



SOUTH TEXAS
JLDA
RECAP STORY

This year at Junior Leadership Development Academy (Summer Camps) both boys and men experienced new levels of adventure and fellowship! Here is a quick recap of the camps from the coordinator's perspective:

Day 1 - Beginnings

It was Thursday morning. Men who had sacrificed much to attend the pre-camp Junior Academy training and serve on camp staff, were finalizing their preparations. Prayers and supplications had been made, fields mowed, campsites set, classrooms staged. Camp Williams was ready and the battle line had been drawn. All of the planning, all of the sweat, all of the tears which had gone into the effort were about to pay off!

The boys and young men began to arrive along with the blazing heat of the sun. Some of these were keenly aware of the challenges they were about to face while others had no idea. The Lord was rubbing his hands in anticipation while the enemy could only shudder and gnash his teeth, powerless to stop the coming tide of victory for these future heroes of the faith.

Patrols were soon formed and training was underway!

From the very beginning, as the challenges mounted and the heat pounded, the patrols experienced adversity.

AJTC late for their first lunch. JTC boys shellshocked by the heat and change of atmosphere. RTC not coming to agreement on Patrol Leader and struggling to understand the complexities of personal responsibility. Their worlds had been shaken. "How will this turn out for me? Can I even do this?"

The Plan. The newly formed patrols learned about the JLDA Coordinator's expectations of meeting a "Gold Standard" by graduation and were taught about setting S.M.A.R.T. goals in order to achieve the standard. They were soon working toward that goal and had achieved much as the first day came to a close.

For the evening service, AJTC boys ran the service which included MC, skits, patrol spirit, worship music, and a sermon from our Chaplain Chad Hutson delivered by campfire, about David's readiness to defeat the giant Goliath and how his propensity toward adventure played in to his development. At alter call, almost all boys and men came forward to proclaim a desire for the readiness to be used of God for His purposes!

Day 2 - Growth

As the sun dawned and began to break over the trees, AJTC set about posting the flags that would fly proudly over the camp, witnessing, in their own quiet way, the miraculous events that were soon to come.

AJTC was in their element. All having graduated JTC the year before as gold medalists and knowing and understanding the "Gold Standard", after being late to lunch the previous day, refused to settle for less than their best from then on. A young man was selected from among them by Camp Director Frank Frazar and assigned the role of Assistant Senior Patrol Leader. In the absence of Senior Patrol Leader, which was planned to a purpose and often, this young man was required to take ownership of these patrols and to coordinate their movements and objectives in order to accomplish the goals set before them. The patrols functioned so well under his leadership that they were able to achieve silver by Friday evening service!

JTC, facing similar tasks as AJTC in the early stages, continued to deal with resistance by some in their patrols to conform to the vision and command of the Patrol Leader. Many of the boys were taking the challenge very seriously while a few others wanted to goof off or give up. The most difficult task that lay ahead for these patrols was not going to be schedule or task related, but to identify the method by which to gain the hearts and imaginations of their wayward brothers. They knew they could not meet the "Gold Standard" unless they were unified.

RTC had resolved their Patrol Leader selection issue the previous day by agreeing to a simple game of "Rock, Paper, Scissors", and also, to the delight of the adults leaders, had awakened themselves on time and completed their personal devotions without any assistance or direction! RTC boys were on the move!

By lunch time all patrols had achieved the Patrol of Excellence Bronze Medal. A good beginning but far from the goal of gold.

By Friday night, JTC's "Redeemed Tigers" patrol received Silver! The Gold, to them, must have seemed just within reach!

Evening service on Friday included many of the same elements as the previous service. This time, however, a powerful and dramatic skit by AJTC unfolded, depicting God and his chisel, carving a new creation out of a broken young man. The sermon delivered by Chaplain Chad on character was powerful and directed like a piercing arrow to the hearts of boys and men alike! Many came forward to give "all of themselves" to God!

