

PIPING FOR THE PRIZE

"In fourth place ..."

We did too well not to place.

"In third place ..."

We definitely played better than last year.

"In second place ..."

Runners up would be awesome.

"Ladies and gentleman, in first place ..."

It can't be.

"All the way from Florida ..."

And with that, **Corporal Shawn Pappas** and the rest of the Dunedin Pipe Band were named the Grade Four winners of the North American Championships.

In a line spanning the width of a football field, **Corporal Pappas** and his band members accepted their champion pins and they struck up a tune as they proudly led the other teams in a procession off the field, a Highland games tradition.

"It was electric," **Corporal Pappas** said.

This year's North American Championships, which take place annually in Maxville, Ontario, pitted in competition 53 bands in five grades, for a total of approximately 1,600 pipers and drummers.

Fourteen bands, including two Canadian military bands, played in the Grade Four heat against **Corporal Pappas** and his team. As pipe sergeant, **Corporal Pappas's** final words of encouragement – "Don't throw up" – preceded the starting drumroll, known as the "attack." The 13 pipers and 10 drummers then marched into a circle, struck in at once, and kicked off the medley of tunes, including a march, a slow air, a waltz, a hornpipe, and a jig.

"Winning this is a huge deal," **Corporal Pappas** said. "Short of going to Scotland and playing in the World Championship, this is as big as it gets in piping."

Corporal Pappas started playing the bagpipes about nine years ago when he was a St. Petersburg Police officer, and he has been a member of the Dunedin Pipe Band for about five years.



"I've just always loved the pipes' sound," he said.

Aside from the three to five competitions the band competes in annually, members of the nonprofit participate in and fundraise at various events throughout the community, including several St. Patrick's Day festivals, the Dunedin Celtic Festival, and Dunedin Concert in the Park events October through March.

Outside of the Dunedin Pipe Band, **Corporal Pappas** gets year-round practice playing at various Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement agency events, ranging from the Annual Fallen Officer Memorial and retiree funerals to academy graduations and miscellaneous ceremonies in conjunction with the honor guard.

"Piping goes back several hundred years in law enforcement," **Corporal Pappas** said. "It's tradition."

A tradition that, with the support of **Sheriff Bob Gualtieri** and his fellow deputies, he is proud to carry on.