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Tough Little Mudders

Kids emerge from mud pits messy, and a little more confident, in this miniature version of the adult obstacle course event.

By Claudia Carbone



A Tough Mudder kid ducks and weaves through the Secret Agent Squeeze.

With mud and green goo spattered all over his body, 11-year-old Liam flashed a big smile. “I had a great time bonding with my good friend, mud,” he says.

Liam was referring to his dirty adventures in the Fruit Shoot Mini Mudder, an outdoor challenge course that’s a cross between a school field day and a neighborhood playground. Except it involves mud—a lot of mud.

The Mini Mudder event, which oozes into Snowmass this September, teaches teamwork, determination and daring that fosters self-esteem and confidence to try new things.

“It’s important to encourage kids at an early age to have fun while being active and we’re proud to provide an exciting new way to inspire kids to work together and unlock their sense of adventure,” says Carol Gottshall, a spokesperson for Tough Mudder, the organization that spawned Fruit Shoot Mini Mudder in February of this year. Tough Mudder is a 10-12-mile extreme endurance event series for adults that takes place in the U.S., the U.K. and Ireland. The kids’ events are held on the same days as the grownups’.

“Liam loved doing the obstacles with his best friend Sam,” says Liam’s mother Rachel.

“His dad and Sam’s dad did the Tough Mudder, too, so we cheered them all on. They loved the teamwork aspect.”

Course Details

The course is not a race, nor a timed event. The organizers encourage kids to help each other and work as a team, though some kids are keen to compete.

The kids’ one-mile course includes fun and slightly scary obstacles:

- **Tunnel of Terror:** A dark steel tunnel they must climb up and through to the other side.
- **Goopy Shoes:** A slimy, slippery pool they must walk over quickly trying not to slip, sink or get stuck in the goo.
- **Secret Agent Squeeze:** A maze of taut “laser” ropes for weaving through to the end.
- **A-Frame Adventure:** A wood structure for climbing up and over using ropes and down the other side using handholds.
- **Hangin’ On, Hangin’ Out:** Two sets of monkey bars for hand-over-hand and side-by-side crossing.
- **Mount Mud:** The grand finale where they climb, slish and slip over a mound and then slide down into squishy mud for the finish.

“The obstacles were challenging yet suitable for the age group,” says Laura, whose 7-year-old son Max completed the course. “He enjoyed the wall climb most of all, though it presented a struggle. I could see the feeling of accomplishment in his face each of the three times he went over that wall. Max was worried prior to the event knowing that at age 7 he would be one of the youngest, and I believe he doubted his abilities. However, afterwards he realized because he put his mind to it, he was able to accomplish the course. He wished it lasted longer. I enjoyed watching his determination and seeing his competitive side. We will definitely do it again.”

Kid and Parent Highlights

Seven-year-old Gianna loved the experience and found it easier than she thought it would be. “She kept up, even passed the boys,” says her mom Jessica. “She learned she’s tough and can do anything boys can do, even better!” Her favorite part was sliding into the mud pit. Why? “Because sliding into mud is fun!” Gianna says. Her least favorite? Crawling through cornstarch, “because it was slimy.”

“The event was well run and everyone was very supportive and friendly,” says Rachel. “At one point someone came up to Liam and his friend and told them where to find a bunch of body paint, and the boys went nuts covering themselves from head to toe in paint. They had a blast. I think its nice for them to just get down and dirty, and no one is telling them not to.”

Says one little girl, “This is the first time my mother let me get dirty.”

Toren’s mom Stacy says the experience appropriately challenged her 8-year-old son and filled him with confidence. “He learned to push himself and that hard work can be fun,” she says. “He was thrilled to make his dad and his dad’s [Tough Mudder] team proud of him for finishing strong. Being able to have that connection to his dad, doing something he loves, even on a smaller scale made it all worth it. I love the pictures of him doing the mini obstacles with all the men in the background cheering him on! It was a great moment for our family and friends.”

Event Info

Fruit Shoot Mini Mudder will be in Snowmass September 12-13. Kids 7 to 12 who stand 42 inches and taller are eligible with a spectator ticket available online for \$20 until midnight Friday before the event. On-site registration is \$40. The event benefits Right to Play, a global organization that educates and empowers kids around the world. Upon completing the course, every kid gets a Fruit Shoot Mini Mudder headband to wear proudly.

Denver-based Claudia Carbone is an award-winning journalist, mother of 5 and nonni to 8 grandchildren.



In the Mini Mudder, kids overcome challenges like climbing walls and ropes, crawling through goo and, of course, sloshing through mud.

FOR MORE INFORMATION mudderella.com/fruit-shoot-mini-mudder

TO WATCH A VIDEO [youtube.com/watch?v=3bYClh984xg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bYClh984xg)

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