

Ethics, Fair Play and Sportsmanship

Ethics, Fair Play and Sportsmanship in Youth Shooting

By Gary Anderson, DCM Emeritus



In the name of all competitors, I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules that govern them, committing ourselves to a sport without doping and without drugs, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honor our our teams.

The Athletes' Oath declared by an athlete representative during the Opening Ceremony of each Olympic Games provides an ethical model for youth sports participants.

Youth sports offer participants life enhancing benefits. Sports improve mental and physical fitness; they offer meaningful friendships and rewarding social relationships. Competing while trying to do one's best gives meaning and joy to life. Sports participants become better persons when they learn vital life lessons like self-control, self-discipline, emotional control, responsibility, goal-setting, how to achieve goals, the rewards of hard work and self-image enhancement.

Unfortunately, there is also a negative side to youth sports. Those benefits are lost when sports are not played according to the rules. This **OTM** article examines the critical roles that ethics, fair play and sportsmanship play in youth shooting and how ethical behaviors ensure that youth shooting programs fulfill their awesome potential for good.

The Ethical Athlete

The ethical athlete is someone who trains and competes by following the rules and competing in a spirit of fair play, good sportsmanship and honesty. The ethical athlete is someone who rejects taking shortcuts, doing anything to gain an unfair advantage, cheating or using artificial performance aids. The ethical athlete treats teammates, opponents and competition officials with respect.

The ISSF Athlete's Handbook

"As an athlete you are expected to embody ideals such as fair play, good sportsmanship, honesty and competitive spirit."

continued...

The Olympic Charter:

“Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles..”

Describing the personal aim of sports competition as striving to achieve a “desired result” helps us understand how ethics impacts sports and shooting. An athlete’s desired result could be anything from firing a respectable score to shooting a winning score in a prestigious competition that brings public acclaim or valued prizes. There are two fundamental ways to achieve desired results. One is through training, hard work, following the rules and making excellent competition performances. The other is achieving inflated results by using some method of cheating.

Any discussion of sports ethics must answer a fundamental question: Is any prize worth winning if it is not won by following the rules and competing in a spirit of fair play and honesty?

Indeed, **one of the most critical responsibilities of youth sports coaches and parents is to teach young athletes the values of fair play, sportsmanship and honesty and to encourage them to make personal commitments to achieve their desired results only through training, hard work, following the rules and making excellent competition performances.**

Core Values of Sport

The criteria for competing as an ethical athlete, following the rules while competing with a spirit of fair play, good sportsmanship and honesty, constitutes the “core values of sport.” Everyone in youth shooting must understand these core values and be committed to applying them.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), which governs the Olympic Games, describes sport as a “school for life.” The IOC focuses its educational programs on three “Olympic Values,” “*Excellence*,” “*Friendship*” and “*Respect*.” IOC descriptions of these values give us a starting point for understanding ethical behavior for athletes, coaches and officials.

***Excellence* means doing the best we can, on the field of play or in our professional life. The important thing is not winning, but taking part, making progress and enjoying the healthy combination of body, will and mind.**



These young athletes from France, China and Russia (l. to r.) were medal winners in the 2018 Junior Women’s World Championship 50m 3-position rifle event. The International Olympic Committee urges all young athletes in all countries to compete as “clean” athletes by rejecting all forms of doping and cheating.

***Respect* includes respect for yourself and your body, for other people, for rules and regulations, for sport and for the environment.**

***Friendship* is at the heart of the Olympic Movement. It encourages us to see sport as an instrument for mutual understanding between individuals, and between people all over the world.**

There are other values that can also broaden our understanding of the core values of sport:

- **Athlete Safety** means all youth shooting participants have a right to train and compete on safe, properly supervised ranges. They also have a right to expect that they will never be subjected to harassment, abuse or bullying.

- **Competition Rules** ensure that competitions are fair and that no competitor gains an unfair advantage. Competition rules “keep the playing field level” for all competitors. A fundamental responsibility of athletes, coaches and officials is to know and follow the rules governing their events.

Olympic Values:

•Excellence. •Friendship. •Respect.

