

World Junior Championship

World Junior Championship

Star-Spangled Banner Played Four Times in Granada to Honor USA Junior Athlete Gold Medal Victories

By Gary Anderson, DCM Emeritus



The flags of the International Olympic Committee, the nation of Spain, the International Shooting Sport Federation and the Royal Spanish Shooting Federation flew over Granada, Spain's Juan Carlos II Shooting Center during the 13 days of competition in September 2014 of the 51st World Shooting Championship.

The world's best junior athletes in the Olympic sport of shooting enjoyed unprecedented opportunities to compete in international championships in 2014. The 51st World Shooting Championship in Granada, Spain featured 24 Junior individual events and 20 Junior team events. For the first time since World Championship Junior events were introduced in 1994, the Junior

competitions in all 15 Olympic events were concluded with Finals. The ISSF launched its Junior Cup program, a World Cup level competition for Juniors, in 2014. The year 2014 was also the 2nd Youth Summer Olympic Games that took place in Nanjing, China in August.

The 37 young athletes, 20 men and 17 women, on the USA Junior World Championship Team returned

Junior Gold Medal Victories



The Alhambra is world-renowned, iconic structure that overlooks the City of Granada. The Alhambra, shown here at night, is an 11th century Moorish fortress that was a center of Islamic culture and rule in Spain until Catholic rulers reconquered Granada in 1492. Today, the Alhambra is one of the great tourist attractions of Europe.

from Granada with two newly crowned World Junior Champions. Twenty-year-old Alex Chichkov, a pistol shooter from Temple Terrace, Florida, actually won two World Junior Champion titles when he triumphed in the 25m Standard Pistol Men Junior and 25m Sport Pistol Men Junior events. Dania Jo Vizzi, a 19-year-old Skeet shooter from Odessa, Florida, returned home as the Junior World Champion in the Skeet Women event.

There are several world championship pretenders, but the ISSF World Championship is the only one that can truly claim to be a real world shooting championship. When the numbers of nations, athletes, diversity of events, gender equity and athlete performance levels are considered there is no comparison. The ISSF World Championship draws participants from 100 or more nations to compete in rifle, pistol and shotgun events that are widely practiced all over the world. In Granada, there were competitions for men and women in the 15 Olympic Shooting events plus 14 traditional, Non-Olympic 300-meter rifle, 25-meter pistol and running target events. Individual and team gold medals are awarded in each. Thirty-eight percent of all participants were women. Since 1994, the World Shooting Championship has also included 25 Junior events for 20 and under male and female athletes.

The first World Shooting Championship was held in Lyon, France in 1897. Today, World Championships are held every four years. In the hierarchy of international

shooting championships they rank second only to the Olympic Games in prestige and importance. The 50th World Championship took place in 2010 in Munich, Germany. The ISSF awarded the southern Spanish City of Granada the honor of hosting the 51st Championship in 2014. Ninety-two nations participated in Granada with a total of 2,003 athletes who made 3,143 starts (many competed in more than one event). The 2,003 athletes included 854 senior men, 497 senior women, 383 junior men and 271 junior women.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RESULTS

Complete detailed results for all World Championship events, Senior and Junior, can be found in the 51st World Championship Official Results Book that can be downloaded from the ISSF website at <http://www.issf-sports.org/media/calendar/2014/930/completeresult/WCH%20All%20ESP%202014%20Results%20Book%20-%20Revised%2020140928.pdf>.

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The 29 Senior World Champions who were crowned in Granada included two USA shotgun athletes, Josh Richmond, who won the Double Trap Men gold medal, and Brandy Drozd, who won the Skeet Women World Championship. Both of these victories came in Olympic events where Richmond and Drozd also earned 2016 Olympic Games quota places for the USA. Drozd, who was born in 1994, was technically still a Junior, but she chose to compete for the open title.

With so many events in three different shooting disciplines it is difficult to decide who was the greatest World Champion this year, but Jin Jongoh, a 35-year-old pistol shooter from Korea, arguably was the best of all. Jin made history in the 2012 London Olympics by becoming the first shooter in 100 years to win two Olympic gold medals in one Olympic Games when he won the 10m Air Pistol and 50m Pistol events. Jin repeated this extremely difficult double in Granada, with a special exclamation point. In the 50m Pistol qualification, Jin shot a 583 to break the

oldest World Record on the books, the 581 free pistol score fired by the USSR's Alexander Melentiev in the 1980 Olympics. Jin's double gold in Granada is also remarkable because he won his gold medals in London



U.S. Army shotgun shooter Josh Richmond won the World Double Trap Men gold medal by defeating Antonio Barilla (l.) of Italy 30 to 29 in the gold medal match. Steven Scott (r.) of Great Britain won the bronze medal match over Daniele DiSpigno of Italy, 27 to 26.

under the old finals rules where qualification scores carry forward, while he won his gold medals in Granada under the new finals rules where finalists must start over at zero.

