

29th Olympiad, Beijing, China

CMP Director Gary Anderson will be in Beijing during the nine days of Olympic shooting that begin on Saturday, 9 August and end on Sunday, 17 August. Anderson is serving as the Chairman of the Jury of Appeal for Shooting. While he is in Beijing for the Olympics, he will send back daily reports on the shooting events. These reports and accompanying photos will be posted here. If you are interested in these special reports on the Beijing Olympic shooting events, plan to check this site on a daily basis from 9 August through 17 August.

Reports from Beijing

Day 9, 17 August – Men's 50-Meter Three-Position Rifle

Matt Emmons is only 27 years old, but he has already endured misfortunes that rival Job's. For the second time in two Olympic Games, Emmons has put together stellar performances in 50-meter three-position rifle events that brought him to the last shot needing just a seven to win the gold medal, only to have victory snatched away from him by an incredible stroke of bad luck. In Athens, four years ago, it was a crossfire on his last shot. This time he bumped the trigger to fire a 4.4 at 12 o'clock as he was settling down onto the target for his final shot. Surely, no good person deserves this much bad luck.



This image of Matt Emmons throwing a clenched fist up in the air after the premature discharge of his last shot that cost him a gold medal best characterizes the tragic ending of an otherwise very successful Olympics for the USA Shooting Team.

The men's 50-meter three-position rifle event was the 2008 Olympic Games last shooting event. It's been a great Olympics for the USA Shooting Team and today started out looking very much like Matt Emmons could increase an already astounding USA shooting medal total to seven. Emmons opened with a 399 prone to take a share of the lead early. He followed with an event leading 389 standing. Kneeling didn't go quite as well for him, but he finished with a 387 that gave him an 1175 total going into the final. The 2000 Olympic gold medalist in this event, Rajmond Debevec of Slovenia, was one point higher at 1176, but Emmons has consistently been the better final round shooter of the two. Also in contention at that point were Jury Sukhorukov of the Ukraine at 1174 and Qiu Jian of China at 1173.



The eight finalists in the men's 50-meter three-position rifle event. The USA's Matt Emmons was in second place at the start of the final and in first place by 3.3 points after nine shots. The lucky gold medal winner, Qiu Jian from China, started the final in the fourth position (count from the left).

In the final, Debevec fired a 7.7 on his first shot and a 7.9 on his third. At that point, it looked like he had taken himself out of the medals. Qiu and Sukhorukov were shooting nines and tens, but neither could keep up with Emmons who was shooting an excellent final. Emmons fired a controlled, disciplined final. By the tenth shot, he had built up a 3.3 point lead. A 7.6 or better would guarantee the gold medal. The contest for the silver medal was supposedly between Qiu and Sukhorukov who were far back of Emmons separated by one-tenth of a point.

No one dreamed that disaster could strike Emmons two Olympics in a row, but it did. Unlike Athens where he took his last shot quickly, he began this shot by working his normal pre-shot routine. Most of the other shooters had fired their tenth shots by the time he was ending his pre-shot routine. As he was settling the sights down onto the bull from above, the impossible happened, he bumped the trigger and the shot fired. He threw his hand in the air in a gesture of extreme frustration. His wife, Katerina, who was working the Czech television announcer's station as a commentator was looking proud and confident as he prepared to fire the shot only to have her face change to a look of horror when she saw the score for that shot.

Utter pandemonium broke out in the shooting hall as once again everyone struggled to process what had just occurred. The master scoreboard told the final story. Emmons dropped to fourth, China's Qiu had fired a 10.0 to a 9.8 for the Ukraine's Sukhorukov to move up into the gold medal position by one-tenth of a point. Debevec who had seemingly shot himself out of the medals, became the Phoenix who rose again to win the bronze medal. For the second Olympics in a row, a Chinese rifle shooter backed into a gold medal in this event after unbelievable misfortune happened to Matt Emmons. Just when you think you've seen it all, you are rudely awakened by the realization that you haven't.

Matt Emmons is arguably the best male rifle shooter in the world right now and his marriage to the Czech Republic's Katerina Kurkova Emmons has generated one of the great stories of these Olympic Games. Between the two of them, they have won two gold and three silver Olympic medals in two Olympic Games. Matt and Katerina are both



The USA's Matt Emmons had the best standing score in the qualification round with a 389.

outstanding shooters; the USA and the Czech Republic can both be very proud of their shooting accomplishments as well as how they have conducted themselves in the face of extreme adversity.



Matt Emmons's target monitor displays the tragic ending to a great match. Until the 4.4, he had fired only two nines in the final.

Since today is the last day of 2008 Olympic shooting and I will be headed back to the USA tomorrow, it is time to summarize. Shortly after the 2004 Athens Olympics where the USA won three shooting medals, preparations and planning for the Beijing Olympics began. The USOC, which gives substantial financial and training center support to USA Shooting, assigned medal goals to each sport. Their goal for USA Shooting was six medals. Serious efforts to reach that goal were undertaken under the leadership of USA Shooting Executive

Director Bob Mitchell and his National Coaches, Lloyd Woodhouse, David Johnson and Sergei Luzov. No one, however, dared to believe that winning six Olympic shooting medals was realistic, but the program moved forward, determined to strive as hard as possible to reach this lofty goal.

The net result of a tremendous organizational and training effort by the USA Shooting Team is a total of six Olympic shooting medals, two gold, two silver and two bronze, plus the improbable near miss by Emmons. The impossible was achieved and commendations must go to Mitchell, the National Coaches and the entire USA Olympic Shooting Team!

No USA shooting team has done that well since the 1964 USA team that won seven medals in an era when there were only six events on the shooting program and shooting was dominated by the Soviet Union. USA successes this year featured strong shotgun and rifle performances together with an unexpected bronze medal in pistol. The Chinese team won the most shooting medals, due in part to Emmons misfortune. China ended with eight total medals, while the USA ranked second overall with six. That is a major accomplishment.

The other general judgment that must be rendered is to credit the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG) with conducting an absolutely splendid Olympic shooting competition. To rephrase a familiar epitaph used several times by past IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch, this was "the greatest Olympics ever" for shooting. The shooting venue is unbelievable in its capability to support all shooting competition functions. The staff was large, well trained and performed their jobs with impeccable courtesy and competence.



Medalists in the Olympic three-position rifle event were (l. to r.) Jury Sukhorukov, Ukraine, silver; Qiu Jian, China, gold; Rajmond Debevec, Slovenia, bronze.

Indeed, this was the friendliest shooting competition I have every experienced. Functions like finals production and award ceremonies were dignified, conducted with style and precision and always kept the focus on the athletes. The BOB television production for shooting was overall the best ever. It's hard to imagine how the shooters of the world could have been given better opportunities to produce their best results on the world sports stage.



Many of the over 800 volunteers who worked during the Olympic shooting events gather in the main plaza of the Beijing Shooting Center to celebrate the end of nine days of Olympic shooting.

The 2008 Olympics were also a great victory for the sport of shooting and the ISSF (International Shooting Sport Federation). 103 countries entered participating shooters. That likely will rank shooting third among all Olympic sports once again. The 45 shooting medals were distributed among 19 different countries, demonstrating anew how many countries in the world have developed shooting programs. Shooting awarded the first gold medal of the Games and a shooter won the first individual gold medal ever for India. Several shooters were featured in the Opening Ceremony. Shooting

received tremendous media coverage here in China as well as around the world. And then there was the Matt and Katerina Emmons story that captivated the media throughout the week. It's been a great Olympics for shooting and the USA Shooting Team.

Reports from Beijing

Day 8, 16 August – Men's 25-Meter Rapid-Fire Pistol & Men's Skeet

There were two Olympic shooting medal events today. The USA Shooting Team had a shooter in first place going into the finals for each event. One of those leads, in men's skeet, turned into a gold medal, though not without some real drama. The other lead, in men's rapid-fire pistol, started as a surprise qualification round finish, but ultimately ended with a fifth place position after the final.

