

Juniors and the 2018 World Championship

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By Gary Anderson, DCM Emeritus



A new and very happy Junior World Champion from India is lifted up in triumph by his teammates. During the match, 16-year old Hriday Hazarika was tied with Amir Nekounam from Iran at the end of the 10m air rifle final. Hazarika won the shoot-off and the gold medal, 10.3 to 10.2.

The 52nd World Shooting Championship took place in Changwon, Korea on 1-14 September 2018. The World Championship Program included individual and team events for both seniors (open) and juniors. The USA was represented by a delegation of 38 junior athletes who had 63 different event entries. USA juniors finished with 10 medals; six silver and four bronze.

World Shooting Championships are governed by the ISSF (International Shooting Sport Federation) the worldwide governing body of Olympic Shooting. They are organized every four years by a national federation chosen by the ISSF General Assembly. Several shooting organizations claim to have world championships, but the only real world championship is the ISSF World Championship. This is because the rifle, pistol, shotgun and running target events in the ISSF World Championship Program are the only shooting events that are practiced on a true worldwide basis. The ISSF has national federation members in 150 nations. 88 of those nations entered more than 1,800 athletes in the 52nd World Championship. The 2018 Championship had 50 individual events, 29 senior and 21 junior. There were also 52 team events, 32 senior and 20 junior. This is the only World Shooting Championship with such a comprehensive program of participating nations, shooting disciplines and shooting events for senior and junior athletes.



The World Championship mascot was named Aimy. Aimy miniatures were presented to World Championship medalists.

The Biggest World Championship Stories

Most Successful Nation. During the Closing Ceremony of every World Championship, the Nasser Trophy is awarded to the “most successful nation.” The USA won this trophy in 1966, 1978 and 1994, but the USA has not been a contender in recent World Championships. China won the Nasser Trophy in the 2014 World Championship and again this year, but this time it was close. India, which was 27th in the medal count four years ago, finished only one gold medal behind China this year.

Overall Medal Count. China and Russia have dominated recent World Championships. In 2014, China athletes won 44 medals and Russian athletes 40. The big advances in 2018 were by India and Korea. In 2014, Korea finished the medal count in eighth position with 14 medals while India was 27th with only two medals. China finished the 2018 World Championship in first place with 43 medals, but Korea moved up to second with 36 medals and India moved up to third with 27 medals. Russia was fourth with 37 medals, but with fewer gold medals. The USA was 9th with 19 medals and three gold medals.

Government Funding for Shooting. A big question is how to account for the phenomenal rise of Korea and India and the obvious conclusion that Asian nations are becoming dominant in Shooting. The answer is simple, Asian governments are investing large sums of money in Olympic sports and this is paying big dividends. With 22 of China’s 43 medals (51%), 19 of Korea’s 36 medals (53%) and 16 of India’s 27 medals (59%) being won by Juniors, Asian dominance in Shooting is likely to increase.

How these countries spend government money to develop young athletes is worth examining. In China, Shooting is a fixture in their sports school program with the best athletes in those programs advancing to national training centers. Korea has a well-funded school program that also produces athletes who advance to train in national training centers. India has invested heavily in placing paid shooting coaches in clubs and schools throughout the country. The best young Indian athletes receive significant government-funded financial incentives. Their skills are honed at periodic national level training camps. The athletes who emerge through these programs are motivated by wanting to win for their countries and the promise of substantial financial rewards when they do win. All of them reached their current levels of excellence through incredibly hard work. Korea’s Hana Im,



ISSF President Vázquez Raña officially declared the 52nd World Shooting Championship open on 1 September 2018. Participant nation flag bearers are assembled in the arena in front of the speaker’s stand.

World Championship Results

Complete, detailed scores and rankings for all World Championship events can be found in the Official Results Book. Download it from the ISSF website at: <https://www.issf-sports.org/media/calendar/2018/1750/completeresult/WCH%20All%20KOR%202018%20Results%20Book.pdf>

an 18-year-old high school student who won the women’s air rifle World Championship, reported that she trains 2 ½ hours every morning and another 2 ½ hours in the afternoon and that her training load increases even more during peak competition times.

Shooting’s Most Exciting Final Ever! Jin Jongoh is a national hero in Korea who has already won four Olympic gold medals, two World Championships and 16 World Cup gold medals in precision pistol events. He is renowned for making bad starts in finals and then staging improbable come-backs to win dramatic victories.

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Jin Jongoh, Korea, was overcome with emotion after winning his third World Championship with an amazing comeback. Artem Chernousov, Russia, was second. Jin's teammate Lee Daemyung won the bronze medal.

In the Rio Olympics 50m pistol final, Jin shot a 6.6 on his ninth shot and at that point was 4.7 points behind the leader.