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Be a Good Example. Champions have a special responsibility to be good examples for younger athletes and fans. Anna Korakaki, Greece, shown here in the back center, is an Olympic gold and bronze medal winner and a World Champion pistol athlete. The eagerness these young fans at the 2018 World Championship had to be photographed with her demonstrates how important this responsibility is.

• **Fair Play** means competing by the rules and rejecting any opportunities to cheat or gain an unfair advantage.

• **Honesty and Integrity** mean being able to conscientiously say “I produced my score by strictly following the rules.”

Competition Etiquette

All competitive shooters should fulfill basic rules of sportsmanship and etiquette while competing. These are good rules to follow:

1. Know and follow the competition rules.
2. Keep your firing positions and equipment within your firing point area.
3. Talking on the firing line may only be done with Range Officers.
4. Avoid actions that might disturb other competitors.
5. Never act out or display anger when bad shots or scores occur.
6. Vow to remain calm, cool and controlled no matter what happens.
7. Cooperate with Match Officials—they are there to help competitors.
8. Do your part to make the competition a great experience for all—teammates, other teams and Match Officials.

• **Impartiality** requires Match Officials who make decisions affecting athletes and their results to treat all athletes the same, in full accord with the rules, and without showing partiality to any athlete or team.

• **Sportsmanship** is acting with fair and generous behavior towards opponents.

Respect for Fellow Athletes and Officials

The Olympic value of “Respect” addresses how athletes and officials behave towards each other. Respect means seeing other athletes and officials as persons of worth, as good persons and as potential friends. There are several ways athletes, coaches and officials can show respect:

• **Be a Good Teammate.** Being a good teammate starts with encouraging and supporting other members of the team. A good teammate devotes time to helping newer and younger teammates. A good teammate happily congratulates other team members when they shoot great scores or new PRs. A good teammate is someone who helps other members of his/her team become better.



Be a Good Teammate. These two Chinese athletes, Junmin LIN and Jian ZHANG, have just finished first and second in the 2018 World Championship rapid-fire pistol event. The obvious joy they share makes it difficult to tell which athlete won the gold medal.

- **Be a Good Example.** Older and more successful athletes have a unique responsibility to be good role models. Younger athletes and fans want heroes; they will look up to athletes who are established winners and follow the examples they set. A true champion recognizes this responsibility and is willing to spend time with younger athletes and fans.

- **Friendship.** One of the great experiences in sports competitions is meeting and enjoying new friends. Athletes who go to competitions expecting to find new friends will almost certainly be well rewarded.

- **Behavior Towards Match Officials.** Ethical behavior standards for athletes and coaches involve showing respect for Range Officers and other Match Officials. Sometimes those officials must make decisions athletes and coaches do not like, but that is not an excuse for attacking them. At the end of a competition, a well-appreciated act of good sportsmanship is when athletes and coaches take time to say “thank you” to the Range Officers and officials who conducted the match.

- **Welcoming Environment.** Ethical behavior standards for Match Officials call for them to do everything they can to provide welcoming environments for competitors at their matches. Informing competitors about what to expect, making registration easy, clearly explaining special range rules, providing equal competition conditions for all and offering genuine hospitality ensure that competing at that range will be a great experience.

Doping

Doping by taking performance enhancing drugs during training or competitions is a notorious way to cheat. Virtually all international and national sports organizations are now engaged in battles to keep their competitions clean. In shooting, where anti-doping testing is done, doping violations are extremely rare. In 2018, the ISSF conducted 645 anti-doping tests during 16 international championships and had only one positive test.

Shooting benefits from the fact that there are no known drugs to speed up athlete skill development during training.



In Rimfire Sporter Rifle and Pistol competitions, competitors often score for each other. They have a high ethical responsibility to carefully score and record all shots as accurately as possible.

The one family of drugs that is performance enhancing in shooting is beta blockers taken during competitions. Beta blockers slow heart rates, moderate muscle tremors and reduce anxiety without compromising mental and neural functions. A rigorous testing program has successfully eliminated almost all beta-blocker use from international competitions.