The headline USA Shooting Team performance today came in the men's skeet event. 19-year-old Vincent Hancock from Eatonton, Georgia already holds both world records in this event and was almost everyone's favorite going into today's competition. Hancock is now a PFC in the U. S. Army and is assigned to the Army Marksmanship Unit at Fort Benning. He was tied for the lead after yesterday's 75 targets at 73. He shot two 24s in today's qualification round firing to total 121 and hold the lead going into the final.



Vincent Hancock of Eatonton, Georgia, and the U. S. Army Marksmanship Unit's International Shotgun Team, won a gold medal in men's skeet today.

The final round squad included Tore Brovold of Norway, Anthony Terras of France and Antonis Nicolaidis of Cyprus, who all had 120s, just one target behind Hancock. VIP spectators for the skeet final included Norway's King and Queen, who came to cheer for Brovold.



Gold medalist Vince Hancock finished the final round tied with Norway's Tore Brovold when he hit his last station eight low house target (see upper right).

With six shooters separated by only three targets the final was tense and exciting. Conditions were outstanding so final scores were high. As the final unfolded, Hancock and Brovold remained perfect through the first 18 targets. This, of course, got them past the most difficult station, number four. When both got to station six without missing any targets, Hancock had a one-target lead and was in a position to win if he didn't make any mistakes the rest of the way. But then it happened. He missed his station six low house double. Brovold went on to shoot a perfect 25 and, with Hancock's miss on station six, tie him for first place.

Hancock and Brovold went into a sudden death shoot-off on station four doubles to decide the gold medal. Brovold shot first and broke both targets. Hancock did the same. On the second low-high double, Brovold missed his second target. Hancock had almost let victory slip away from him by missing the station six low house target and he was not about to let this happen again. He broke both targets cleanly to take the gold medal.



The USA's Vince Hancock raises his hand in triumph right after hitting both targets of a second station four double to win the gold medal shoot-off with Norway's Tore Brovold (right).

Today's second medal event was men's rapid-fire pistol. This event is fired in two days. Each day has a 30 shot course where 2x5 shots in 8 seconds, 2x5 shots in 6 seconds and 2x4 shots in 4 seconds are fired with .22 cal. pistols at 25-meter targets. Keith Sanderson, an Army Sergeant stationed at Colorado Springs and training at the Olympic Training Center, fired a 289 x 300 yesterday and was in third place going into today's second 30 shot series. The leading score was a 291 so getting into the final was a real possibility for Sanderson.



Medalists in the men's skeet event were (l. to

r.) Tore Brovold, Norway, silver; Vincent Hancock, USA, gold; Anthony Terras France, bronze.

The surprise came today when Sanderson led all firers with a 294 to go into the final in first place with a 583 total. This is an event where a USA shooter has not won a medal since William McMillan won the rapid-fire pistol gold medal in 1960. Could Sanderson pull off one of the bigger upsets of the 2008 Olympics and take home a rapid-fire pistol medal?

The final consists of 20 shots with four 4-second series. The first three shooters were Oleksandr Petriv of the Ukraine, Ralf Schumann of Germany, who was going for his fourth Olympic gold medal in this event, and 21-year-old Christian Reitz of Germany, who took away Schumann's world record in this event in a World Cup in June. They finished with Petriv in the lead, Schumann in second and Reitz third, but none had shot well and it appeared that the second three shooters in the final that included Sanderson could medal.



Keith Sanderson, the lone USA rapid-fire pistol competitor, finished the 60 shot qualification round in this event leading all firers with a 583 total. He ended up in fifth place after the final round.

Unfortunately, Sanderson was not able to put together a single good 4-second series score. His series scores were 48.6, 48.0, 48.5 and 49.5. None of the first three shooters, in fact, could hold their leads and Petriv, Schumann and Reitz ended up winning the medals. Sanderson finished in fifth.

Today, with 14 of 15 Olympic shooting events finished, the USA has an astounding six medals, two gold, two silver and two bronze. This is second only to China's seven medals. And there is one more event tomorrow where the USA has an outstanding medal opportunity. Matt Emmons is probably the favorite, if there can be one, going into the men's 50-meter three-position rifle event. The U. S. Army's Jason Parker is also capable of shooting the kind of scores that could get him into the final. The USA Shooting medal count could go higher.

SPECIAL NOTES:

Olympic Participation. There are a total of 103 different countries that qualified shooters for the 390 quota places shooting was allocated for the 2008 Olympics. Shooting also had 103 participating countries in 2000 when it ranked third behind athletics (track & field) and swimming in the number of participating countries. This is an important statistic for shooting because it confirms just how popular shooting is in the world.

Olympic Quotas. One question that sometimes comes up is why aren't the numbers of shooters in Olympic shooting events larger. The reason is that in order to keep the total number of athletes in all sports at 10,500, each of the 28 summer Olympic sports is allocated a fixed number of quota places. Shooting has 390 quota places, but then has to allocate those quota places among 15 different medal events. For 2008, the number of quotas for each shooting event ranged from 17 to 32. In order to enter a shooter in the Olympics, a country first had to win a quota place in qualifying competitions (World Cups, Continental Championships or World Championships) that took place in 2005, 2006 or 2007. For an individual shooter to be entered, he/she first had to fire a Minimum Qualifying Score (MQS) in a qualifying competition.



Medalists in today's rapid-fire pistol event were (l. to r.) Ralf Schumann, Germany, silver; Oleksandr Petriv, Ukraine, gold; Christian Reitz, Germany, bronze.

Olympic Television. Shooting is receiving a huge amount of television coverage during these Games. Beijing Olympic Broadcasting (BOB) is the host broadcaster for all Olympic sport. BOB is televising every shooting final and award ceremony live. BOB has a staff of 6,000 that is producing the Olympic Games telecasts. These TV broadcast signals are then taken by up to 85 rights holding broadcasters, including the USA's NBC for live or delayed broadcasts in their countries. Each rights holding broadcaster adds its own commentary onto the telecast. An American, Brian Douglas, is the Director of the BOB staff that is producing the Olympic shooting telecasts.

Reports from Beijing

Day 7, 15 August – Men's 50-Meter Rifle Prone

The USA Shooting Team won two more Olympic medals today, one from a great performance by Matt Emmons in the men's 50-meter prone rifle event and one from Jason Turner's outstanding performance six days ago in the men's 10-meter air pistol event. Turner originally placed fourth in that event, but an IOC announcement today of a positive doping test for the original third place winner moved Turner up to the bronze medal. The USA now has five shooting medals, the most since the boycotted 1984 Olympics and with good chances for more medals in the remaining three events tomorrow and Sunday.



Medalists in today's men's prone rifle event were Matt Emmons, USA, silver; Artur Ayvazian, Ukraine, gold and Warren Potent, Australia, bronze.



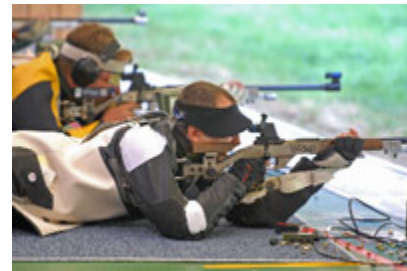
35-year-old Ukrainian shooter Artur Ayvazian raises his rifle in triumph after firing his last shot in the 50-meter men's prone rifle final.

Today's one medal event was the men's 50-meter prone rifle event. USA entrants in the prone event were Matt Emmons, the defending Olympic champion in this event and husband of Katerina Emmons, who has already won gold and silver medals in women's events while competing for her home country of the Czech Republic, and U. S. Army Major Mike Anti from Fort Benning, Georgia.

The prone rifle event is a game of extreme precision. Winning shooters must have an superbly accurate rifle-ammunition combination. Both USA shooters were shooting Anschütz rifles and Eley ammunition that have made them and other USA prone rifle shooters very competitive in the last two or three years. Winning shooters must also make a flawless performance where every shot is broken within the ten ring. Since prone qualification rounds are fired on outdoor ranges, winning shooters must usually also be very good at judging wind and very disciplined in waiting for their conditions.