He was in danger of being eliminated, but he shot tens on eight of his next 11 shots to win his fourth Olympic gold medal on the last shot. His finish in the 10m air pistol final in Changwon was even more dramatic. He was shooting in front of Korean fans who filled every available space in the Finals Hall and cheered every one of Jin's good shots. Jin shot an 8.8 on his 15th shot and at that point was 5.5 points behind Russia's Artem Chernousov, who was shooting at a world record pace. Gaining that many points on someone who was shooting that well is virtually impossible, but Jin narrowed the margin, shot-by-shot. Eight of his next nine shots were tens. When they reached the last shot, Jin was 0.4 behind. Chernousov shot a 10.0; Jin shot a 10.4. They were tied; the crowd exploded. In the shoot-off, Chernousov again shot first; he had a 9.5; Jin followed with a 10.3; the crowd was jubilant as they savored what seemed to them like a miracle.

North Korean Participation. One of the great stories from the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, Korea, was the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) peace initiative that led to the formation of a joint Korean

Olympic team with athletes from both the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). This helped to ease international tensions at a time when the world feared it was close to war. The IOC initiative was carried over into the 2018 World Shooting Championship where a 22-person North Korean delegation competed on South Korean soil for the first time. They were warmly and enthusiastically received and competed well, winning four medals.

A Junior Athlete Won a World Championship.

The only junior to win a senior World Championship was an 18-year-old high school student from the host city of Changwon.

Hana Im won the women's air rifle gold medal after shooting the highest qualification score, 630.9, and then, despite her youth and inexperience (she had never been in an international final before), prevailing in the final. In the final she was in third place after the two 5-shot series, but she was only 0.9 behind the leader. She had a 9.8 on her sixth shot, but no other shot was less than a 10.2. She took over the lead after the 16th shot and never relinquished it. By her 20th shot she had a 1.8 point lead over second. In air rifle finals that is a big lead, but she was under tremendous pressure from shooting in front of



Hana Im's moment of triumph! She has just laid down her rifle after firing her last shot in the women's air rifle final and turned to receive congratulations from her coach. She knows she has just become the World Champion.

a very enthusiastic hometown crowd. In spite of this extra pressure, Hana IM shot 105.0 on her last ten shots, with a nearly perfect 10.8 on her last shot.

USA Junior Athlete Performances

Overall Evaluation for USA Juniors. There were some bright spots in the USA junior performances in Changwon. 18 of the 63 USA junior event entries resulted in top ten finishes (see "USA Junior Top Ten Rankings" on page 12). The 10 medals won by USA Juniors ranked fifth

An Interview with Hana Im

Q. How old were you when you started shooting?

A. I started shooting at age 14 when I was in the first grade at Yullyang Middle School.

Q. Why did you decide to try shooting?

A. There was an extracurricular activity at school that included Shooting. One of my close friends already had started Shooting and I had chance to try Shooting so I decided to start. At first, my mom wasn't happy about me starting shooting, but I was able to begin Shooting because she believed me after all.

Q. Where do you train now?

A. I am currently selected as a National Team member so I normally train at the Jincheon National Training Center. During other times, I can also train at the high school that I attend.

Q. How many hours a day do you train?

A. It is different depending on my competition schedule. Normally I train 2 1/2 hours in the morning and again each afternoon. Before national competitions, I train more than that.

Q. How did you control your emotions and nervousness during the last shots of the Women's Air Rifle Final?

A. Since there was a score difference between me and the athlete behind me, I believed I could make it as long as I didn't make a mistake. I kept thinking about what I trained to do; I took deep breaths to relieve my body.

Q. How did you celebrate your becoming a World Champion?

A. After the WCH, I ate tasty foods with my co-shooters and went to a Noraebang (Korean Karaoke). After returning home, I ate tasty foods again with my family and enjoyed my time with them since I had not been home for a while.

in total medals, but only 15th in the official medal count because they did not win any gold medals.

USA shotgun juniors continued to do well. Logan Lucas was the number one qualifier in junior men's trap and finished the final with a silver medal. Nic Moschetti was the top qualifier in junior men's skeet and also finished with a silver medal. In junior women's skeet, Samantha Simonton qualified first and finished sixth while Austen Smith won a bronze medal. The USA junior women's skeet team won a silver medal and the junior women's trap team won a bronze medal.

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Leading Junior World Champions

This page introduces you to eight young athletes who became Junior World Champions in Changwon. 11 of the 13 individual rifle-pistol Junior World Champions are from Asian countries.



Iran's 20-year-old Amir Nekounam won the most medals of any junior. He was on Iran's air rifle mixed team that won a silver medal, he won a second silver medal in 10m air rifle, where he missed gold by one-tenth of a point, and he won gold in the 50m 3-position event.