Day 3 - Tipping Point

By the third day much patrol identity and spirit had been established across all camps. It was exciting to see the patrols working hard to accomplish their goals! Three of the camps came together to lash together and raise a large tower!

The third day can either make or break a patrol's chances for "Gold Standard". It's the tipping point. Patrols will either push through the struggle and catch their second wind, or they'll stall out. How will it all turn out? Well...

AJTC was still swinging for the fences, achieving success in almost every arena. The patrols were functioning optimally under the command and servant leadership styles of the assistant senior patrol leader and camp staff. Each young man pulling his weight according to his own personal strengths. "Gold Standard" was the fuel and AJTC was soaring!

The outlook for JTC was not as inspiring however. As was the case the previous day, many of the boys were working hard to get it done, but the constant tug o' war-like backward pressure of some of their members was sapping their resolve and causing them to stall. The patrols were still having difficulty resolving internal issues. Patrol advisors and camp directors were providing counsel and encouragement. Senior Patrol Leader was working hard to resolve the issues as best he could. At the end of the day however, instead of advancement, a patrol lost their silver medal, leaving both JTC patrols still hovering at Bronze level when they could have been eyeing Gold. These young men, some perhaps for the very first time, were facing an adversity that many rarely face. The trial of putting your own ideas, wants and desires, dreams, and time to the side in order to lift another up. The challenge of laying down your life for someone who hasn't "earned" your love.

RTC also faced some challenges on day 3 which caused them to lose their silver medal temporarily. As the day wore on, and particularly after a flash thunderstorm just after the lunch hour, the boys began to refuse helping one another and did not want to participate in patrol spirit. The loss of the medal was a like a lightning strike to their young egos and they did an almost immediate about face. I'm happy to say that their medal was returned to them by Saturday evening.

The evening service on this night was the ignitor that brought about new beginnings for many of the young men in AJTC and JTC. While Chaplain Chad was delivering a powerful sermon to the camps in front of a blazing bonfire near the pond, and while the RTC boys worshipped and prayed in their own special service, the camp staff were committed to a spiritual war up at headquarters. We prayed for miracles for the boys. For salvation, purity, healing, strength, resolve, joy. We prayed against the footholds of the enemy in these boys lives. We shed tears for them. We called on God to mend what the enemy had broken in each of their lives. And an hour and a half later we received a report.

Six salvations and many confessions. The cleansing of hearts and strengthening of resolve! A call to righteous living!

Day 4 - Graduation

As I think back over the last week, I have come to realize something fundamental about this camp. It's not as much about reaching "Gold Standard" as it is about reaching and teaching. About learning and sharing. It's about the time the Lord gives us to pour ourselves into our youth. To adventure along side one another in a manner that causes real spiritual growth. I have decided that for me, one of the most exciting things about getting older, is the opportunity to mentor our young and to watch them become heroes of their faith.

Thank you to everyone who served and to everyone who attended. Senior Patrol leaders and all staff did an outstanding job putting on the camps!

Both AJTC patrols, Raging Panthers and Armor Bearers, achieved Gold Medals!

Both JTC patrols, Redeemed Tigers and Iron Hawks, finished with hard-earned Silver Medals!

The single RTC patrol, Godly Gators, finished with a Gold Medal!

Outdoor Skills Camp boys earned their NRA ML Shooters cards along with the Camp Safety merit, Knife & Hawk merit and Dutch Oven Cooking merit (cobbler and ice cream was delicious!) Great job OSC boys and Commander Mark!

Congratulations on all of your hard work and I look forward to seeing you at JLDA next summer!

Thank you all once again for an amazing camp. I thank you Lord for your obvious hand in all of it and for the miracles you sent to us all for your Glory!

Please join us in 2019 for Junior Leadership Development Academy! Let's go adventuring!

Respectfully,
Kenny Murray
JLDA Coordinator
South Texas Royal Rangers

