

On the Mark



The 2016 Olympic Games Opening and Closing Ceremonies were spectacular. In this Closing Ceremony scene, fireworks exploded as a “tree of life” rose from the stadium floor after the Olympic Torch was extinguished. The tree is a symbol of hope for the future of the Games and of mankind.

The 2016 Rio Olympic Games *Shooting's Greatest Days of Glory* By Gary Anderson, DCME

The Olympic Games are the world's greatest sports competition and Shooting is a major sport in those Games. Every four years the Olympics give Shooting and its best athletes television and media coverage that far exceeds anything achieved in the previous three years and 11 months. This is vital to junior shooting programs all over the world because having Shooting in the Olympics affirms how their sport is one of the world's great sports.

The Games of the 31st Modern Olympiad took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 5-21 August. They

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Gary Anderson is the CMP's Director of Civilian Marksmanship Emeritus. He is a Vice President of the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) and was appointed by the ISSF to serve as a Technical Delegate for the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil. In Olympic sports, the Technical Delegate is an international federation's chief technical advisor to the Olympic Organizing Committee for the sport that he/she represents. This ***On the Mark*** article is a report on observations made by Mr. Anderson during the Rio 2016 Olympic Games Shooting competitions.

featured competitions in 306 medal events in 28 different sports for 11,303 athletes from 206 countries. In Rio, 390 athletes from 97 countries participated in 15 Shooting events. Shooting ranked fourth among the 28 sports in national participation; only Athletics, Swimming and Judo had qualified athletes from more countries. The 390 Shooting athletes emerged from an Olympic Games qualifying process in which 4,412 athletes from 117 nations competed in 23 qualifying competitions between September 2014 and March 2016.

Here are 2016 Games Shooting highlights that will be of special interest to junior shooting leaders and programs in the USA.

The Games First Gold Medal

Shooting once again enjoyed the unique honor of presenting the very first medal of the entire Games. The 2016 first gold medal was extra special because a 19 year-old athlete from the USA won it. Virginia Thrasher from Springfield, Virginia was already well known in the USA because she won both 2016 NCAA rifle championships, but she was completely unknown to the rest of the shooting world. She had only competed in three ISSF World Cups in 2015 and 2016 and had not qualified for a final in any of them.

In the Olympic Women's Air Rifle event, Thrasher finished 6th in the 40-shot qualification to qualify for the final. The eight finalists included three athletes who had already won four Olympic medals and five world championship medals between them so no one expected her to beat all of them. The final was incredibly close and hard fought as Thrasher quickly advanced into 3rd, then 2nd and, after 12 shots, into first. She held onto first place the rest of the way with a fantastic performance (see chart) to become the 2016 Olympics first gold medalist.

Ginny Thrasher's Path to Olympic Gold									
After Shot #	3	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20
Eliminations			8 th	7 th	6 th	5 th	4 th	3 rd	1 st & 2 nd
Margin to/from 1 st	-0.2	-0.7	-0.4	-0.1	+0.7	+1.3	+0.5	+0.7	+1.0
Place	3 rd	2 nd	2 nd	2 nd	1 st	1 st	1 st	1 st	Gold
Ginny Thrasher shot a 10.9 on her first shot and a 9.7 on her second shot. Her next 18 shots were all 10s.									

The Greatest Shooting Performances in Rio

Every Olympics are distinguished by athlete performances that rise above the rest. In addition to Thrasher's unexpected victory, the greatest performances in Rio belonged to Korean pistol shooter Jin Jongoh, Italian rifle shooter Nicco Campriani, Viet Nam pistol shooter Xuan Vinh Hoang and a young pistol shooter from Greece, Anna Korakaki.

Going in to the Games, the 37-year-old Jin was one of only three athletes to ever win three individual Olympic gold medals in Shooting. He competed in both precision pistol events. In 10m Air Pistol on the first day of competition, he had a disappointing 5th place finish, but four days later, he won the 50m event with an unbelievable come-from-behind performance. In the final, his quest to become the first shooter to win four gold medals looked bleak after he shot a disastrous 6.6 on his ninth shot. That dropped him to last among the remaining seven finalists and placed him in grave danger of being eliminated. But he proceeded to shoot eight tens in his last ten shots to climb back to the top after he passed Viet Nam's Hoang on their last two shots. Jin's 50m Pistol performance in Rio was a great example of never giving up even when there appears to be no hope. He became the first athlete in the 120-year history of Olympic Shooting to win four individual gold medals.