Today's prone match was exciting to watch. Conditions were ideal at the beginning, but quickly became very challenging. Great prone shooters like Emmons, Potent and Martynov shot nines early when it appeared they would not even make the final. In the meantime, a couple of other veterans, Artur Ayvazian of the Ukraine and Juha Hirvi of Finland were shooting 100s. Wind conditions were switching back and forth and as the match neared the end, it was interesting to note how the experienced shooters were the ones whose names

started to show up in the top eight that would make the final. Ayvazian stayed perfect until the last series when he dropped one nine to finish with a 599. Emmons lost three points in his first 30, but he put on a great finish with three straight 100s to total 597 and was second going into the final. Early predictions that it would take 597 or at least 596 to make the final did not materialize because of the tricky winds. Norway's Vebjoern Berg, a left-handed shooter, finished with the lone 596. Experienced veterans Hirvi and Martynov finished with 595s to make the final. The USA's Mike Anti had a chance to make the final, but a nine on his 57th shot dropped him to 594 and ninth place just out of the final.



Today's gold medalist Artur Ayvazian prepares to fire the last shot in his leading qualification round score of 599.



The USA's Matt Emmons was the defending Olympic champion in today's 50-meter prone rifle event. He came within 1.0 points of winning again after firing a 597 qualification round score and 104.7 final. Emmons' silver medal was his second Olympic medal and the fifth USA Shooting Team medal of these Olympics.

The 10-shot final round for this event took place in the indoor finals hall where there is no wind and the battle for medals becomes a test of human, rifle and ammunition accuracy. Ayvazian's two point lead over Emmons appeared to be insurmountable, but there would definitely be a contest for the bronze medal. As the final unfolded, Ayvazian was not shooting brilliantly, but he stayed in the ten ring with a solid, mistake-free finals performance that won the gold medal. Emmons opened with a 10.0 and fired a 9.8 on his fourth shot. Other than those two shots, he never fired less than a 10.4 as he closed the gap between him and Ayvazian to 1.0 points. Ayvazian could not afford to make any

mistakes and he didn't.

In the battle for third place, Australia's 46-year-old Warren Potent prevailed. In the last couple of years, Potent has emerged as the best prone rifle shooter in the world. In the Beijing World Cup in April, Potent won the "greatest prone final ever fired" with a 599 and 105.8 final. This time his 595 qualification score placed him too far back to challenge for gold or silver, but an outstanding 105.5 final moved him in third and the bronze medal.



Today's men's 50-meter prone rifle qualification round started in the 50-meter hall of the Beijing Shooting Complex where 56 shooters contended for the eight final round spots where medal winners are determined.

It should be encouraging to older shooters to note that three of today's eight prone rifle finalists are age 40 or over. In addition to Potent, who is 46, Juha Hirvi is 48 and Sergei Martynov is 40.

In other events today, the USA's Keith Sanderson fired a 289 in the first half of the 25-meter rapid fire pistol event. This placed him in a tie for second, two points behind the leader going into tomorrow's second 30 shots. The scores in this event were low today so expect to see several higher second half scores tomorrow.



The USA's Jason Turner (on right) is shown here firing in last Saturday's men's air pistol

In men's skeet, the USA's Vincent Hancock, from the U. S. Army Marksmanship Unit at Fort Benning, was sitting on top of the leader board with a 73 after the first three rounds. Four shooters follow with 72 and another four with 71s. Tomorrow all competitors will fire an additional 50 shots in the qualification round before reducing the field to the top six for the final. The second USA shooter, Sean McClellan from Mission, Texas was tied for 10th with a 70. He still has an outside chance to make the final. Tomorrow we will see the conclusion of the rapid-fire pistol and skeet events. It appears that the USA has medal possibilities in both.

event. He finished fourth then, but today was moved up to third after the original bronze medal winner failed a doping test.

The other big news today was the IOC's announcement this morning that North Korea's Kim Jong Su was found guilty of doping and stripped of the bronze medal he won in the first day's men's air pistol event. Kim tested positive for propranolol, a beta-blocker. The USA's Jason Turner finished a surprising fourth in this event after winning a dramatic sudden death shoot-off with his teammate Brian Beaman. Turner won that shoot-off 10.5 to 10.3 and that fortuitously put him in a position to move up to the bronze medal position after Kim was disqualified.

Reports from Beijing **Day 6, 14 August – Women's 50-Meter Rifle & Women's Skeet**

If you ever wanted dramatic evidence of how one shot can make a huge difference, you only had to look at today's two Olympic shooting finals. The USA had shooters in both finals who were in a position to win a medal. Rifle shooter Jamie Beyerle was in second place with one shot to go, but an 8.7 on her last shot dropped her to fifth. Skeet shooter Kim Rhode had missed the second target on station 4 right-left doubles four straight times, but she connected on both in a shoot-off for the silver medal in women's skeet.



Medalists in today's women's skeet event were Kim Rhode, USA, silver; Chiara Cainero, Italy, gold and Christine Brinker, Germany, bronze.



The silver medal won by the USA's Kim Rhode is her fourth Olympic medal. She won gold in 1996 and 2004 and a bronze in 2000.

The two Olympic events today were women's 50-meter 3x20 rifle and women's skeet. The USA had strong medal possibilities in both. The USA's most successful female Olympic shooter Kim Rhode was shooting in skeet this year after winning Olympic gold medals in 2004 and 1996 and one Olympic bronze medal in 2000 in women's double trap. Since the double trap event was dropped from the Olympic program after Athens, Rhode elected to go back to skeet where she originally started her international shooting career. Rhode, who comes from El Monte, California, was the only USA entrant in skeet. She won her previous Olympic medals by shooting well in finals so if she could make the final there was a good chance for a USA medal.

Jamie Beyerle, 24, from Lebanon, Pennsylvania was competing in her first Olympics, but she had moved herself up to 5th in the world rankings in women's 50-meter three-position rifle. Jamie also has a reputation for being a strong final round shooter so everyone was hoping she could get into the final. The second USA shooter in this event, 18-year-old Sandra Fong from New York City was one of two junior shooters on the 2008 USA Olympic shooting team.

The women's skeet event starts out with three 25-target series that make up the qualification round. Rhode shot 24, 23 and 23 to total 70x75 and went into the final tied for third. The other finalists were from Italy, Thailand, Germany, China and Sweden. By the time the skeet final started, the rain and wind had also started. In a difficult final where the ultimate gold medal winner Chaira Cainero of Italy shot a 21, Rhode and Christina Brinker of Germany shot 23s to make up a two-target margin and create a three-way tie for first place. Ties are broken with shoot-offs at doubles on station 4.



Kim Rhode walks off of a rain-soaked finals field where she has just won a tiebreaker for the Olympic silver medal and into a congratulatory bear hug from USA shotgun coach Lloyd Woodhouse.

This tie was broken quickly. Brinker shot first and missed her second target. Rhode followed and did the same. Cainero shot third and broke both targets to take the gold medal. Italian fans went wild and had to be restrained by venue security. Rhode and Brinker now had to continue the shoot-off to decide who won silver and who won bronze. This double would be a right-left double where Rhode had already missed the low house bird four consecutive times in the three qualification rounds and the final. But this time she hit both targets. Brinker followed and missed her second target. The silver medal went to Kim Rhode, her

fourth Olympic shooting medal. That last shot made the difference between silver and bronze.



The most courageous performance of the Olympic Games shooting events is almost certainly Du Li's comeback from the tremendous criticism and disappointment she experienced after not producing the Games' first gold medal that so many in China expected.

produce even a credible performance today. Du Li was having trouble putting a performance together yesterday in training and was the subject of much attention from the Chinese coaches.

As the qualification round unfolded, Du Li started with a weak 196 prone while Beyerle had a 199. Du Li came back with a 194 standing. Beyerle started standing with an 8 and two 9s. Coach David Johnson called her off the line and when she returned, she finished standing with a 191. In the meantime, Pfeilschifter had seen her chances for an Olympic medal disappear when she fired a 195 prone and 189 standing. In kneeling Du Li put herself in position to win when she posted a 199 to total an Olympic record 590. Two other shooters, Olga Dovgun of Kazakhstan and Eglis Yaima Cruz of Cuba totaled 588 to enter the final in second and third. Beyerle fired an excellent 197 in kneeling to total one of four 586s that qualified for the final. One of those shooters was the Czech Republic's Katerina Emmons, who had established her reputation as a strong final round shooter. The reigning Olympic champion, Liubov Galkina of Russia lost her chance for a medal when she fired four nines in her last five shots kneeling and had to start the final in the eighth position with a 585.