Manipulating Results, Falsifying Scores

A few years ago, a competitor in a well-respected national junior postal fired a sporter class 3-position score of 298 x 300. A few months later that same competitor fired in a shoulder-to-shoulder match and did not break 500 out of 600. A few months after that, this young man quit shooting, knowing he had cheated and could never be respected by other shooters. Occasional cases of cheating in shooting involving schemes to manipulate or falsify scores have ended with personal humiliation, disqualifications and even bans from participating.

- **Score and Target Manipulation.** Score manipulations include tricks like not shooting the last shot when there is a tight multi-shot group, fingering the back of a target or using a sharp object to tear the inside edges of shot holes. More egregious cases involve firing postal scores in supported positions or at closer distances, altering or falsifying scorecards or substituting pre-fired targets. Any attempt to manipulate or falsify a score is cheating.

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- **When Competitors Score.** There are temptations to cheat in Highpower Rifle, Pistol and Rimfire Sporter competitions when competitors record scores or score for each other. Helping a friend or shooting buddy get an extra point or two may seem like a charitable thing to do, but it is score falsification and the rules do not allow it. The ethical competitor conscientiously scores and records all shots as accurately as possible.

- **Manual Scoring Ethics.** When manual scoring is done correctly, it can be quite accurate. But official scorers also face ethical challenges. There are temptations to score loosely by scoring shots “in” that are not really in (“it was close”). More dangerous temptations involve scoring loose for the home team and tight for the other teams. The practice of allowing scoring challenges creates a problematic gray area. Challenging scores is at best a protection against poor scoring, but it is also ethically problematic because the only shots that are ever challenged are shots that were scored “just out.” Shots that were scored “just in” are never challenged. Making a challenge when there is an obvious scoring mistake is certainly justified, but the practice of challenging every close shot in an attempt to “buy points” is ethically questionable.

- **VIS and EST Scoring.** Modern electronic targets and electronic scoring systems like Orion overcome the disadvantages of manual scoring by speeding up scoring and accurately scoring all shots according to the same standard. However, VIS and EST Scoring Officers have the capability of making manual interventions, so they also have an ethical responsibility to be well-trained and committed to making score reviews with absolute integrity and impartiality.

Shooting Equipment and Position Violations

In a sport like shooting where equipment plays a decisive role in athletes’ performances, using equipment or shooting positions that give an unfair advantage is cheating. Almost all cheating attempts involving equipment or firing positions, however, can be prevented with effective enforcement.

- **Trigger Weight Violations.** In events with minimum trigger pull requirements, a common violation is shooting with a light trigger. Making a trigger lighter after passing a pre-competition check is even more serious. Post-



Easy-to-do pre and post-competition tests like trigger weighing have proven to be an effective means of ensuring that competitors comply with equipment rules.

competition checking is the best way to make sure trigger weight violations do not occur.

- **Rifle Clothing.** Rifle shooters know stiffer shooting jackets add stability, especially in standing. The ISSF employs rigorous testing to restrict jacket thickness and stiffness, but the testing equipment is expensive and requires a skilled operator, so testing is almost never done in national, regional or local competitions. Even when testing is not done, junior rifle competitors are advised to avoid using extra stiff shooting clothing because if they advance to higher level competitions where stiffness testing is done, it will be too late to recover from the dependency created by using extra stiff clothing. There have been a few cases where competitors used rifle jackets with rigid back braces inserted in them; this is strictly illegal.

- **When the Rules Don't Cover It.** Match officials often hear some version of “the rules don't say I cannot use this,

so this (device, technique, gadget, etc.) must be legal.” In many cases, the rules do not specifically prohibit something, but most rulebooks do have a rule that says something like this: *“Any gun, device, equipment, accessory or other item that may give an athlete an unfair advantage over others and that is not specifically mentioned in these Rules, or that is contrary to the spirit of these Rules, is prohibited.”* These rules have been used to exclude a lot of questionable equipment. Athletes or coaches should be aware that if the rules don’t cover something, don’t assume it’s OK, ask someone who knows. Questions about three-position air rifle rules, for example, should be addressed to 3PAR@thecmp.org.