A 2014 World Champion who should be a special inspiration to USA Junior rifle shooters is 18-year-old Yang Haoran from China. Even though Yang is still a Junior, he has dominated men's world air rifle shooting for two years. In 2014, he won the Air Rifle Men event in the Munich World Cup, the Youth Olympic Games, the Granada World Championship and the Asian Games. This young Chinese shooter has clearly demonstrated how Juniors can shoot scores high enough to win world-level competitions.

ISSF rules define a Junior as anyone who was born in 1994 or later. The 24 Junior events on the World Championship program included six rifle events at 10 and 50 meters, seven pistol events at 10, 25 and 50 meters and five shotgun events for skeet, trap and double trap. There were also six 10m and 50m running target events, but the USA did not enter these events because they are Non-Olympic events that are not widely practiced in the USA. Nine of the 24 Junior events were for women.



Brandy Drozd, USA, beat three Olympic medal winners to become the 2014 World Skeet Women Champion. In her gold medal match she defeated Elena Allen of Great Britain 14 to 13.

Junior Gold Medal Victories



Double World Champion Jin Jongoh, Korea, also won two Olympic gold medals in 2012. He is probably the best precision pistol shooter in the world today.

USA Shooting, the National Governing Body for Olympic Shooting in the USA, conducted tryouts to select the young athletes that represented the USA in Granada. USA Shooting provided funding for the USA Junior National Team from donations it receives from individual contributors and sponsors.



USA pistol shooter Alex Chichkov won two World Junior Championship gold medals in the 25m Standard Pistol and 25m Sport Pistol events.

The headline performances by U.S. Juniors were the gold medal victories by Chichkov and Vizzi. Chichkov competed in all five Junior pistol events. His eighth place qualification finish in 25m Rapid Fire missed making that final by two points. In the Standard Pistol event he finished the 150-second stage in third and he held onto that position through the 20-second stage and the first ten shots of the 10-second stage. He won his gold medal by closing with a 97 rapid-fire series that vaulted him into first with a 563 total, two points ahead of second.

Chichkov went on to dominate the last Junior pistol event, 25m Sport Pistol. In the precision stage, his 293 gave him a three-point lead over second. When he returned the next day for the rapid-fire stage, his 294 produced an outstanding 587 total and an unprecedented eight-point lead over second.

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Chichkov was born in Bulgaria where his father Vladimir Chichkov was trained as a pistol coach before the family emigrated to the USA. Like so many top 25m pistol shooters in the world, he shoots a Pardini semi-automatic pistol. In addition to regular participation in USA Shooting competitions, Chichkov has been a successful participant in the CMP Junior pistol events during the National Matches at Camp Perry. He fired a 268 x 300 to win the Junior National Trophy Individual Pistol Match in 2014. One year earlier in 2013, his 369 won the Junior President's Pistol Match.

The best USA Junior team effort was in the Skeet Women event where World Junior Champion Dania Vizzi teamed with 4th place Sydney Carson and 8th place Hannah Houston to win the gold team medal. Their 204 team total was nine targets ahead of the second place Czech Republic.

USA Juniors won three other individual medals in Granada. Ian Rupert, a 20-year-old Double Trap shooter from Muncy, Pennsylvania, shot the second best qualification with a 137 x 150 and followed that with a 28 x 30 in the semifinal to advance to the gold medal match. He shot another 28 in the gold medal match, but that was one target less than the gold medal score fired by Andrea Vescovi of Italy. Rupert won this event in the 2013 World Shotgun



Dania Vizzi, USA, won the World Skeet Junior Women title ahead of Karin Weisshuber, Germany (l.) and Barbora Sumova, Czech Republic (r.).

Championship and finished with a silver medal this year. His 137 qualification score also led the USA Juniors to a bronze medal Double Trap team finish.



The USA Skeet Women Junior Team World Champions, Sydney Carson, Hannah Houston and Dania Vizzi, pose for a 'selfie' on the victory podium after receiving their gold medals.



