness representative on the Canadian base in Kuwait, she had a particularly busy schedule throughout her deployment. "In addition to organizing special events and recreation, each week I had to offer ten physical training classes to the deployed military members."

She maintains that the two deployments she took part in gave her a better understanding of the work of the CAF members. "We had a lot more proximity with them and it allowed us to discover a little more about what they can experience on deployment as well as the mission of the Canadian Armed Forces."

Join our representative teams!

As the military sports coordinator, Vanessa McAlpine's mandate is to support local representative teams, our Patriotes, and to organize regional and national championships for the CAF. "We also provide administrative support to the CAF members who participate in these events. For example, we obtain authorizations from their units, take care of their accommodation and transportation, make sure they have sports uniforms and so on. We also support military personnel who participate in sports that are not part of the official CAF disciplines, and who take part in civilian competitions."

Discover the Patriotes teams

The new coordinator is looking forward to organizing her first championship and welcoming athletes from all over the country. She's confident that our Patriotes will put on a good show. "I intend to put a lot of effort into recruiting new faces for our teams, both among the Regular Force and the Reserves."

She mentions that since the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been more difficult to find players, but especially female players. "I invite military personnel to contact me or the representatives of our representative teams to discuss the possibility of joining one or more teams. We're not looking for top athletes. Apprentices are welcome!"

Ms. McAlpine reminds us that maintaining good physical condition is essential for CAF members. "Joining one of our sports teams is a great way to stay fit and alert. What's more, it's a great way to bond with other players and get away from the daily grind."

CAF members who wish to get involved in the organization of the championships are most welcome. "We also need sports trainers for these events. In fact, in the fall, we'd like to offer Level 1 and 2 training courses. I invite anyone interested to contact me."

Grappling training has begun

In the Montreal region, there is a Patriotes team for men and women in the following sports: badminton, slow-pitch, basketball, running, golf, hockey (junior, regular and veterans), ball hockey, swimming and lifesaving, soccer, squash, triathlon and volleyball. "We are also in the process of forming grappling teams."

Grappling training is offered to both men and women CAF members. They began on April 18 at the Saint-Jean Garrison. They take place in local M-211, on Thursdays, from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. There should also be grappling training soon at the Montreal Garrison," she concludes.

Photo: courtesy

Vanessa McAlpine, military sports coordinator, Personnel Support Programs - Montreal Region.

Grappling encompasses all combat sports techniques, including throwing, immobilizing and subduing an opponent in standing or ground combat, using bare hands.

Photo: Imagery Saint-Jean

For more information on grappling