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Golden Knights: It’s all about preparation

BILL BARLOW
Staff Writer

WILDWOOD — Sgt. Sloan Kanat’s parents don’t worry much that she jumps out of airplanes for a living.

Over the roar of the prop engines of a modified C-147 cargo plane and the wind through an open door in the back, she said both her parents are avid skydivers and that she took her first jump on her 18th birthday, as soon as she was legally allowed in the United States. She’s now 26.

“I’ve been skydiving for eight years. I’ve been with the Golden Knights for about a year. This is my first year on the demonstration team,” she said.

The team’s jump kicked off the Thunder Over the Waves airshow in Wildwood on Saturday, the first year for an event that tourism officials in the Wildwoods plan to host annually. A little more than 6,000 feet below, the rides on the Wildwood Boardwalk and the crowds on the beach could be seen.

The jump itself takes minutes, but the training for it takes far longer. About an hour earlier, each member of the team prepped his or her parachute, making sure everything was in place.

That included an oversized American flag, along with a POW flag and the New Jersey flag, were properly stowed inside the ‘chutes, to be released only after the parachute fully deployed.

Kanat, who is also a jump instructor, said paratroopers in a combat situation would drop from much lower. The intent is to get on the ground as quickly as possible. On Saturday, the intent was to put on a safe and dramatic show, which includes much more time in the air.

“Our goal is not to get to the ground as fast as possible because it would make a quicker show for everyone,” she said.

Before the parachute opens, the team members reach a speed of about 120 mph in freefall. Someone jumping head first or feet first can get to speeds of 180 mph. They deploy the parachute at about 3,000 feet.

The flight from Cape May Airport in Lower Township to the ocean takes moments. The pilot makes several passes the length of Five Mile Beach while the team gathers information on the wind speed outside the airplane doors. The back door has remained open since takeoff.



BILL BARLOW, STAFF WRITER

The U.S. Army parachute team Golden Knights make their first jump of the day over Wildwood to kick off the Thunder Over the Waves airshow on Saturday, jumping from about 6,000 feet with smoke devices strapped to their boots and flags tucked into their parachutes to come out after the parachute is deployed.

THUNDER OVER THE WAVES AIRSHOW

THE MOOD IN WILDWOOD SOARING IN SEPTEMBER



MATTHEW STRABUK PHOTOS, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A formation flight performance passes the beach by Spicer Avenue during the Thunder Over the Waves Airshow on Saturday in Wildwood.

City’s first airshow draws big post-Labor Day crowd

JOHN RUSSO
Staff Writer

WILDWOOD — The primary goal of the Wildwoods is to do better on this date than a year ago, Lou Belasco said.

So when the Greater Wildwood Tourism Improvement and Development Authority set out to bring the first airshow to the city, if Saturday was better than the weekend after Labor Day in 2024, then it was worth it.

“And I think we blew the doors off of ‘better than last year,’” the authority’s executive director said.

Saturday was the debut of the Thunder Over the Waves Airshow. And the beach full of residents enjoying locals summer mixed with



Jonathan Rumancik, left, visiting from Orlando, Florida, and the Ginder family (Mike, Sara, Josie, 9, and Colin, 7), of Wildwood Crest, enjoy the show. Rumancik is Sara Ginder’s brother.

HAMMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Woman in ball dispute not district employee

PRESS STAFF, WIRE REPORTS

The Hammonton School District released a statement Saturday to refute speculation that a woman who was in a much-publicized dispute about a home run ball at the Philadelphia Phillies’ game in Miami on Friday night is a district employee.

“The woman identified on social media as “Phillies Karen” is not, and has never been an employee of the Hammonton Public Schools located in Hammonton, New Jersey,” the district said on its Facebook page. “Social media and news reports indicating that she is, are incorrect.”

The pre-K though 12 school district, with an enrollment of approximately 3,600 students, then attempted to inject a little humor into the situation.

“Anyone who works for our school district, attended as a student or lives in our community would obviously have caught the ball bare-handed in the first place, avoiding this entire situation,” the statement concluded.

The incident involving a Harrison Bader home run ball has drawn widespread attention and commentary. The Phillies invited a young fan to meet Bader following their 9-3 win over the Marlins after a dispute over the home run ball the veteran center fielder had hit.

Bader hit a solo home run into the left-field stands in the fourth inning at LoanDepot Park. Several fans scrambled for the ball before a man came up with it and walked over and gave it to a boy and hugged him. Both were wearing Phillies gear, and it was the boy’s birthday.

Moments later, a woman, also wearing Philadelphia apparel, approached and appeared to shout at the man, who then grabbed the ball from the boy’s glove and gave it to her.

It isn’t clear from videos circulating on social media who initially secured the ball when it landed.

Later in the game, a member of the Marlins’ staff gave the boy a prize pack and another baseball as fans sitting near them in the stands cheered. The boy ended up going home with a signed bat from Bader, who met with him outside of the Phillies’ clubhouse after the game.

Marcus Lemonis, Camping World CEO and star of CNBC reality TV show “The Profit,” later posted on his X account that he would pay for the young fan and his family to attend the World Series.

“Oh, and you just won an RV as

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