America's Jamie Beyerle firing in the final of the women's 50-meter rifle events where she started in 5th, rose as high as 2nd and ultimately finished in 5th.

18-year-old junior Sandra Fong finished in 21st place with a 577 total, a credible start on what could become a long and successful international shooting career.

The final was tense and exciting. The consensus was that any of the eight finalists had a chance to win one of the three medals. Du Li opened with an 8.9 on her first shot and dropped to third. Cruz, who was the surprise finalist, actually was in first place after three of the first five shots. After that, a courageous finals performance by Du Li moved her back into first for the remainder of the final. Beyerle was shooting well in the final and closed the gap on the leaders so that she was actually in second place with one shot to go. Beyerle had prepared well on each finals shot, taking nearly as much time to run her pre-shot routine as Katerina Emmons, who was also climbing up on the board.

With one shot to fire, Du Li just need a decent shot to win, but the silver and bronze medals were up for grabs between Beyerle, Emmons and Cruz. Du Li nailed a 10.5 on her last shot and the Chinese crowd exploded. She had gone from the penthouse to the dungeon and back to the penthouse, once again a heroine. This time, Beyerle did not run her normal pre-shot routine and fired quickly; it was an 8.7. Emmons finished with a 10.2 to take the silver. Cruz finished with a 9.5 to take the bronze medal. Galkina finished the best final of the day with a 102.4 total to take fourth as Beyerle dropped to fifth.



Medalists in today's women's 50-meter rifle event were (l. to r.) Katerina Emmons, Czech Republic, silver; Du Li, China, gold; Eglis Yaima Cruz, Cuba, bronze.

The greatest accolades for the day must go to China's Du Li. She is a great shooter and to finish 5th in the first day's women's air rifle event is not a disgrace. She was under tremendous pressure and was reduced to remorseful sobbing after that event. She was so badly affected that she had to struggle through three days of training just to get her performance back. Yet in spite of this great pressure, she put together an Olympic record setting performance today, fired a strong, courageous final where she held her composure and fought through all of the pressure. Everyone was happy for her as a person because she fought so hard to overcome the great pressure that was on her.

Reports from Beijing

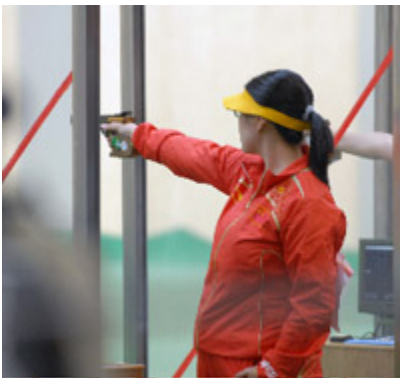
Day 5, 13 August – Women's 25 Meter Pistol

Only one event was contested today at the Beijing Shooting Range, women's 25-meter pistol. This is another event that has been dominated by eastern Europeans and eastern Asians and today was no exception. Chen Ying won China's third gold medal in shooting on the strength of a spectacular final. Mongolia's Gundegmaa Otryad won the silver after fighting back from a costly malfunction in the final. Munkhbayar Dorjsuren represented Germany in winning the bronze medal, but she is also originally from Mongolia and won her first international pistol medals while shooting for that country.



Pistol shooter Chen Ying became China's third Olympic gold medal winner when she won today's women's 25-meter pistol event.

The women's 25-meter or "sport" pistol event actually has three stages. It begins with a 30-shot precision stage where five-shot series must be fired in five minutes. A couple of hours later it continues with a 30-shot rapid fire stage where shots are fired during 3-second exposures. In rapid-fire, the shooter must load five, lower the pistol to the ready position where it is down at a 45 degree angle. Firing times are controlled by red and green lights. The lights are red for seven seconds, then green for three. After the light turns green, the shooter must lift the pistol up to the target and fire one shot before the light turns red. If the light turns red before a shooter fires, the electronic target system scores that shot a miss. The event concludes with a final round consisting of four additional five-shot rapid-fire series.



Olympic gold medalist is shown firing the last series in the final round where she climbed from third place to first.

USA entrants in this match were Rebecca Snyder, a three-time Olympian from Colorado Springs, Colorado and 56-year-old Elizabeth Callahan, a retired Washington DC Metropolitan Police Officer now living in Columbia, South Carolina. By competing in her fourth Olympic Games today, Callahan became the oldest known American woman to compete for the USA in a Summer or Winter Olympic Games.

Unfortunately, neither was able to occupy a top eight ranking on the leaderboard during the match and both ultimately finished with 575 totals.

Callahan finished 25th and Snyder 28th out of 41

competitors.

One of the interesting things about the Olympic shooting events that have been contested so far is the high number of established champions who do not make the finals. Former Olympic medalists who did not make today's final included Padernina of Russia, Sekaric of Serbia, Salukvadze of Georgia and Kostyvych of Ukraine. Even more interesting was the fact that there were two juniors in this

final. Jo Yonk Suk from North Korea is 19; Tanyaporn Prucksakorn from Thailand is 18. Another finals surprise was Luisa Maida from El Salvador, who became the first shooter from the America's to make a woman's pistol final.

Leading the finals field was Otryad of Mongolia, who tied the Olympic qualification round record with a 590 after firing a spectacular 299 in rapid fire. Second going into the final was Germany's Dorjsuren. She was born in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia and won a bronze medal in the 1992 Olympic Games competing for Mongolia. Third, going into the final was China's Chen Ying. Chen was fourth in this event in Athens and won the World Championship in 2006. If there was a gold medal favorite here, Chen was probably it.



After China's Chen Ying fired the last series in the final round of the women's 25-meter pistol event, she was so disciplined that she had to make notations in her shooting diary before she could begin her victory celebration.

In fifth place going into the final was Maria Grozdeva of Bulgaria who won two gold medals in this event in 2004 and 2000. She was trying to become only the second shooter in the 110-year history of the modern Olympics to win three individual gold medals in shooting. Ralf Schumann, a rapid-fire pistol shooter from Germany became the first to achieve this feat in Athens.



Medalists in the Olympic 25-meter pistol event were (l. to r.) Gundegmaa Otryad, Mongolia, 2nd; Chen Ying, China, 1st; and Dorjsuren Munkhbayar, Germany, 3rd. Munkhbayar won her first Olympic medal while shooting for the Mongolian team.

In the final, which consists of four rapid-fire series, Otryad started out shooting well, but Chen was shooting fantastic. On the first series, Otryad totaled 51.1, but Chen scored 52.4. Otryad's lead was shrinking. On the second series, it was 51.1 to 51.3. Then disaster struck Otryad. She fired a 9.0 on her first shot of the third series and had a malfunction on that shot. She got a refire, but a 49.0 total dropped her into second. Chen had a 52.5 to take the lead on that series. Otryad took the last series 51.0 to 50.3, but it was too late. Chen was the new Olympic champion. She had won China's third shooting gold medal of the Games.

There are two events tomorrow where the USA has realistic medal possibilities. Jamie Beyerle from Lebanon, Pennsylvania has the ability to make the final in women's three-position rifle and a reputation for being a strong final round shooter. Kim Rhode, who won gold, bronze and gold Olympic medals in successive Olympic double trap events is now shooting skeet after the IOC eliminated double trap from the 2008 Games program. The irony of this is that Rhode began her international competitive career as a skeet shooter, but switched to double trap when that was added to the Olympic program in 1996 as the first women's clay target event.

Reports from Beijing

Day 4, 12 August – Men’s Free Pistol and Men’s Double Trap

They played the USA national anthem and raised the American flag the highest of all at the Beijing Olympic shooting range today. The USA’s Walton “Glenn” Eller won the men’s double trap event with Olympic record scores in both the qualification and final rounds.