Athlete Safety, Preventing Harassment and Abuse

An athlete’s right to train and compete in a safe environment in shooting requires having coaches and Range Officers who are trained and qualified to supervise safe firing procedures. Completing a CMP Range Officer Training Course is a good way to fulfill that requirement (<http://thecmp.org/competitions/cmp-rangeofficer-program/>).

Employing any form of harassment or abuse with athletes or other officials has no place in sports so protecting athletes from harassment and abuse becomes a high priority responsibility for coaches and Match Officials. There are many forms of harassment and abuse that must not be allowed to occur in youth shooting programs.

- **Emotional Misconduct.** Insults, personal attacks, calling someone names, constant yelling, threats to injure or threatening to deny coaching or practice are all forms of emotional misconduct.

- **Physical Misconduct.** Hitting or slapping are obvious forms of physical misconduct. Providing alcohol or drugs to athletes is another form of misconduct that can have serious adverse consequences.

- **Sexual Misconduct.** This can involve touching or non-touching sexual interaction that is nonconsensual or forced, coerced or manipulated. Sexual misconduct can include sexual-oriented comments or jokes, discussing one’s sexual life or exposure to pornographic material. Sexual interaction between a coach and an athlete is always prohibited. Sexual abuse among youth is also possible.

- **Bullying.** Bullying is any action intended to cause fear, humiliation or physical harm. It includes verbal and emotional actions such as teasing, ridiculing, spreading false rumors or using electronic communications to harass, frighten, intimidate or humiliate (cyber bullying).

- **Harassment.** Harassment involves physical or non-physical actions intended to cause fear, humiliation or intimidation, especially if it targets someone on the basis of race, religion, national origin, sex or sexual orientation. Harassment creates a hostile environment for the athlete and must never be tolerated.

Standards of Conduct for Coaches and Leaders

In order to prevent even a hint of behaviors that could lead to allegations of abuse, there are basic guidelines for coaches and youth program leaders to follow:

- **Meetings.** When individual meetings with an athlete are necessary, have a third person present or make sure another adult is informed about the meeting. If possible, the meeting room should be unlocked and open.

- **Being Alone with Athletes.** Coaches and Match Officials should not be alone with young athletes. If individual training is desired, be sure to have parental approval or invite a parent to attend.

- **Touching.** Coaches and Match Officials should not touch athletes. When teaching a skill, show or demonstrate the skill, but do not touch the athlete.

- **Physical Contact.** Physical contact with athletes should be avoided during coaching, but some physical contact is acceptable. High-fives, fist bumps, celebratory hugs and pats on the back are appropriate when celebrating accomplishments. Similarly, consoling an emotional athlete after a loss or injury with an embrace or side hug is also appropriate. Such physical contact should always take place in public.

- **Travel.** Coaches must take into account the abuse risks that can occur during travel. Opposite sex athletes must always have a same sex chaperone.

- **Social Media.** Program leaders should only use email and texting to communicate information about coaching or team activities. Parents may request to be copied with all messages sent to their children.

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This photo, taken at the end of the 2018 World Championship Junior Women's Air Pistol event, provides excellent examples of when it is appropriate for coaches to touch athletes. The coach on the right is hugging the gold medal winner. The coach on the left placed his arm on the silver medal winner's shoulder to console her in her disappointment over not winning.

• **Rifle Clothing Inspections.** If pre or post-competition equipment checks involve rifle clothing inspections, those checks must always be done by a same-sex judge.

Duty to Report

One of the most egregious cheating cases in CMP history was exposed when a CMP Match Official was standing in front of a scoreboard and someone reached over his shoulder, pointed to a high-ranking score on the results list, said “that shooter didn’t fire that score” and then quickly disappeared. The CMP Staff’s ensuing investigation proved that this competitor had carried out a scorecard switching scheme that almost won several

prestigious National Trophy awards. The cheater was ultimately banned for life from CMP competitions. He may never have been caught, if that anonymous informant had not reported a suspicious score to a Match Official.