16-year-old Chaudhary Saurabh of India established himself as a rising pistol star when he won the 10m air pistol event in the 2018 Suhl Junior World Cup while setting a new Junior World Record. In Changwon, he raised his World Record and became the air pistol Junior World Champion.



Haojie Zhu, 16, from China shot 35 x 40 in the 25m rapid-fire pistol final to become a Junior World Champion. This was three hits more than the score of the senior World Champion. Zhu led all junior qualifiers with a 589.



Seyval Marhan, 18, from Turkey won the women's 10m Air Pistol Junior World Championship with a 237.9 in the Final.



19-year-old Xiaoyu Wang from China had one of the most dominating wins. She won the women's 25m pistol Junior World Championship by finishing the final with three consecutive 5s, a 37x50 total and a 10-point margin over second.



20-year-old Hong SU of China made her first international start in Changwon. It was a great start; she became the women's 50m rifle 3x40 Junior World Champion. Su had 390 standing in the qualification and overcame a 5.1 deficit in the final in the standing position to win the gold medal.



The 16-year-old Sidhu twins from India each won gold medals in junior pistol events. Vijayveer (II) won the standard pistol gold medal. Udhayveer (r.) won the 25m sport pistol gold medal.

Leading USA Juniors in the World Championship

This page highlights USA junior athletes who ranked among the most successful athletes in Junior World Championship events. The ages and hometowns of these USA juniors are listed in the "USA Junior Top Ten Rankings" table on page 12.



Katelyn Abeln, 17, from Douglasville GA (l. & r. above) won a silver medal with her outstanding 27 hit total in the junior women's 25m pistol final. In the final she won a shoot-off for 3rd before finishing 2nd behind Xiouyu Wang from China. Anna Dedova from the Czech Republic was 3rd.



The Leverett brothers from Bainbridge, Georgia were a key part of the USA junior pistol resurgence in Changwon. They are shown here with their father Dr. Jack Leverett who coaches them. Henry (l.) is shown with the silver medal he won in 25m sport pistol. Jack (r.) had outstanding 5th, 6th, 9th and 11th place finishes in four different pistol events.



West Virginia Univ. student athlete Morgan Phillips led all qualifiers with an 1171 and finished 4th in the junior women's 50m 3x40 event. She was 5th in the 50m rifle prone event.



Trap silver medalist Logan Lucas (l.) was one of three USA juniors to win individual medals in shotgun events. Nic Moschetti won silver in trap. Austen Smith won bronze in skeet. The junior trap gold medalist was Nathan Argiro from Australia. The bronze medalist (on r.) was Elia Sdrucchioli from Italy.



Sarah Choe, led 25m pistol qualifiers with 582 and finished the final in 6th place.

Henry Leverett, another 17-year-old junior from Georgia, won a silver medal in the 25m sport pistol event with a 584 score and almost won a second medal when he finished 4th in 25m rapid-fire pistol.

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USA Junior Top Ten Rankings

- | <i>Athlete's Name, age, hometown</i> | <i>Athlete's Name, age, hometown</i> | <i>Athlete's Name, age, hometown</i> |
|--|--|---|
| <i>Place finish, event, score (+ indicates Final)</i> | <i>Place finish, event, score (+ indicates Final)</i> | <i>Place finish, event, score (+ indicates Final)</i> |
| • Katelyn Abeln , 17, Douglasville, GA
Silver in 25m Pistol, 576 + 27x40 | • Henry Leverett , 17, Brunswick, GA
4th in 25m Rapid-Fire Pistol, 582 + 21x30 | • Jack Leverett III , 18, Brunswick, GA
6th in 25m Sport Pistol |
| • Nic Moschetti , 20, Broomfield, CO
Silver in Skeet, 121 + 54x60 | • Morgan Phillips , 20, Salisbury, MD
4th in 50m Rifle 3x40, 1171 + 434.3 | • Katharina Jacob , 19, Rochester, MI
7th in Skeet, 114 |
| • Logan Lucas , 18, Pacific, MO
Silver in Trap, 120 + 41x50 | • Sarah Choe , 17, Los Angeles, CA
5th in 25m Pistol, 582 + 11x30 | • Jack Leverett III , 18, Brunswick, GA
9th in 10m Air Pistol, 573 |
| • Henry Leverett , 17, Brunswick, GA
Silver in 25m Sport Pistol, 584 | • Jack Leverett III , 18, Brunswick, GA
5th in 25m Standard Pistol, 563 | • Emma Williams , 19, Savannah, TN
9th in Trap, 113 |
| • Austen Smith , 17, Keller, TX
Bronze in Skeet, 114 + 43x50 | • Morgan Phillips , 20, Salisbury, MD
5th in 50m Rifle Prone, 618.8 | • Carey Garrison , 13, Crossville, TN
10th in Trap, 112 |
| • William Shaner , 17, Colo. Springs, CO, Bronze in 50m Rifle Prone, 618.2 | • Samantha Simonton , 18, Gainesville, GA, 6th in Skeet, 117 + 16x20 | • William Shaner , 17, Colo. Springs, CO, 10th in 10m Air Rifle, 625.0 |

The USA has historically been very weak in pistol so the excellent USA junior pistol results were particularly encouraging. In junior women's 25m pistol, Sarah Choe had the highest qualification score, 582, and finished sixth. Katelyn Abeln also qualified for the final with a 576 and then shot a great final. She had 4x5 hits on three of her first four series. She was in the lead after the fourth and fifth series before falling back to a tie for third. She won that tie-breaking shoot-off and finished with a silver medal.