Double trap is a one-day event where competitors fire pairs of targets or doubles thrown from two traps in the center of the trap bunker while competitors rotate through the five trap stations. The qualification round involves three series of 25 pairs for 150 targets total. The final is another 25 pair of targets for an event total of 200 targets.

The outcome of this event was not a surprise; the USA was expected to do well in double trap. This was actually the third Olympic Games for Eller, whose hometown is Katy, Texas and who is now in the U. S. Army as a member of the Army International Shotgun Team at Fort Benning, Georgia. Eller finished 15th and 17th in the 2000 and 2004 Olympics, but has been shooting better and more consistently in the last two years. He medaled in two 2007 World Cups and won the World Cup Final last fall. He was second in the Beijing World Cup this year.



Today was a gold medal day for double trap shooter Glenn Eller and for the USA!



Eller raises his shotguns in triumph to celebrate his victory just after he broke his last pair of targets in the double trap final.

In today’s competition, Eller shot a 48 x 50 in the first round to take a lead that he never relinquished throughout the day. He followed that with rounds of 49 and 48 to total 145 going into the final. This gave him a four-target lead over Italy’s Francesco D’Aniello and a five-target lead over his teammate Jeff Holguin. Holguin, like Eller, is a member of the Army Marksmanship Unit’s International Shotgun Team. Eller’s 145 qualification round broke the Olympic record of 144 set by Ahmed Al Maktoum of the United Arab Emirates in Athens.

As the leader, Eller shot sixth in his final round squad. His start was scary. He missed both targets in his first pair. Fortunately he settled down and began breaking pairs of targets while anyone who could catch him was missing

occasional targets. Eller neared the end with a three-target lead over D'Aniello. When he broke his 24th pair he clinched the gold medal. A triumphant fist thrust up in the air told the crowd he knew exactly where he stood. By breaking his last pair, he finished with a 190 total and three-target victory over D'Aniello who finished with 187 and China's Hu Binyuan who scored 186 to take the bronze medal. Eller's total broke the Olympic record of 189, held jointly by Russell Mark of Australia, who won the gold medal in 1996, and who finished fifth today, and by Al Maktoum who won the gold medal in 2004 and who finished seventh today.

Today Glenn Eller added his name to an historic list of USA shooters who have won Olympic gold medals. He did it by turning in a truly great and record-setting performance against a 19-competitor field that included three former Olympic gold medalists.



Olympic double trap gold medalist Glenn Eller firing at a pair of qualification round targets.



U. S. Army pistol shooter Daryl Szarenski fires his "free" pistol in Beijing Olympic competition. He finished 14th in today's 50-meter pistol event with a 555.

Today's second gold medal event was men's 50-meter pistol. This event starts with a 60-shot qualification round and concludes with a 10-shot final. The traditional name for this event, "free pistol," comes from the fact that the pistol design is relatively unrestricted as to grip shape, sight radius or trigger weight.

The USA has not won an Olympic medal in 50-meter pistol since Frank Green won silver in Tokyo in 1964. After Jason Turner and Brian Beaman did so well in air pistol three days ago, there was some hope that USA fortunes might change, but that didn't happen today. U. S. Army NCO Daryl Szarenski fired a 555 to finish 14th while Jason Turner of Colorado Springs fired 553 to finish 21st.



Korea's Jin Jong Oh lifts his pistol to fire his last shot. He needed an 8.2 to clinch a gold medal. His last shot was an 8.2.

This event has long been dominated by countries from eastern Europe and eastern Asia. The medals today all went to east Asia, to the countries of Korea, China and North Korea. Just about everyone thought scores were lower than normal. Tan Zongliang of China led the final round qualifiers with a 565; it usually takes 567-570 to top this list. The eighth qualifier came in at 559; it is rare to see a score below 560 make a 50-meter pistol final. The thing that made this final exciting was that five shooters were tied for second behind

Tan at 563. With the exception of the 559, everyone else in the final had a chance to win a medal.

Korea's Jin Jong Oh, who won a silver medal in men's air pistol two days ago, moved out in front early. He was the only shooter to score a 10, a 10.3, on his first shot and when Tan opened with a 7.9, he took over the lead. Jin fired an 8.5 on his fourth shot that dropped him back to third place, but he came back with a 10.4 to regain the lead and hold on for the remainder of the final.

Second place went to North Korea's Kim Jong Su, who won a bronze medal in air pistol two days ago. China's Tan Zongliang, whose lead was short-lived, finished in third to take the bronze.



Jin Jong Oh, 50-meter men's pistol gold medalist.

Special Notes:

Royalty at the Shooting Range. HSH (Her Serene Highness) Princess Nora de Liechtenstein, who is a member of the IOC, watched the men's air rifle event yesterday. She was the first of what likely will be several royal family members who visit the shooting range during the Olympics.

British Minister of Sport. Tessa Jowell, the British Minister of Sport, has been in Beijing learning as much as she can about organizing the Olympic Games in preparation for the next Olympics that will be in London in 2012. Minister Jowell spent yesterday afternoon at the Beijing shooting range.



Yang Ling, a double Olympic gold medal shooter was one of eight Chinese athletes selected to bear the Olympic flag during the Games' Opening Ceremony.

Shooters Featured in Olympic Opening Ceremony. At least four Olympic shooting medalists played prominent roles during the Opening Ceremony. Yang Ling, Double gold medalist in running target, was one of eight famous Chinese Olympic winners who carried the Olympic flag in the Opening Ceremony. Xu Haifeng, who won the Olympic gold medal in free pistol in 1984 to become the first Chinese athlete ever to win an Olympic Games medal, was the first athlete to run with the Olympic torch after it entered the Olympic stadium. At least two shooters were flag bearers for their country's Olympic team, Jasna Sekaric for Serbia and Juha Hirvi for Finland.



Shooting Spectators. Official numbers are not available yet, but all indications are that the total number of shooting spectators most likely will eclipse the Olympic record 50,000 plus total that paid to see shooting events in Atlanta in 1996.

Yang Ling, a double Olympic gold medal shooter was one of eight Chinese athletes selected to bear the Olympic flag during the Games' Opening Ceremony.

Reports from Beijing **Day 3, 11 August – Men's Air Rifle and Women's Trap**

The USA won its first 2008 Olympic shooting medal today, but it was the most improbable of medals. Corey Cogdell's bronze medal in women's trap appeared to have been lost a dozen times, only to be resurrected again and again. In the end, it appeared that this medal was destined to be hers no matter what happened.

The women's trap event is fired in one day, beginning with a short 75-target qualification round and concluded with a 25-target final where only one shot may be fired at the targets. For the 21-year-old shooter from Eagle River, Alaska to win an Olympic medal was improbable because she has very little international experience. She made the 2007 USA World Championship team, but finished 50th out of 70 competitors. After making the 2008 USA Olympic team she improved to 12th in the Beijing World Cup, but that was still a long ways from third place.



Corey Cogdell, 21, from Eagle River, Alaska (on right), won the USA's first shooting medal when she won a bronze medal in women's trap. The gold medalist was Satu Makela-Nummela from Finland (center) and the silver medalist was Zusana Stefecekova from Slovakia (left).



Corey Cogdell was the fourth of four shooters tied for third in the women's trap event to fire a tie-breaking shot. She is shown here firing that shot. The first three shooters unbelievably missed their targets, while Cogdell's shot barely drew a puff of orange smoke and a hit that won the bronze medal.

Cogdell's competitive effort began well enough. She fired three consecutive 23s to put her in a tie for third going into the final. More importantly, the names that had not made the final, experienced champions like Gelisio, Italy; Kiermayer, Germany; Laricheva, Russia; Natrass, Canada; Liu, China and Lee, Korea; meant that several potential medal winners had already fallen by the wayside. It appeared the stars were aligned for something good for her.

But Cogdell's final round did not go well at all. She missed her first shot and a total of 8 targets out of the first 20 targets. At that point, she was mired in 6th place with no chance for a medal. Fortunately for her, the other finalists in the field were having as much difficulty as her. The three shooters ahead of her missed one, two and three targets in their last five targets, while Cogdell broke five straight. The result was an improbable four-way tie for third place at the end of the final.

