

Students wage epic battle in miniature

By RANDY SINIARD AMRDEC PUBLIC AFFAIRS



CLASSIC SEIGE-- GEMS II students defend their army and castle while battling two other teams. Note the additional armor built from popsicle sticks to protect their soldiers.

REDSTONE ARSENAL, Ala. (Jul. 28, 2010) — “A trebuchet is a siege engine that was employed in the Middle Ages either to smash masonry walls or to lob projectiles over them and into the castle under siege,” according to the Wikipedia.

The question on everyone’s mind: Who has the best strategy to defend their army and their castle from the other two armies that will bombard them with their trebuchets during what could possibly be an hour-long battle.

In the Middle Ages, sieges could last for years. Students in the Gains in the Education of Mathematics and Science program don’t have that long to conduct their siege.

“It can take awhile for the war to finish because each team tries to knock down all the other team’s men then attack their castle,” Bonnie Garrett, the Trebuchet Module instructor, said.

These GEMS II students, ages 16-17, assembled their trebuchets from kits using diagrams and some general instructions. However, the students had the freedom to modify their trebuchets and personalize them.

Each team was given 50 popsicle sticks to construct a castle and a company of soldiers to array defensively. The objective: Knock down all soldiers and then knock down the castle.

One team developed a barrier system to protect their ground soldiers. Another team designed several types of ammunition, adding modern thought to an ancient weapon system. These included two balls connected with string, a string tied to a rod connected to a ball, a rod through a ball, a spiked ball, numerous small balls, and even a ball looped in a rod.

Unbeknownst to one team, the other two teams had formed an alliance and planned to bombard their common enemy with all their ammo.

The battle was epic.