Korea's JIN Jongoh made Olympic history by becoming the first shooter to win four individual gold medals.

Italy's Nicco Campriani is well known to U.S. shooting enthusiasts because he attended the University of West Virginia and shot on their NCAA Championship Rifle Team. Campriani won the 50m 3-Position gold medal in the 2012 Olympics under the old finals rules where qualification scores carried forward into the final. The ISSF changed to start-from-zero finals in 2013 and Campriani suffered through several disappointing finals finishes during the last four years. In Rio, however, his two gold medals became another great example of perseverance through adversity. He had a strong finish to win the Air Rifle Men event and, on the last competition day,

overcame Russia's Sergey Kamenskiy on the last shot to win the 50m 3-Position gold medal. Campriani became the fourth athlete to win three individual gold medals in Shooting and only the third athlete to win two gold medals in one Games.

Viet Nam's Xuan Vinh Hoang has become one of the world's best precision pistol shooters so his medal wins in Rio were hardly surprising. On the first competition day, he and Brazil's Felipe Wu fought for first and second places in the Men's Air Pistol event. Wu had a slender 0.3 lead going into the last shot and shot a 10.1, but Hoang shot a 10.7 to win the gold medal by 0.4 points. The finish was especially exciting because the home crowd enthusiastically shouted "WU-WU-WU-WU" throughout the final. Hoang became the first athlete from Viet Nam to ever win an Olympic gold medal while Wu won Brazil's first medal of the Games. Hoang's outstanding Olympics climaxed when he nearly won another gold medal in the 50m Pistol event where he finished with a silver medal.



Nicco Campriani, Italy, became only the third shooter in 120 years of Olympic history to win two individual gold medals in one Olympics.

Three other athletes in Rio won two Shooting medals each; two of them are married. Anna Korakaki from Greece placed third in the Women's Air Pistol event and then won the Women's 25m Pistol event after a back-and-forth 8-6 gold medal match duel with Germany's Monika Karsch. China's Du Li won gold medals in 2004 and 2008. In Rio, she finished second to Thrasher in Air Rifle and third in 50m 3-Position to add two more medals to her collection. Du is married to China's Pang Wei who won silver and bronze medals in Rio in the Men's Air Pistol and 50m Pistol events.

Junior Successes in Rio

The successes several junior-aged athletes had during the 2016 Olympics should inspire junior shooters in the USA to believe it is possible for juniors to win in international competitions. According to international rules, a junior is



Junior athlete Anna Korakaki, Greece, won medals in both women's pistol events, gold in 25m and bronze in 10m. The photos show her competing in the two finals.

anyone who is 20 or younger. In Rio three juniors won four medals. These included Thrasher's gold medal, Korakaki's gold and bronze medals and a silver medal won by Russia's Vitalina Batsarashkina in Women's Air Pistol. In addition, four other athletes who were 21 or 22 years of age won medals. Athletes who were 22 or younger won eight of the 45 medals (18%) awarded in Rio. Modern training methods and equipment are making it possible for junior athletes to develop faster than ever before. All of these medal winners had no prior Olympic experience, but most had records of success in ISSF Junior World Cups or the 2014 Junior World Championships.

The USA Shooting Team Performance

The USA Shooting Team entered the Olympics with a very strong team that included several athletes with “podium potential.” Ten of the 20 USA team members were ranked in the top ten in the world before the Games and they had a great start. Ginny Thrasher won gold on the first day and trap shooter Cory Cogdell won a bronze medal on the second day. They won only one other medal in the remaining seven days, Kim Rhode’s bronze medal in Women’s Skeet.

Rhode went to Rio with the distinction of having won medals (3 gold, 1 silver, 1 bronze) in five consecutive Olympics. She had to win a one-shot sudden death shoot-off at the end of the Skeet bronze medal match, but her bronze medal in Rio made history. The 37-year-old skeet shooter from El Monte, California became the first athlete in any sport in Olympic history, male or female, to win medals in six consecutive Games.