Ties in trap are shot off one station at a time after showing the shooters a target that would be the same for all. Cogdell drew the 4th position. She watched as each of the three shooters ahead of her missed the first target cleanly. She could win by just hitting one target. She was clearly nervous, but prepared well. She looked skyward for a moment, took her time in shouldering her shotgun and finally called for the target. She fired, for a moment it too appeared to be a miss, but there was a faint puff of smoke. Only one or two pellets hit the target, but getting orange smoke out of the target is all that is required to score a hit. Corey Cogdell has become America's first shooting medalist in the Beijing Olympics.



Cogdell reacts with disbelief to the fact that she has just won an Olympic medal for the USA.

The women's trap gold medal was won by Satu Makela-Nummela from Finland who finished with a 70 + 21 for a 91 target total. The silver medalist was Zusana Stefecekova of Slovakia.

One of the things that makes shooting a great sport is how many different countries there are that have developed shooters who are capable of winning Olympic medals. The men's air rifle event today was a perfect example. The gold medalist is from India, the silver medalist is from China, not a surprise, but the bronze medalist is from Finland.



The men's air rifle final turned out to be the most closely fought contest so far in three days of Olympic shooting. Henri Hakkinen, Finland, Zhu Quinan, China, Alin Moldoveanu, Romania and Abhinav Bindra, India, started the final with scores of 598, 597, 596 and 596.

USA shooters in the men's air rifle competition were Army NCO Jason Parker, who has held air rifle world records in the past and was the 2002 World Champion in this event, and U. S. Military Academy freshman cadet Steven Scherer. Parker recently has not been firing the 596-598 scores that it takes to make international finals while Scherer is relatively inexperienced in international competition of any kind.

Men's air rifle starts with a 60-shot qualification round and concludes with a 10-shot final. Parker and Scherer finished with a 591 and 590, not

enough to be in contention for making the final eight. China's Zhu Qinan was the defending Olympic champion and he started as if he was going to dominate again this year. Unfortunately for him, his careful, but relatively long shot preparation got him into time trouble at the end and the pressure of unbelievable home country expectations began to take their toll. He finished with a 99 and 98 to total 597, two points below his qualification round score in Athens.

Henri Hakkinen of Finland shot relatively fast and his 598 qualification score put him in first going into the final. Alin Moldoveanu of Romania and Abhinav Bindra scored 596s to go into the final in 3rd and 4th. As the final began to unfold, Hakkinen was shooting well, but was not scoring any deep 10s. Zhu struggled through his first five shots scoring nothing better than a 10.2. This dropped him down to third place. Moldoveanu was also struggling, but India's Bindra was having a sensational final. He averaged 10.5 through his first seven shots.

At this point, it is interesting to look back to the Athens Olympics where Bindra also made the men's air rifle final, only to fire a disastrous final that began with nine straight nines. Two years later, though, Bindra came back to win the men's air rifle gold medal in the 2006 Zagreb World Championship, finishing ahead of Moldoveanu and Zhu, who were second and third. He obviously had learned from a poor Olympic finals performance.



Abinav Bindra from India is shown here firing in the men's air rifle final. He climbed from fourth to first to win an Olympic gold medal that follows a World Championship title that he won in 2006.

In this final, Bindra overtook Hakkinen to take the lead after the 7th shot, but a 10.0 and 10.2 on the next two shots resulted in the two of them being tied going

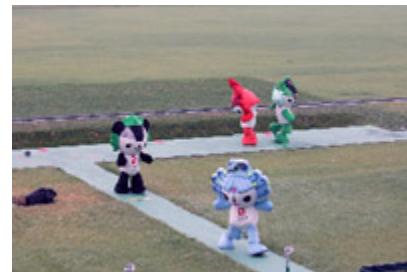
into the last shot. Zhu had also settled down in the last four shots and had a chance to win going into the last shot. It was truly a dramatic shot. Bindra fired a 10.8 to clinch the gold medal, Zhu had a 10.5 to move into second, while Hakkinen's only nine, a 9.7, dropped him to third.

By the end of today and four Olympic shooting event, 12 different countries already have won Olympic medals. This is convincing evidence that shooting truly is a world sport where many different countries in all parts of the world are producing shooters capable of winning Olympic medals.

Reports from Beijing

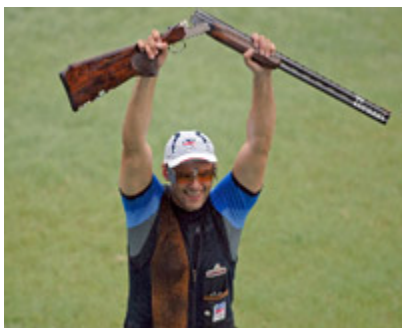
Day 2, 10 August – Women's Air Pistol and Men's Trap

Day two of the 2008 Olympic shooting events is now finished. But who would have expected that after four events, two countries have all four shooting gold medals. It's no surprise that Chinese shooters won both the men's and women's air pistol events, but it is a big surprise that the Czech Republic won the other two gold medals, one in women's air rifle yesterday and one in men's trap today.



The Olympic mascots performed on the trap range today just before the men's trap final began.

Yesterday's USA Shooting Team performances were excellent. USA shooters finished 4th and 15th in women's air rifle and a surprising 4th and 5th in men's air pistol. Things didn't turn out near as well for the USA today. In men's trap, Bret Erickson, a retired Army NCO now living in Muenster, Texas, and Dominic Grazioli, a U. S. Air Force Major from San Antonio, Texas, finished with identical 113x125 totals in 22nd and 23rd place. This was one of the events where the USA had medal hopes, but Erickson opened with a 20x25 round yesterday, while Grazioli started today's competition with a 20x25. You cannot drop five targets in one round and stay in medal contention in international competition.



David Kostelecky of the Czech Republic raises his shotgun in triumph after shooting a perfect 25x25 to win the men's trap gold medal in Beijing.

After a great start yesterday by the USA men's air pistol shooters, today's USA women's air pistol scores were especially disappointing. Brenda Shinn, from Redondo Beach, California, finished

37th with a 373 total while Rebecca Snyder, from Grand Junction, Colorado, finished 41st with a 370, out of 44 total competitors. There were no USA medal hopes at stake in this event though.

Men's trap involves a two-day 125-target qualification round. 75 targets were thrown yesterday and another 50 today. After 125 targets, the top six shooters advance to the final round. Qualification round shooters have two-shots to break the fast-moving international targets, but in the final round only one shot can be fired. Correcting a first-barrel miss is not possible in the final so final round scores are normally lower.

The final round was fired this afternoon in a heavy rainstorm. The finalists were a who's who of great Olympic trap competitors. Michael Diamond of Australia has won gold medals in 1996 and 2000. Alexey Alipov of Russia was the 2004 gold medalist. Giovanni Pellielo of Italy won a trap bronze in 2000 and a trap silver in 2004. In addition, Diamond and Pellielo have six individual trap World Championships between them. There were also three newcomers or unheralded competitions in the final, David Kostelecky of the Czech Republic, Erminio Frasca of Italy and Josip Glasnovic of Croatia.



China's Guo Wenjun firing in the women's air pistol final where she fired a new Olympic record to win China's second shooting gold medal.

The 33-year-old Kostelecky, who shared the lead with Alipov going into the final, had never won a major international title, but today was his day. With heavy rain making it difficult to concentrate, Kostelecky proceeded to outshine his far more experienced competitors. By the 14th final round target, he was the only finalist who had not missed at least one target. By the 16th target, he had a 3-target lead over second. Kostelecky did the unthinkable today, he shot a perfect 25x25 when the targets and the pressure were at their most challenging. The best any other finalists could muster were 23s by Pellielo and Diamond.

In the final results, Kostelecky won the gold medal with a 146, Pellielo won his second Olympic silver with a 143 and Alipov won a 3-target sudden death shoot-off with Diamond to take the bronze medal. The Czech Republic has its second shooting gold medal of the Olympics, after only four events.

