

State Mine Rescue Teams Are Among Champions In National Competition

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Horse racing and basketball may be the more publicized activities in which Kentucky claims champions, but they're not the only ones.

It is a little-known fact Kentucky is home to teams completely dominating national mine rescue competition since competition was extended to a national basis in 1951. Kentucky lost that first contest, but has won every bi-annual event since, according to J. H. Mosgrove, assistant to Mines and Minerals Commissioners Herreld Kirkpatrick.

In most years, Kentucky teams finished in the top three or four positions. At the last rescue competition, at the Kentucky State Fair and Exposition Center in Louisville, in 1967, International Harvester Co., Mine No. 10, Benham, won the top prize with the U. S. Steel Corp. Mine No. 32, Lynch, won second place against 17 other teams.

Mosgrove said the teams do not continually practice, like a basketball team, but instead learn the fundamentals of mine rescuing which enables them to "continually stay in shape."

Team members are not employed for that purpose, but are employed by the individual coal company as workmen or foremen. They participate on the rescue teams in addition to their regular duties.

"We (the Department of Mines and Minerals) feel that we're

a part of them (the rescue teams) and they're a part of us," Mosgrove said. "We work together closely at promoting mine safety with the contests."

The contests are laid out on a regular field with a "mine" area marked off. "Hazards" and actual rescue conditions are posted on ground signs. The teams are judged on performance in exploring the area, rescuing "live men" and finding "bodies." That one blunder could "kill" the rescuers is taken into consideration by the judges, who are experts from the federal or state mine departments.

The object of the contests is the same as in a real-life roteran, Coalhuila, Mexico, in operation — to negotiate each obstacle, record it on a map, locate the miner and bring him safely to the surface.

The miners wear the standard hard-hat helmet and breathing apparatus containing a two-hour supply of oxygen. To assist them in their rescue work, they carry flame safety lamps to check for oxygen deficiency and methane gas, carbon monoxide detectors, fire-fighting equipment and a stretcher on which to carry the injured.

These annual contests have made Kentucky teams so adept at rescue work that whenever there is an emergency in any part of the country the Ken-

tucky rescue teams are likely to be called to aid in rescue work.

In March, 1968, 21 salt miners were trapped in a cave-in on Belle Isle in Louisiana. Teams from Pittsburgh - Midway Coal Co., Sturgis, and Island Creek Coal Co., Madisonville, led rescue efforts.

Eleven members of the two teams have recently been awarded Gold Medals of Honor from the Interior Department's Bureau of Mines for their heroic work during the disaster.

In other emergencies, such as the March 31 disaster in Borwick which 153 miners died, the companies put themselves on the alert in case their services were needed.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick and Mosgrove were called to that disaster. When they returned they found the Kentucky Mine Rescue teams had been ready to go to the disaster site, without having been officially alerted.

"There was no need to send our teams down there," Mosgrove said, "since all the miners were killed. But if there had been a chance to save one life, the teams were ready to go."

The 1969 state championship for mine rescue teams will be at Jenny Wiley State Park Sept. 27. Regional contests will be at Madisonville, Sept. 5; Harlan, Sept. 13; and Pikeville, Sept. 20.

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RICHMOND, Ky.—The great-granddaughter of the first newspaper publisher in Kentuc-

evett, Harry Hopkins, Al Smith, James Farley, and also A. B. (Happy) Chandler.