USA skeet athlete Kim Rhode (on right) finished behind gold and silver medalists from Italy, but her bronze medal made her the first Olympic athlete to win medals in six consecutive Games.

The 2016 USA total of three medals compares favorably with USA results in previous Olympics (1988 = 3, 1992 = 2, 1996 = 3, 2000 = 3, 2004 = 3, 2008 = 6, 2012 = 4). However, compared with the possibilities that existed before the Games, the 2016 medal total was disappointing. In Rio, the USA had three world number one ranked athletes finish 19th, 19th and 15th so it is easy to understand the disappointment. Officially, the USA finished 5th in the medal count behind Italy, Germany, China and Korea.

The Rio 2016 Organizing Committee

The Rio de Janeiro Games were unique because they were the first to be held in South America where **Rio 2016**, the Olympic Games Organizing Committee, successfully combined Latin culture with the Games. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies. The Rio ceremonies were not the costly technological extravaganzas of Beijing or London; rather they were joyous celebrations of Brazilian culture and music. Brazilians are a happy people whose 'joie de vivre' came alive in the Games great celebrations.

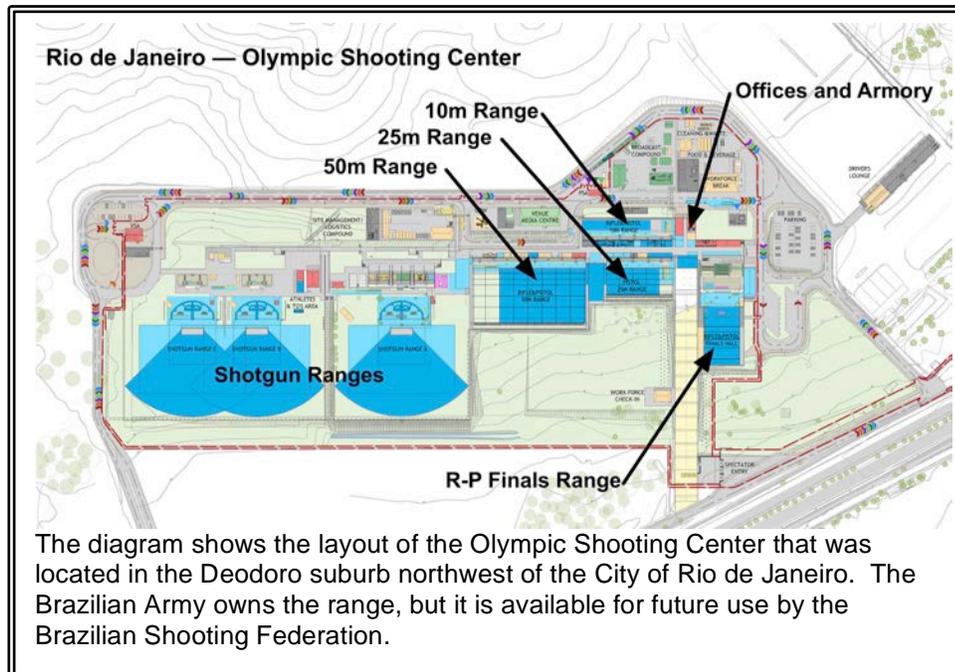
In judging the Rio Olympics, it is important to acknowledge the obstacles **Rio 2016** had to overcome just to conduct the Games. Prior to every Olympics there is always a flood of negative media stories about the Olympics. In the months before Rio negative stories focused on mosquitoes and the zika virus, dangerous pollution in water-based sports venues, huge budget cutbacks caused by Brazil's severe economic downturn, Rio's horrendous traffic and systemic threats of crime.

None of these "the-sky-is-falling" scenarios prevented Rio from giving the world a great Olympics. Very few people complained about ever seeing mosquitoes. Water pollution was never entirely cleaned up, but there also were no widespread reports of illnesses. Brazil conquered its traffic problem by providing Olympic lanes and new highways that drastically reduced travel times for athletes and officials to reach sports venues. The most serious crime story during the Games was about three American swimmers who trashed a gas station and lied about being robbed. Budgets were tight and cutbacks had to be endured, but the quality of the sports competitions was never compromised.