The women's air pistol event began this morning with a 40-shot qualification round. There the top eight advance to the 10-shot final that is shot in a separate finals range where everything is set up for an elaborate TV production. Although eight shooters advanced to the final, it was clear that barring surprises, only four were in the contests for medals. Natalia Paderina of Russia led qualifiers with a 391, a new Olympic qualification round record. China's Guo Wenjun was just one point behind, however, at 390. The two of them were destined to be in the gold medal contest.



Today's medalists in women's air pistol were (l. to r.) Natalia Paderina, Russia, silver; Guo Wenjun, China, gold and Nino Salukvadze, Georgia, bronze.

Mongolia's Munkzul Tsogbadrah was third at 387 followed by Nino Salukvadze of Georgia in fourth at 386. Their's was to be the bronze medal contest. The 24-year-old Guo took the lead from Paderina on the third shot and never relinquished it. She finished with a 102.3 final round score in front of a wildly partisan crowd of Chinese spectators who cheered loudly as soon as her target registered any final round ten, which occurred in eight of the ten shots she fired. And they cheered even more wildly on her last shot, a 9.7, that clinched her gold medal victory. In the bronze medal contest, Tsogbadrah shot badly through most of the final while Salukvadze, who won her first Olympic shooting medal, a silver in 1988, performed solidly to take third.

Today, both shooting gold medal winners, Kostelecky and Guo, finished with new Olympic record totals. Their victories were richly deserved; they turned in great performances under difficult circumstances.

Tomorrow the USA has medal chances in both events. The Army Marksmanship Unit's Jason Parker is one of the top men's air rifle competitors in the world while Cory Cogdell is shooting in a women's trap event where the small field of 20 competitors makes any good shooter a medal possibility.

Special Notes:

I saw a negative side of the Chinese Olympic effort yesterday evening on CCTV. They were interviewing 2004 women's air rifle gold medalist Du Li who finished fourth in that event yesterday to the obvious disappointment of the Chinese people who expected her to win the Games first gold medal. She was distraught and in tears, her face was blotched with red from crying. It was disheartening to me to see a great champion reduced to this. Du Li gave a great and courageous effort to finish fourth behind three outstanding final round performances by the medal winners. She has nothing to apologize for—China should be proud that she fought so hard.

Reports from Beijing

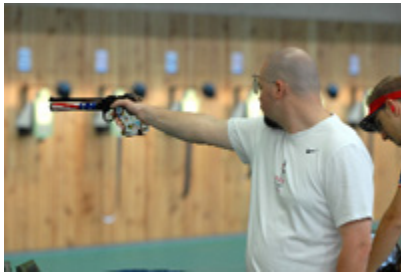
Day 1, 9 August – Men's Air Pistol

The second event on the first day of Olympic shooting competition was men's air pistol. This is an event where USA shooters have typically not done well and where there were no expectations for medals or medal contenders. Olympic shooting can also be about surprises and USA performances in this event were a truly pleasant surprise.

A second story line for this event concerned whether hometown pressure would continue to plague Chinese shooters and keep them off of the victory stand. The difficulties that Chinese rifle shooters Du Li and Zhao Yanghui faced earlier today in the women's air rifle event were effectively displaced by a dominating gold medal performance by China's 2006 Men's Air Pistol World Champion Pang Wei.



Men's Olympic air pistol medalists were (l. to r.), Jin Jong Oh, Korea, silver; Pang Wei, China, gold and Kim Jong Su, North Korea, bronze.



Jason Turner, a 33-year-old resident athlete at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, finished an unexpected fourth in the men's air pistol event, just one point behind the bronze medal winner.

The men's air pistol event has a 60-shot qualification and a standard 10-shot final. The first surprise in this event occurred when many of the top shooters in this event fell by the wayside and did not make the final. When has anyone ever seen a pistol final where names like Nestruev, Tan, Doumolin, Kiriakov or Costa were not on the final start list?

Instead, the final began with China's Pang Wei in first with a 586 and a two point lead over two Koreans, Jin Jong Oh from Korea and Kim Jong Su from North Korea. The biggest surprises were to see two Americans, Jason Turner, an Olympic Training Center Resident Athlete from Colorado Springs, and Brian Beaman, a 24-year-old wheat farmer from Selby, South Dakota in fourth and sixth positions in a pistol final. Turner fired a 583 qualification round to get into the final, but he did this with a 93 on one series. Beaman fired a 581 qualifying score, but he had to fire a perfect 100 on his last 10-shot series to do that. Beaman fired on the Jacksonville State University (AL) rifle team and has only been shooting pistol for a couple of years. Believe it or not, today's Olympic air pistol final was the first time he has qualified for a major international final of any kind.

Both Turner and Beaman performed well in the final. Unfortunately, the shooters ahead of them also performed well in the final. China's Pang Wei shot an impressive 102.2 final to lock down the gold medal to the immense joy of the Chinese spectators. The two Koreans managed to stay ahead of Turner to win the silver and bronze medals, although Turner briefly moved into third place, only to follow with a costly 8.9 on his 8th shot. Beaman shot the second best final overall. He only had one nine in ten shots and ended with a 101.0.



Brian Beaman, a relatively new and inexperienced pistol shooter from Selby, South Dakota finished fifth in his first Olympic effort, just 1.0 points behind the bronze medal score.

When it was all over, Pang, Jin and Kim were the medalists, while Turner and Beaman were only 1.0 point behind third place, tied for fourth. They had to shoot a sudden-death tiebreaker to decide fourth and fifth places. Beaman broke his shot first, a 10.3. Turner followed with a 10.5 to take fourth. Those were two great performances from two improbable American medal contenders. National Pistol Coach Sergei Luzov had done an excellent job of preparing them to perform well and exceed expectation in the Olympic Games. We hope this is a portent of things to come in American pistol shooting.

Reports from Beijing

Day 1, 9 August – Women's Air Rifle

Shooting's biggest day in the four-year Olympic cycle occurs on the first day of Olympic Games competition. By tradition, shooting presents the first gold medal of the Games. When the first gold medal of the 29th Olympiad was presented at 11:15 AM this morning, a Hollywood writer could not have written a better script. Today was truly a great day for shooting and for the Games first gold medalist, Katerina Emmons of the Czech Republic.

The women's air rifle event involves a 40-shot qualification round and a 10-shot final. The favorites included 2004 Athens gold medalist Du Li of China, 2004 women's air rifle silver medalist Liubov Galkina of Russia, 2008 Beijing World Cup gold medalist Katerina Emmons of the Czech Republic and Sonja Pfeilschifter, the current World Record holder in this event. Du Li was the 2006 World Champion and held the world record until Emmons broke it this spring at the Beijing World Cup. Pfeilschifter broke that record in June; she now holds women's rifle world records in both air rifle and three-position smallbore. The left-handed Pfeilschifter may



The very first Olympic medalists of the 2008 Beijing Olympics were (l. to r.) Liubov Galkina, Russia, silver, Katerina Emmons, Czech Republic, gold and Snjezana Pejcić, Croatia, bronze.

have been the most successful woman rifle shooter of the last 15 years, but she has a monster monkey on her back, she has never won an Olympic medal.



2008 Olympic gold medalist Katerina Emmons (center) fired a new Olympic record of 400x400 in the women's air rifle qualification round.

The situation facing Du Li concerned whether the additional pressure that comes from shooting in her home country would adversely affect her scores. Du Li received a ton of publicity in the Chinese media in recent days and the hopes of a nation for her to win the Games first gold medal has certainly weighed heavily on her.

Katerina Emmons was the bronze medalist in 2004 behind Du Li and Galkina when she competed as Katerina Kurkova. She is the daughter of Peter Kurka, who won two men's World Championships in 50 meter three-position rifle in 1986 and 1994. She met USA's 2004 rifle gold medalist Matt Emmons at Athens and the two were married in her home city of Pilsen, Czech Republic, in June 2003. She spent much of her last year training with her husband at the U. S. Olympic Training Center at Colorado Springs.

Today's match also began with the realization that there are no shooters who are so dominant that someone in the second tier of international-class competitors cannot beat them on any given day. The event is too short for anyone to establish true dominance so there was always plenty of room for surprise medalists.

