



# United States Naval Academy

## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **NAVAL ACADEMY TO HOLD HERNDON CLIMB ON MAY 17**

ANNAPOLIS, Md. – The annual Herndon Monument Climb for the Class of 2026 will be held Wednesday, May 17, at 8:00 a.m., to coincide with Sea Trials and be the true culminating event of their plebe year.

Scheduling the Herndon Climb to be an extension of the current Sea Trials schedule will reinforce the important plebe year concepts of teamwork and mental toughness.

“Sea Trials is by far the most impressive and complete training event I have observed during my time here as Commandant of Midshipmen. It is a true rite of passage as plebes complete the transformation that began on I-Day,” said Commandant of Midshipmen Col. J.P. McDonough. “I’m excited for this schedule because it combines intense mental and physical tests with a classic Naval Academy tradition.”

The Herndon Climb has long been seen as a milestone event for fourth class midshipmen (freshmen or “plebes”) at the Naval Academy. Demonstrating the teamwork and perseverance they have learned during their first year at the academy, the plebes build a human pyramid to remove the “dixie cup” cover (hat) at the top of the vegetable shortening-covered monument and replace it with an upperclassman’s cover. After successfully completing the Herndon Climb, the freshmen are no longer called plebes but “fourth class midshipmen.”

Over the years, Sea Trials, the 14-hour rigorous physical evolution modeled after the U.S. Marine Corps’ Crucible and the U.S. Navy’s Battle Stations recruit programs, has become a more significant milestone for plebes. It is led by upperclassmen and provides a final physical and mental challenge to the plebes, designed to test their teamwork and cement their bonds as companies and classmates.

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## **HERNDON 2-2-2**

Sea Trials will begin the evening of Monday, May 15, with an opening ceremony and table-top wargaming. The physical and mental portion then begins early Tuesday morning, May 16, and will pause in the evening for dinner and rest. Climbing Herndon monument, the final event of Sea Trials, will begin the following morning, allowing for plebes to immediately apply lessons learned during the previous days. This multi-day, culminating leadership challenge will reinforce the moral, mental, and physical development plebes undergo during their first year at the Naval Academy. This schedule will allow the Class of 2026 to fully dedicate their time and attention to the progress and achievements of their class before the Naval Academy community shifts its attention to commissioning the Class of 2023 the following week.

Families and friends are encouraged to attend the Herndon Climb the morning of May 17, but Sea Trial events the preceding two days are closed to observers. Additional details regarding gate access and shuttles for May 17 will be available in the coming weeks.

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