USA Junior Skeet shooter Philip Jungman (shown shooting) prevailed 7 to 6 over Germany's Felix Haase in a tie-breaking shoot-off to win the bronze medal.

Junior Gold Medal Victories

Nineteen-year-old Philip Jungman from Bryan, Texas, shot a 121 qualification score to advance to the semifinal. His 13 x 16 semifinal score advanced him to the bronze medal match. In the contest for third with Felix Haase of Germany, Haase was perfect until his last target. That miss left Haase and Jungman in a 15 x 16 tie. Jungman then won a dramatic shoot-off, 7 to 6, to take the bronze medal. Jungman's 121 qualification score also led the USA Juniors to a silver team medal.

The other USA Junior World Championship medal came in the 50m Rifle Prone Women event where Katherine Bridges, 20, Kingsland, Texas, won a bronze medal. Bridges had a 622.3 total (103.7 average). Her teammate Lorelie Stanfield, who was only 0.9 points behind in fourth place, narrowly missed making the podium. Unfortunately, a low ranking third team score kept the USA team off of the podium in fourth place.

An especially important measure of the USA Junior team performance is the number of athletes who qualify for finals in the 15 Olympic events. USA shotgun Juniors did well in this regard with four athletes making finals in five events and three of them winning medals. USA Junior rifle-shooters, however, were nearly shut out. In ten Olympic rifle and pistol events, only one athlete qualified for a final. Minden Miles, an 18-year-old freshman at TCU, qualified for the Air Rifle Women final with the third best qualification score, but a 28.9 and 30.0 on her first two final round series destined her to an eighth place finish.

USA Junior placings in the Olympic rifle and pistol events raise some concerns about whether USA Juniors in these disciplines are falling behind their counterparts in Europe and Asia. Garret Spurgeon's 11th place 3-position rifle score of 1161 was three points shy of a finals berth. Tim Sherry's 617.0 was one point away from making the final in the 50m Rifle Prone event. The average USA placing in those events, however, was 26th. In the 10m Air Rifle Men event, the best USA Junior finished 37th. The average placing in the Air Rifle Women event was 49th. Clearly there is room for improvement.



Katherine Bridges (on right) won a bronze medal in the 50m Rifle Prone Junior Women event. The gold medal winner was Ines Niewada from France. Pei Ruijiao from China won the silver medal. Pei also won a gold medal in the 50m 3-Position Junior event.



World Junior 3-Position Rifle Champion Andre Link of Germany is shown firing the first finals position, kneeling, where he gained a lead that he never relinquished on his way to a Finals Junior World Record.

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Germany's Andre Link enjoys his moment of triumph when he is presented after the Junior Rifle 3-Position final as the new World Junior Champion.

USA Junior pistol performances were even lower. Except for Chichkov's two golds and narrow finals miss in rapid-fire, 16 out of the 18 individual USA place finishes and every team placing were in the bottom half of the results list. Junior pistol and rifle shooters from the USA are not competitive with juniors from the top nations in Europe and Asia like China, Russia, Korea, Germany and Italy.

There were many noteworthy Junior performances by Juniors from other countries. Germany's Andre Link fired an 1171 qualification score and a Junior World Record 456.1 in the final to win the 50m 3-Position Rifle gold medal. Only 2.3 points separated all eight qualifiers in the 10m Air Rifle Men event that was won by the seventh place qualifier, Vladimir Maslennikov of Russia, who fired a 622.8 qualifier and a 206.8 final. Maslennikov won both the Air Rifle and 3-Position Rifle events in the ISSF Junior Cup in Suhl, Germany in May.

In the 25m Rapid Fire Pistol event Jean Quixquampoix of France combined a 5th place 570 qualification score with 28 hits in the final to win the gold medal. Germany's Alexander Kindig led Air Pistol qualifiers with

a 580 and topped the final with a 199.1. The small Baltic nation of Latvia placed two athletes in the final and won the Air Pistol team gold medal. In 50m Pistol, Italy's Dario Di Martino fired a 560 to lead the eight qualifiers, but finished second to the eighth place qualifier Andrey Popchenko of Russia who won the final.