In the Olympic Games, the IOC chooses the host city and provides overall supervision for Games preparation, but the IOC delegates responsibility for governing and supervising the sports competitions to each sport's international federation (IF). The IF for the Olympic sport of Shooting is the ISSF (International Shooting Sport Federation). IFs provide competition rules and appoint Technical Delegates who work directly with the host city's organizing committee to plan and prepare the competitions in each sport.

A key requirement for Olympic host cities is to provide a venue or sports facility that complies with IF rules. Rio de

Janeiro had an existing shooting venue that was located in the suburb of Deodoro in the northwest part of the city. This venue was originally built for the 2007 Pan American Games, but it was completely refurbished for the 2016 Olympics. The Olympic Shooting Center has three shotgun ranges, 60 50m firing points, 60 10m firing points, eight 25m bays and a Rifle-Pistol Finals Hall. ISSF and Rio 2016 officials were able to make the refurbished venue work quite satisfactorily.



The actual conduct of the competitions is done by the NTOs (National Technical Officials) from the host country. Brazil started with very few trained, experienced Range Officers, but they appointed a group of enthusiastic volunteers, many with military backgrounds, to serve as NTOs (Chief Range Officers and Range Officers). They participated in a rigorous training program and served with distinction during a Pre-Olympic Test Event in April and again during the Olympics. The **Rio 2016** NTOs became some of the best Range Officers in the world who helped to ensure that the 2016 Olympic Shooting competitions were outstanding.

The consensus among ISSF officials is that the 2016 competitions were the best ever for Shooting. All 15 Shooting events started and finished on time, there were no protests and amazingly few even minor incidents. The conduct of the 15

Finals went without a single glitch or significant incident. There were no anti-doping violations. The objective of providing absolutely fair, optimum conditions for the athletes was achieved. A new innovation during the 2016 competitions was the use of music during qualification and final round competitions. This was one of several sports presentation procedures used by Shooting in Rio to bring it more in line with how other Olympic sports are conducted.



The Rio 2016 Shooting Range Officers (“NTOs”) turned out to be some of the best Range Officers in the world. The NTO team in this photo conducted all firing on the 50m Range.

The Impact of Start-from-Zero Finals

The ISSF made a major rule change in 2013 immediately after the London Olympics. ISSF finals rules that have been used since 1986 allowed the top eight or six athletes to keep their qualification scores and finish with a short, ten-shot final. The new 2013 rules changed that format by providing for longer finals (more shots) and no longer allowing finalists to carry qualification scores forward into the final. The Rio Games were the first Olympics to use the new format. Qualification competitions earned the top



Viet Nam's Xuan Vinh Hoang passed Brazil's Felipe Wu on the very last shot to win the 10m Air Pistol Men gold medal. Here they are embrace each other after that fateful, but tremendously exciting shot.

athletes places in the final, but in line with how almost all Olympic sports now conduct final round competitions, finalists must follow with a second great performance in the final in order to win a medal.

The competitions in Rio proved that this new finals format generates a lot more drama and excitement. Under the old rules only the top two or three in most qualification competitions had a chance to win. In Rio, every one of the eight finalists had an opportunity to win. Two rifle gold medalists, Henri Junghaenel of Germany, who won in 50m Rifle Prone, and Nicco Campriani of Italy, who won in 50m Rifle 3-Position, finished their qualifications in 8th place. Women's Air Pistol gold medalist Mengxue Zhang of China qualified in 7th. Ginny Thrasher qualified in 6th and Women's Rifle 3-Position gold medalist Barbara Engleder of Germany qualified in 5th. Under the old system none of them would have had any real chance to win.

Every rifle and pistol final was not decided until the last shot. Campriani went from second to first on the last shot in the 50m 3-Position final. Viet Nam's Hoang jumped from second to first on his last shot in the 10m Air Pistol final. Jin Jongoh moved from 2nd to first in the 50m Pistol final on the second to the last shot and needed a great last shot to ensure his victory. Germany's Christian Reitz scored a perfect five hits on his last 25m Rapid-Fire Pistol series to secure his gold medal. The 2016 Olympic finals truly were the most exciting ever.