In the junior men's pistol events, two brothers from Georgia, Jack Leverett III and Henry Leverett, were the stars. Henry qualified second in rapid-fire pistol with a 582 and finished fourth in the final. In 25m sport pistol, which has no final, he won a silver medal with a 584. Jack shot in four events, placing fifth in standard pistol, sixth in sport pistol, ninth in air pistol and 11th in rapid-fire pistol. Their 15-year-old sister Abbie also made the USA team and competed in junior women's 25m pistol. The future is looking brighter for USA pistol fortunes.

USA junior rifle medals included a silver won by the 50m 3x40 women's team that was anchored by Morgan Phillips' 1171. That score led all qualifiers and she finished the final in fourth. William Shaner won a bronze in the 50m prone event and the USA women's team also won a bronze in prone.

USA World Championship Successes

Overall Placing. In the 2014 World Championship, the USA was sixth in the medal count with 17 total medals and six gold medals. The USA's ninth place medal count ranking in the 2018 World Championship included 19 medals, but only three gold medals. All three USA gold

medals and eight of the USA's 19 total medals came in skeet events. The only other senior individual medal was a silver medal won by the Army's Mike McPhail in men's 50m 3x40 rifle. USA athletes are the best in the world in skeet, but they were not among the leading nations in rifle, pistol and trap events.

The USA Skeet Victories. USA athletes dominated World Championship skeet events. One of the most extraordinary performances came in women's skeet where USA athletes have now won the last four consecutive individual World Championships. The USA team won the team gold medal with a World Record score. All three team members qualified for the Final where they completed an unprecedented sweep of the medals. Amber English



USA women shooters celebrate their sweep of the women's skeet medals. All three USA athletes qualified for the final. In the Final, Amber English (r.) finished third, Kim Rhode (l.) finished second and Caitlin Conner won her first international gold medal.

had the highest USA qualification score with a 119. She finished with a bronze medal. Kim Rhode, a five-time Olympic medalist and winner of three out of four 2018 World Cups shot 118 in the qualification and finished second in the final. Caitlin Conner, an LSU student from Winnfield, Louisiana, also had 118 in the qualification. Conner had previously won one World Championship silver medal and six World Cup silver medals with all six World Cup silver medals coming when Kim Rhode won gold medals. She had never won an international gold medal before Changwon. In the final, she hit her first 35 targets before missing two station four targets. She missed only one other target to finally finish ahead of Kim Rhode, 57 to 56.

Like Korea's Jin Jongoh in pistol, the USA's Vince Hancock is regarded as the world's best male skeet shooter. He dominated that event in the World Championship. The Eatonton, Georgia shooting instructor shot a perfect 125 in the qualification to equal the World Record. In the final he missed only one target to score an impressive win over Erik Watndal of Norway, 59 to 56 and again equal a World Record.

The Korean World Championship organization was outstanding. It showcased an ancient and proud culture, a nation with advanced industrial, technological and economic capabilities and a people who excelled in hospitality and managerial effectiveness. In a closing



Vince Hancock, who won the last two Olympic gold medals in skeet and is ranked number one in the world, dominated the Skeet World Championship by shooting a perfect 125 x 125 qualification score and 49 x 50 in the final to gain a 3-point victory over Erik Watndal of Norway (l.). Riccardo Fillipelli of Italy (r.) was third.

Mixed Team Events



The shooting program in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics will feature three mixed team events for air rifle, air pistol and trap. Mixed teams consist of one man and one woman. In the air gun events they both shoot 40 shots in the qualification. The top five teams advance to the final where team members alternate shots (2x24 shots). In Changwon, the Italian team of Marco Suppini and Sofia Benetti won the air rifle mixed team Junior World Championship with a World Record total of 499.0.

press conference on 13 September, ISSF President Olegario Vázquez Raña declared, "**this has been the best World Championship in history.**" It was the "best ever" because of 1) meticulous planning, 2) unexcelled shooting ranges and facilities, 3) an unexcelled cultural environment and 4) match officials, range officers and volunteers who were exceptionally well-trained and effective in performing their duties.

About the Author

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

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

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

