

2019 Camp Perry National Match Report

This time of year everything seems to be winding down. The excitement of summer vacations and adventures is mostly past now, and the kids will soon be back in their school-year routines. The firing lines of Rodriguez and Viale are quieter than they have been in several months. All summer long the sounds of gun-fire and range commands have been heard almost every single day as shooters from literally around the world competed in the different stages of the National Matches and searched for items they needed (or didn't need!) on Camp Perry's Commercial Row. Many of our riflemen from here in Pennsylvania were right in the middle of the action!

Of the many trips I've made to Camp Perry, this one was all-around the best! The weather was almost perfect. A couple of days were about 90 degrees, but most of the week was very comfortable, with no need to test out our rain gear. The matches ran very smoothly. I saw no major problems, and the few cease-fires we experienced were short and conveniently timed. Adding to the fun, our PA shooters held hard and shot well all week long!

The President's Match was fired on Monday, July 29th. Over 1000 shooters tried to end up in the top 100 spots. Mike Bottiger, James Martin, Matt Slocum, Nate Russell, and Tom Hemphill all earned a President's 100 tab. Sean Prosser and Joe Hendricks, Jr. took it a step farther, placing in the top 20 and giving us two local shooters to cheer on in the shoot-off. Very strong, switchy winds made this year's shoot-off really interesting to watch and nerve-wracking to shoot, with Sean coming in 3rd place and Joe at 16th.

The National Trophy Individual match (or "Leg" match) was fired on Tuesday. It was the hottest day of the week, but still awesome weather for shooting. Nate Russell only dropped 7 points for the day, ending with a 493-24X, to take the High Non-Distinguished spot. Emily Thomas, Marc Burnes, Amanda Wright, and John Martin all got a 10-point "hard" leg, with Wyatt Thomas and Steve Thomas picking up their final points and becoming "Distinguished Riflemen."

On Wednesday the adults shot the Hearst Doubles match on Viale in extremely windy standing conditions, while the juniors went to Rodriguez for the National Trophy Junior Team match. Our PRPA 3 of 5 team (Emily and Wyatt Thomas, coached by Dave Kerin) placed 3rd in the Freedom's Fire Trophy.

For many shooters Thursday was one of the biggest events of the year- the National Trophy Team match. Once again the weather was gorgeous! PRPA's NTT Hi-Power team was made up of Joe Hendricks, Jr., Jeremy Castle, Mike Bottiger, this year's new shooter Roy Leidy,

Tom Hemphill, and Hanne Brantner. Bill Gelet coached and Dave Shellhammer was team captain.

Coming off the line standing we averaged just under 95 each, a very good start. Our scores were down a little at 200 and 300 rapid fire, but we really shined at 600 under Bill's wind reading skills, making up many points. Watching Joe and Jeremy pair firing at 600 was a pleasure as they were in sync and rapidly drilling 10 after 10. Eight points separated the top four teams, with us finishing in 4th place with a score of 2916 and 101Xs. That's the highest score I ever remember our team firing!

Jeremy Castle had an outstanding day finishing 3rd overall civilian with a 493-21X and earning an Elihu Root medal given to the top 6 civilian shooters in the team match, along with the winning coach and team captain. He also won an expenses-paid trip to Talledega, AL in November to shoot a match with the members of the Root Team.

Our PRPA Junior team 2 of 2, not to be outdone by the adults, also placed 4th. The team members were Emily Thomas, Sam Graw, Tad Horomanski, Jack Graw, Wyatt Thomas, and Nickolas Thomas, with Scott Thomas coaching.

The Infantry Trophy ("Rattle-Battle") team was made up of Joe Hendricks, Jr., Andrew Leclair, junior and new shooter Wyatt Thomas, Hanne Brantner, Jeremy Castle, and Mike Bottiger. The team captain was Dave Shellhammer and coach was Bill Gelet. The shooters did their job, shooting good groups and getting their rounds off in plenty of time at 600 yards. Unfortunately for the first time in 17 years the wind gods played havoc with us and changed direction during the 50 seconds of firing time. Many of our shots went wide right. We made needed corrections and nailed it at 500. We ended up with a score of 1022. Almost all the top teams, military and civilian, got burned the same way we did, except the civilian team from Virginia who had it centered up and won the match overall.

Looking back over these National Matches shows once again how many excellent rifle shooters we have scattered all across Pennsylvania. The talent on the state teams is on the rise, and we are getting closer to the glory days of Tom Rider, Mike Harpster, Ron Smith, and Mark Heff. So keep working on your positions, refining your ammo, perfecting your hold, and most importantly enjoying your time on the range with all the other shooters. We look forward to seeing you all at Camp Perry next summer!

Submitted by Dave Shellhammer and Jeremy Castle