Anyone involved in a competition, whether an athlete, coach or Match Official, who knows or reasonably suspects that someone is trying to manipulate results or cheat has an ethical duty to all other competitors to report this. In a competition, reports of alleged cheating should go to the Match Director. In a CMP competition, reports of violations can also be made directly to the CMP Programs Chief.

A Match Director who receives a report of alleged cheating has a duty to investigate and gather as much information as possible. All CMP rulebooks provide procedures for adjudicating and, if warranted, penalizing or disqualifying competitors who are guilty of manipulating results or cheating.

If a team member or parent suspects that harassment, abuse or bullying is occurring in their junior program, they should speak with the team coach. If there is a concern that the coach is an abuser, it may be necessary for two or more parents to meet with him/her to discuss their concerns.

Allegations of sexual abuse involve possible violations of the law and must be reported as soon as possible. If an allegation of sexual abuse is credible, this should immediately be reported to law enforcement authorities.

One of the great movements in today’s world of sports is the monumental effort sports leaders, athletes and coaches are making to keep sports clean, eliminate all forms of cheating and ensure that the athletes who win are really the athletes who make the best performances. It is important for youth shooting leaders to be part of this effort by making sure their young athletes learn how to compete as ethical athletes.

Resources for Ethics in Youth Shooting:

• **ISSF Athletes Handbook.** This Handbook has much valuable information about ethics and professional integrity, especially in Section 8. Download the Handbook at <https://www.issf-sports.org/media/athletes/ISSF%20Athletes%20Handbook.pdf>.

• **The IOC Fundamentals of Olympic Values Education Manual** can be downloaded at: <https://www.olympic.org/-/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/What-We-Do/Promote-Olympism/Olympic-Values->

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SPORTSMANSHIP – In the 2018 World Championship 10m air rifle final, Sergey Kamenskiy, Russia, and Petar Gorsa, Croatia, were tied at 237.8 with one shot to go. Kamenskiy won the gold medal by firing a 10.6 on his last shot. This sequence of three photos shows how Gorsa reacted to Kameskiy's victory after they had fired their last shots. It was a great display of sportsmanship.

Education-Programme/Toolkit/The-Fundamentals/English.pdf?la=en&hash=C136D160F7C6CFA75856291B57C5B76D1FCC8879.

this Center where allegations of Sexual Misconduct can be reported (<https://safesport.org/>).

- **USOC/USA Shooting Safe Sport Program.** This program offers an on-line course to educate coaches and competition officials about harassment and abuse in sports. Completing the Safe Sport Program course is highly recommended for youth shooting coaches. Enroll in this free course at: <http://www.usashooting-coachacademy.org/safe-sport-policy-for-coaches-staff-volunteers.html>.

- **ISSF Anti-Doping Webpage.** Athletes who are committed to staying clean should avail themselves of the excellent education program available from the ISSF. Go to the ISSF Anti-Doping webpage at <https://www.issf-sports.org/theissf/antidoping.ashx>.

- **Medication Checking.** Athletes who need to take drugs for medical conditions who plan to compete at national levels are strongly advised to consult with the drug reference program offered by the U. S. Anti-Doping Agency (<https://www.usada.org/substances/drug-reference-phone-line/>).

- **USA Center for Safe Sport.** The USOC and Olympic sports governing bodies in the USA established

About the Author

Gary Anderson, Director of Civilian Marksmanship Emeritus, retired as the full-time CMP Director at the end of 2009. He continues to work with the CMP as the senior marksmanship instructor. During his remarkable career, he won two Olympic gold medals, seven World Championships and 16 National Championships. He served as a Vice President of the International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) from 1990 through 2018. He is a former Nebraska State Senator and Past President of USA Shooting. He served as a Technical Delegate for Shooting during the 2012 and 2016 Olympic Games as well as for the 2014 and 2018 World Shooting Championships.

In 2012, the International Olympic Committee awarded Gary Anderson with the Olympic Order, its highest honor “for outstanding services to the Olympic Movement.”

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