Top performances among the Women Juniors included 18-year-old Sarah Hornung from Switzerland who edged out Martina Ziviani of Italy 207.2 to 207.1 to win the Air Rifle gold medal. Hornung also won the Air Rifle Women Youth event in the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games. Eighteen-year-old Pei Ruijiao of China combined a second place 582 qualification with a 455.8 final to win the 50m Rifle 3-Position Women Junior gold medal. She shot eights on her last two shots and still won by two points while setting a new Junior World Record.

In the Women's 25m Pistol event France's Mathilde Lamolle defeated China's Lin Yuemei 7 to 1 to take the gold medal. Lin Yuemei qualified eighth in the Air Pistol event, but followed that with an excellent 199.8 in the final to win that gold medal.

In the World Junior Championship medal count for rifle, pistol and shotgun events, China was the leading nation, with eight gold medals and 15 total medals. Italy came next with six gold medals and 11 total medals, mostly from shotgun successes. France, Russia and Germany followed. The USA, with four gold medals and nine total medals, finished in sixth place in the Junior medal count.



China's Yang Haoran (middle) won the Air Rifle Men event in Granada. Yang is only 18-years-old and is still a Junior, but he has dominated senior air rifle competitions at the world level for the last two years.

Junior Gold Medal Victories

The 51st World Shooting Championship Junior events offered top USA Junior athletes a great opportunity to measure their skill and performance levels against the best Juniors from other countries. There were some bright spots with the gold medals won by Alex Chichkov, Dania Vizzi and the Skeet Women Juniors, but except for the shotgun events, getting only one USA Junior athlete in an Olympic event final was a cause for concern as was the high number of USA juniors who finished in the lower half of their event results bulletins.

USA Shooting and the entire USA Junior shooting community must intensify our efforts to raise the level of junior shooting in the USA. For young athletes, this will likely mean increasing the amount and intensity of training. Junior coaches must increase their knowledge base and advance their coaching skills to an even higher level. Athletes, coaches and program leaders must raise our national standards and expectations regarding the top scores that our Juniors must shoot to compete successfully in world level competition.

Some winning athletes in the 2014 World Championship Junior events will compete for medals in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. Many

more of the leading Juniors in Granada will compete for medals in the 2018 52nd World Shooting Championship in Changwon, Korea and the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. With increased efforts on the part of USA Junior athletes, coaches and program leaders, the best of the current USA Juniors and other young athletes who are coming along behind them will be able to compete successfully for medals in Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo.

ISSF JUNIOR CUP CHAMPIONSHIP

The first ever ISSF Junior Cup, a World Cup level international championship for Junior athletes who are 20 or younger, took place at Suhl, Germany on 26-31 May 2014. The program included individual and team competitions in the 15 Olympic rifle, pistol and shotgun events plus three Non-Olympic events. Twenty-five young members of the National Junior Team were selected to represent the USA. Ian Rupert (Double Trap) and Sydney Carson (Skeet) won gold medals. The USA Skeet Women also won a gold team medal.

NO USA JUNIORS IN YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES SHOOTING

The International Olympic Committee inaugurated the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) in 2010 to promote international friendship and cooperation through competitions in Olympic sports for youth, ages 14-18. The YOG program has four shooting events, air rifle and air pistol, as well as mixed team events in both. Qualifying for quota places in the YOG is similar to qualifying for the Olympic Games. There was an American Continent YOG qualifying competition during the Fort Benning World Cup in March 2014. USA Juniors, unfortunately, were precluded from participating in YOG qualifying or the Games because the U. S. Olympic Committee was unable to support participation by USA Youth in shooting and several other Olympic sports. Unlike most countries, U. S. Olympic sports do not receive government support and the USOC, as an organization that depends upon private donors and sponsors, does not have enough money to support USA participation in all of these international competitions.

About the Author

Gary Anderson, Director of Civilian Marksmanship Emeritus, retired as the full-time CMP Director at the close of 2009. He continues to work with CMP as the senior marksmanship instructor. During his remarkable career, he won two Olympic gold medals, seven World Championships and 16 National Championships. He is a Vice President of the International Shooting Sports Federation, the President of USA Shooting, a former Nebraska State Senator and was one of the two Olympic Games Technical Delegates for Shooting during the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

In June, 2012, the International Olympic Committee awarded Gary Anderson the IOC's highest honor, the Olympic Order, "for outstanding services to the Olympic Movement."

In 2014, the CMP expanded their world-class air gun center at Camp Perry and renamed the facility the Gary Anderson CMP Competition Center, in honor of Anderson's contribution to the organization and the marksmanship community.

