

History Channel competition show comes to the Historic Triangle



Eddie Hall, Brian Shaw, Robert Oberst and Nick Best compete to see who could eat the most soft-shell crabs in two minutes. (Rodrigo Arriaza / Virginia Gazette)

By **Rodrigo Arriaza**
Staff writer

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Four of the world's strongest men sat around a table in Yorktown's Riverwalk Restaurant. Between them, a tray piled high with 96 soft-shell crabs.

The challenge pit the four in a race against the clock to see who could eat the most crabs in two minutes. That's just one of the challenges you can expect to see in "The Strongest Man in History," a new show premiering on the History Channel this summer that filmed in Yorktown and Colonial Williamsburg this week.

The four men in question are Eddie Hall, Brian Shaw, Robert Oberst and Nick Best, who have all either competed in or won the World's Strongest Man event. The show has taken the four across the world to places including Scotland, England, Minnesota, Wyoming and now Virginia.

Executive Producer Rob Worsoff said the show's goal is to highlight the facts and fiction surrounding stories about historical feats of strength and to test their validity.

"There's a great many legendary feats of strength throughout history that you don't know the exact dates, figures and sizes, and over time, these stories get exaggerated," he said. "Our show is about the four strongest men in the world as they travel around debunking the mythology of those myths, investigating whether or not they're true, and then attempting to recreate them regardless of what the facts were."

Worsoff said the show's Virginia episode was partially inspired by the tales of strength that surround Peter Francisco, a Revolutionary War-era Portuguese-American soldier who was known as the "Virginia Giant," according to the American Battlefield Trust.

Wednesday's shoot in Yorktown began with a challenge to toss wooden crates into the water off the Yorktown beach pier and continued with the eating competition at Riverwalk Restaurant.

"Everywhere we go, these guys do some sort of eating challenge, because they eat 10 to 12,000 calories a day, and obviously, a big part of being a strongman is eating a lot of food," Worsoff said. "Today, without going into too many details, we were doing a challenge based on the Yorktown Tea Party, and it was a great one."

As Riverwalk Restaurant was in the midst of its dinner time rush, the four stars and a team of camera operators and other members of the production crew filled the center of its main dining room.

Customers turned away from their meals and toward the swarm of activity to get a look at the massive tray of food and the four strongmen tasked with eating it. Lynette Farmer, a tourist from San Antonio, Texas, who was dining at the restaurant, said she wanted to order the soft-shell crab, but was told they wouldn't have any left after using it all for the eating competition.

Jamie Albertson, operations manager at Riverwalk Restaurant, said she learned about the production through York County, and was happy to have the show in her restaurant.

"I think it's great exposure for the restaurant," Albertson said. "We're in such a beautiful, historic location, so to celebrate the history in such a fun way with these great strong men in our business eating local soft shell crab, I just think that's a really cool thing."

York County representatives said the History Channel reached out to them about filming in Yorktown and were similarly glad to shine a national spotlight on Yorktown.

"We have all the history here, but telling it in unique and fun and interesting ways like this, you can really reach a broader audience, so we're really excited for this opportunity," said York County Content Marketing

“The Strongest Man in History” is scheduled to premier on the History Channel on July 7. The Virginia episode is expected to air in August.

Arriaza can be reached at 757-790-9313 or on Twitter @rodrigoarriaza0.

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