



Sibling Riflery: Hannah and Josh Black

By Ashley Brugnone, CMP Writer

Photos Courtesy of the Black Family

Hannah and Josh Black are your typical brother and sister. From the words of their mom and dad, “older sister ignores, little brother annoys.” But outside of their societal act, the two are actually extremely supportive of each other and share a unique common interest – both are accomplished junior shooters.

Hannah Black, 19, of Richmond, VA, has earned the title of “Distinguished” shooter by both the NRA and the Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) and has achieved such shooting heights as becoming a Virginia Commonwealth Games Sporter Air Rifle Champion, NRA National Indoor Sporter Air Rifle Intermediate Junior Champion, a two-time gold medalist at the CMP Dixie Double and was even a finalist at the 2012 Women’s

Olympic Air Rifle Trials, among her many other medals and titles.

“[The Olympic Trials] was the biggest match, and it was a little intimidating at first,” said Hannah. “All the best shooters were at this match and on top of their game. At the time, I shot a personal best.”

The Olympic Trials was also where she met Coach Karen Monez, head coach of the Texas Christian University air rifle team, where Hannah is a sophomore athlete. Her freshman year, she placed in 5th for the Horned Frogs in the air rifle NCAA competition, helping to lead her team to a 3rd place finish in Columbus, OH on March 10, 2013. Recently, she was named TCU’s November Scholar Athlete of the Month.

Hannah was also the American Legion National Sporter Champion in 2010, where she shot the second-highest score in the 20-year history of the event. Along with her title honor, she received a \$2,500 scholarship from the American Legion.

“I actually didn’t know that by winning the match I would get a scholarship. When I was asked about it, I said, ‘What scholarship?’” Hannah said. “It was

a great feeling to win a national championship, and the scholarship just added to the experience.”

Joshua Black, 18, has done well at keeping up with big sister Hannah. Josh has also been named a “Distinguished” Air Rifle expert by the NRA and the CMP. His list of shooting achievements includes National Junior Olympic 3-Position Sporter J2 and J3 Rifle Champion, a gold medal at the NRA Open Sectional, first place at the CMP 3-Position Air Rifle match, gold at the Virginia American Legion Air Rifle Tournament, and Josh also competed in the U.S. Olympic Trials in 2012.

“I went [to the Olympic Trials] mainly as an educational experience. I got to see the top-level shooters up close. I learned quite a few little tips just from observation,” he said.



Accomplished in the sport, Josh has also proven maturity and confidence as he has overcome unforeseen obstacles. He has learned how to control his thoughts in stressful situations.

“Josh was in a shoot-off to qualify for the finals at a sporter match when he had a problem with his air cylinder,” explained his mother, Donna Black. “We were able to diagnose and fix the problem with the sighter clock running out. He didn’t get in a single sighter, and I was almost certain this would mentally derail him, but he picked up the gun and got to work.”

Josh managed to win the shoot off and advance to the finals match. In the end, he placed 5th overall in the competition and grew as an experienced and talented shooter under pressure.

The brother and sister duo became involved in the sport of shooting when their father, Scott Black, joined a local gun club in Virginia for recreation and to become more equipped in self-defense. The club also offered a Friday night program aimed at getting juniors involved with shooting, using incentives such as stickers, pins and bars to instill a more goal-oriented teaching. Scott and Donna felt it was important for their children to also have some knowledge of self-defense, so they signed up Hannah and Josh in the junior program.

The siblings both showed natural shooting talent right away. Hannah admitted that one of her favorite parts of shooting was “beating the boys.” It wasn’t long before the coach of the club’s shooting team, Jim Crawford, invited them to participate in matches.

“Our team was sporter national champs four years in a row. I was on the team for three of those championships,” Josh said. “After that, I was addicted to shooting. I started air pistol, precision air rifle and now I shoot smallbore.”

Neither Scott nor Donna knew anything about competitive shooting, so Scott took it upon himself to quickly study the aspects of the sport. A high school football and shot put athlete, as well as a certified physical therapist and athletic trainer, Scott found the sport’s lack of motion to be an interesting aspect – considering it was so different from the other sports in which he has experience. He quickly learned the large amount of technique, strength, endurance and mental toughness rifle shooting demands.

Though both showed promise within the realm of rifle, competing in a sport together brought its own personal challenges for Hannah and Josh.

“I’m not going to lie – at first, I didn’t like it. I wanted it to be my own thing,” Hannah admitted. “As I got older, I got over that and embraced the competition. I think it ended up being good for both of us. We always have something to talk about and help each other with.”

Though a bonding pastime, the common activity has brought a new level of sibling rivalry between the two. As with brother-sister relationship, emotions exchanged between Josh and his sister display playfulness on the outside with respected gratitude on the inside.

“Hannah HATES it when I beat her, but she’s beaten me so many times that I’ve gotten used to it,” Josh said. “For me, it’s a challenge to try to catch up to Hannah, especially since I LOVE beating her. I can’t wait for college so I’ll have more chances to beat her.”

Josh also admits that when he is asked who is a better shooter, he “mans-up” and confesses that Hannah has him beat – for now.

When the gun club where she and her brother first learned to shoot closed the junior air and small bore range, it, at first, seemed as if Hannah’s shooting days were over. But, she was determined to keep their rifle dreams alive by helping to found a local group, the Patriot Shooting Club.

“It was difficult at first when we had nowhere to practice,” she said. “My mom definitely wasn’t thrilled when I was shooting in my own room, through the kitchen into the dining room.”



Hannah is a sophomore on the Texas Christian University Air Rifle Team. This past summer, she was also a counselor at the CMP Summer Junior Rifle Camps.