During the 40-shot qualification round, Galkina lost a point on her first ten, but then shot perfect from there on to tie her own Olympic 40-shot record with a 399. The surprise came from Snjezana Pejicic of Croatia shot a 99 on her first series and then shot tens the rest of the way to also tie the Olympic record at 399. Du Li of China put on a courageous performance. She struggled to get started, but continued to shoot tens until shooting one nine on her last series. She became the third shooter to tie the Olympic record today. Pfeilschifter looked especially strong when she started with two 100s, but she began to struggle after the halfway point and finished with two 98s and another Olympic frustration.



With the final round clock starting at 75 seconds for each shot, Katerina Emmons did not begin aiming to fire any shot until 39-40 seconds remained. On this shot she has just started to aim when her nearest competitor Lioubov, Galkina, RUS, has already fired her shot.

Despite having three shooters tie the old Olympic record, the best qualification round came from Emmons. She kept on shooting tens, but started to struggle in the last series. She took a break after shot 32 to go back and talk to her coach and father Peter Kurka and her husband. After the break she returned to the line and finished a perfect 400 and new Olympic qualification round record. Only two minutes remained on the clock when she finished.



Katerina Emmons husband Matt congratulates her immediately after she won the women's air rifle gold medal. Matt is entered in two men's rifle events in Beijing and is a medal contender in both.

USA entrants were Jamie Beyerle from Lebanon, PA and Jamie Caruso from Fairfield, CT. Caruso finished with a 395 that placed 15th. Beyerle looked to have no chance to make the final after she shot a 98 and 99 on the first two rounds, but she followed with two 100s to total 397 and start the final in fifth. Making the final in the Olympic Games is a big deal because it means you rank in the top eight in the world, but gaining two or three points on four very good shooters in an air rifle final is normally not possible.

The pressure of competing for the Games first gold medal in front of a worldwide TV audience that may have been as large as two billion people put a lot of additional pressure on all the finalists. The question going into the final was whether Emmons could hold off three challengers who were each just one point behind. However, during the final, neither Galkina, Pejic or Du could mount a real challenge. In the meantime Emmons shot a strong, disciplined final.

In the final, shots are fired one-at-a-time, with a 75 second time limit for each shot. Emmons was the last to fire all ten shots. She uses a long pre-shot routine where she never began aiming to fire a shot until 39-41 seconds remained. From that point she fired each shot with 28-30 seconds remaining. She finished with a strong 103.5 final to lock down the first gold medal of the 29th Olympiad.

With her husband Matt Emmons strategically placed in the audience so TV cameras could get shots of him during the final, it was a storybook finish. As soon as it was over, embraces from her father and husband sealed the victory. Now both husband and wife have Olympic gold medals, and with good possibilities for either to win more medals in the 50-meter smallbore events that come in a few days, the Emmons family medal collection could become larger.

Olympic Shooting Preview— Will Beijing Be Ready?

*By Gary Anderson**

On the 8th of August 2008, the Opening Ceremony of the Games of the 29th Olympiad will take place in Beijing, China. Our sport, shooting, will be one of 28 sports on the 16-day program of Olympic competitions that follows. With 15 medal events and 390 athlete quotas, shooting will indeed be one of the biggest and most watched sports.



Tiananmen Square lies in the heart of Beijing, the host city for the 2008 Olympic Games.



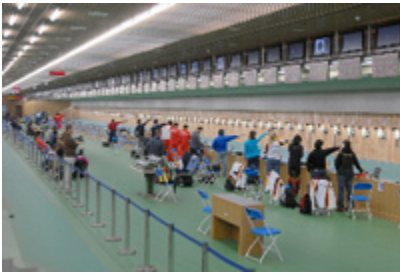
Beibei is one of five Olympic mascots whose friendly faces will be seen everywhere in Beijing during this summer's Games.

Shooting will bask in a special moment of glory on Saturday morning, 9 August, the first day of Games competition, when International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Jacques Rogge will be at the shooting finals hall to present the first 2008 Olympic Gold Medal to the winner of the women's air rifle event. As many as two billion people around the world are expected to see that significant event. Will the Games first gold medalist be 2004 Gold Medalist Du Li of China, Katarina Kurkova-Emmons of the Czech Republic, who broke Du Li's world record in that event during the pre-Olympic test competition in April or Sonja Pfeilschifter of Germany, who broke Emmons' world record six weeks later during a World Cup in Italy? Or will one of several other women rifle shooters who rank just behind Du, Emmons and Pfeilschifter claim that historic first medal of the Games?

A pre-Olympic test event was staged in Beijing in April that was recognized by the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) as a World Cup. The Beijing World Cup answered almost everyone's concerns about whether Beijing would be ready for a great Olympic shooting competition. Conducting the Olympic shooting events is the responsibility of BOCOG (Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games), but the Ministry of Sport in China and the Chinese Shooting Association is heavily involved in supporting the shooting organization. The Beijing World Cup demonstrated that China has provided a superb shooting range, an outstanding staff and a remarkable organizational spirit that almost certainly will result in a great Olympic shooting competition.



Li Feng, a Vice President of the Chinese Shooting Association and member of the ISSF Executive Committee, is the Competition Manager who leads the work of the staff that will conduct the Olympic shooting events.



Interior of the 10-meter air gun hall at the Beijing shooting range. The 100 firing points are more than that are needed for the Games, but the ranges also serve as a site for larger national competitions and training events.

Competition Manager Li Feng heads up the large shooting organization staff. Their work during the test competition demonstrated that the staff is well-trained and know their jobs. International juries appointed by the ISSF will supervise their work during the Games. Dr. Jim Lally, President of USA Shooting, will be the ISSF Medical Director. Gary Anderson, the CMP Director, will be Chairman of the Jury of Appeal. Susan Abbott from Louisiana will be Chairman of the Pistol Jury.

One of the most interesting features of the Olympic shooting staff is the 350 volunteers who were selected from college student applicants all over China. As in all Olympic Games, these volunteers provide the manpower to work many different jobs on the shooting venue. The unforgettable experiences they and thousands of other volunteers at other Olympic venues will have by interacting with people from all over the world during the Games will be one of the lasting positive impacts of the Games.



The beautification measures completed at the Beijing range are impressive. A large fountain programmed to produce timed water ballet sequences graces the main plaza in front of the finals hall.



The Finals Hall where all of the 10, 25 and 50 meter rifle and pistol events will conclude and be televised live to the world. The top eight in each of ten rifle and pistol events advance to the finals.

The Beijing Olympic Shooting Range is distinguished by its size, beauty and efficient layout. The large complex includes skeet and trap fields, a 50 meter range, a 25 meter pistol range, a 10-meter air gun range, a rifle-pistol finals hall, areas for arms and equipment storage, a press center, a hotel, restaurant and dormitories. The entire complex is almost certainly the largest shooting sports complex in the world. More importantly, the Chinese Shooting Association controls it so its preservation and continued use as a legacy of the Olympic Games is virtually assured.

The most important part of any Olympic Games are the athletes and their performances in the most intense competitions and pressure they face in the four-year Olympic cycle. The Beijing shooting complex will provide excellent conditions for producing outstanding results. The world's best shooters demonstrated during the 2008 World Cups this past spring that they are ready for record-setting performances. The USA has several shooters with excellent chances to medal, but there are many shooters from other countries who are also legitimate medal contenders. In recent Olympics Games and ISSF World Cups, the Chinese and Russian shooters have led the medal counts, with USA, Germany and Italy contending for third on the list. China is the home team in these Olympics, but there is a serious question as to whether there is a home advantage in shooting where the presence of thousands of supportive spectators can add to the pressure.



A view of one-half of the shotgun fields where five skeet, trap and double trap Olympic events will be contested.

One thing is certain. As the 2008 Olympic shooting events begin to unfold on the morning of 9 August, the Beijing Olympic ranges and staff are ready to give the shooters of the world a great competition.

** The author, Gary Anderson, is the CMP's Director of Civilian Marksmanship. He is also a Vice President in the International Shooting Sports Federation and will serve during this year's Beijing Olympics as the Chairman of the Shooting Jury of Appeal.*