The NCAA Connection

One of the most interesting observations that came out of Rio is the impact that NCAA college rifle programs have had on rifle athlete development. Nicco Campriani, who won two rifle gold medals, is a graduate of the University of West Virginia and shot on their very successful rifle team. Ginny Thrasher



Lucas Kozeniesky, age 21, shoots for the North Carolina State Univ. Rifle Team. He was one of several promising young athletes on the 2016 USA Olympic Shooting Team. He finished 21st in Men's Air Rifle.

is a current WVU sophomore. 50m Rifle Prone gold medalist Junghaenel is a graduate of the University of Kentucky. Current or former members of NCAA rifle teams won four of the five 2016 rifle gold medals. Three other rifle event finalists had former NCAA rifle team connections.

How Much Is an Olympic Gold Medal Worth?

An Olympic gold medal is made of silver with gold plate on the outside so its intrinsic value is not exceptional. The last solid gold Olympic medal was awarded in 1912. Forbes Magazine calculated the “podium value” of a 2016 gold medal at \$564, based on current prices for gold and silver. Nevertheless, the real value of a gold medal to an athlete who wins one is much higher because it commemorates becoming the best in the world in an international sports event and because it brings substantial financial rewards.

Almost all Olympic medal winners receive money for their victories, some of them a lot of money. Many national shooting federations like USA Shooting now provide financial rewards for winning Olympic medals. Most national Olympic Committees provide cash awards. Some government agencies also provide financial incentives. Ginny Thrasher received a total award of \$75,000, \$50,000 from USA Shooting and \$25,000 from the U. S. Olympic Committee. German gold medalists Engender, Junghaenel and Reitz each received 20,000 Euros (22,000 US\$) from the German Sports Aid Foundation. In addition their coaching staff received 40,000 Euros for each gold medal. Credible reports from China state that Chinese gold medalists receive well over a million dollars in payments from sports agencies and governments that support them.

Celebrity and Television Support for Shooting

In addition to receiving unprecedented worldwide television coverage during the Olympics, Shooting once again attracted enthusiastic attention from many government and sports leaders. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and Chinese Vice Minister Liu Yandong attended the Women's Air Rifle final, where IOC President Thomas Bach presented the Games first medals. At least four royal family members visited the Olympic Shooting Center including Princess Ann of Great Britain, Prince Albert II of Monaco, Prince Frederik of Denmark and Princess Nora of Lichtenstein. At least 29 IOC members attended, along with numerous other government and National Olympic Committee leaders.

All relevant television viewer statistics are not yet available, but initial indications are that Shooting did very well



IOC President Dr. Thomas Bach (on right) is accompanied by ISSF President Olegario Vázquez Raña as they are introduced prior to the presentation of the Games first medals for the Women's Air Rifle event.

in attracting TV viewers. The Games attracted an overall worldwide TV audience of 3.5 billion people; that's half of the world's population. NBC live streamed all 15 Olympic Shooting finals via the Internet for viewers in the USA. German television reported over six million viewers for each of the two 25m pistol finals where German athletes won gold and silver medals. Similar reports are coming from several other countries.

The 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro have once again demonstrated how Shooting is a well-established and highly respected sport within the Olympic movement. Young shooters can be proud of their participation in Shooting, be inspired by the accomplishments of its great athletes and enjoy their engagement in the Olympic dream.

Resources

For anyone who wants more information about the 2016 Olympic Shooting competitions, two good resources to check are:

- ***The Shooting Results Book***, a complete list of all athletes, all scores and all rankings for the 15 2016 Olympic Shooting events. Download from the ISSF website at:
<http://www.issf-sports.org/media/calendar/2016/1664/completeresult/OG%20BRA%202016%20Results%20Book.pdf>.
- NBC Olympic Live Stream Videos. Archived copies of NBC Olympic coverage can be found at
<http://www.nbcolympics.com/video/shooting>.