



Ups and Downs for Two NCAA Rifle Programs

By Sommer Wood, CMP Program Manager

College Connection

The NCAA has gained one new rifle program just as a long established program is potentially shutting down. First, there was great news in December from Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia when the school's athletic department announced that it would add four new athletic programs for the 2009-2010 school year, one being a Co-Ed Varsity Rifle Team. This was exciting news for both the NCAA and for high school athletes in Georgia, where Rifle is a varsity sport sanctioned by the Georgia High School Association. Before CSU added its new program, North Georgia College and State University and Mercer University were the only NCAA shooting programs in Georgia. NGSU is the only one of those two programs that competes in both air rifle and smallbore; Mercer is exclusively an air rifle program. These limited options have resulted in many of Georgia's top shooting athletes venturing to other parts of the country to pursue college shooting careers. With the addition of CSU's program, high school athletes have one more option to entice them to stay closer to home.

The new Columbus State University team will practice and compete in the Army Marksmanship Unit's (USAMU) International Shooting Range at Fort Benning, which is only a few miles away from the University's campus. This will give CSU's athletes the unique opportunity to train and compete on one of the best ranges in the country. The USAMU 10-meter range is equipped with electronic targets.

Heading the program will be CSU staff member Mike Green, who has served as Athletic Facilities Coordinator for the last four years, and Sergeant First Class Mike Moore of USAMU. For more information about CSU athletics go to www.csucougars.com, or visit the Universities' website at www.colstate.edu.

Not long after the CSU announcement, disappointing news came out of Indiana as Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology informed the school's NCAA Rifle Team that the athletic department was dropping the program's NCAA status and funding after the 2008-2009 season. The school's administration informed the team that the decision was based on budget constraints caused by the current world economic situation. While conversations between the administration and the rifle team have resulted in a one-season extension of NCAA support, the team must fund itself next season, and will not be allowed to continue shooting NCAA competitions after the conclusion of the 2009-2010 season.

Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology has a long history of competitive shooting that can be traced back to 1914 when the ROTC department began to carve out a small range under an academic building for the purposes of marksmanship instruction. Over the years, teams from Rose-Hulman have competed in various competitions and disciplines, from a smallbore league run by the local YMCA to firing service rifle and pistol with the Indiana National Guard at the National Matches. In more recent years, the team has changed from ROTC to NCAA and has enjoyed much success at the national level, sending two individuals to the NCAA Championships, and earning one NRA All-American Award and two Academic All-American Awards. The fact that Rose-Hulman is a Division III school that competes primarily against Division I schools makes its achievements even more significant.

The team is asking for a showing of support from the community, hoping to convince the administration to reverse its decision to end their endorsement of the NCAA Rifle Team. Emails can be directed to President Dr. Gerald Jakubowski, Vice President of Student Affairs, jakubows@rose-hulman.edu, Pete Gustafson, Dean of Students, gustafso@rose-hulman.edu and Bob Bright, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, bright@rose-hulman.edu. For those who wish to provide a tax-deductible donation, please send checks made out to Rose-Hulman Rifle Team to Jason Labella, Head Rifle Coach, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, CM 41, 5500 Wabash Ave., Terre Haute, IN 47803. Coach LaBella can also be reached at labelljp@rose-hulman.edu.

For more information about NCAA Rifle programs across the country go to www.collegerifle.com.