

Back in December of 2012, juniors from around the state competed in the USA Shooting National Junior Olympic New Hampshire State qualifiers for Women's and Men's Air Rifle and Smallbore Rifle. Entries for this match are limited to residents of New Hampshire and based on their scores and age categories, some received invitations to compete in the National Junior Olympics at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, CO.

The Olympic Training Center (OTC) houses athletes from all over the country. The campus is entirely self-sufficient with outstanding restaurant that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner with a mix of self-service cafeteria and made to order entrées'. Most athletes stay on campus in dormitories that sleep up to three per room, have internet and cable tv and even a private study/game area. The training center hosts not just Olympic shooting hopefuls but also the US swimming athletes, Boxing, Tae-Kwan-Do, wrestling and many more sporting disciplines. The backdrop for the OTC is the majestic Pikes Peak making for breathtaking views. Weather during the stay was very unusual ranging from 70+ F on one day and then dropping into the teens the following day with high winds and snow. When the weather was nice, the athletes visited local attractions like the Cave of the Winds and Garden of the Gods.

Receiving invites from the Women's category were Lacey Hamelin (member of Ferry Brook Junior Rifle team) for Smallbore and Elizabeth Dutton (member of Hudson Fish and Game Club Junior Rifle Team) for Air Rifle and Smallbore. The Men's category invitee's were Alex Martin (member of Ferry Brook Junior Rifle team) for Smallbore, Joe Nikiforakis (member of Ferry Brook Junior Rifle team) for Air Rifle and Zach Wambsgans (member of Hudson Fish and Game Club Junior Rifle Team) for both Air Rifle and Smallbore rifle.

The first week of the rifle matches were shot by the Women starting with the Air Rifle matches on April 9-10. State gold medal winner, Elizabeth Dutton, was the only woman representing New Hampshire in Air Rifle. On Day 1, Elizabeth shot a personal best 377 (out of a possible 400) getting off to an outstanding start. On day two of the Air Rifle matches, she shot a 370 which was her 4th highest score ever.

Lacey Hamelin joined Elizabeth for the smallbore matches on April 11-12. The Women's smallbore shooting format is a 3x20. 20 shots prone, 20 shots standing and 20 shots kneeling for 60 shots total. On day 1, Lacey, shooting as a J1 (Age group 17 and above) shot a 537, which was right around her average. Elizabeth also shot near her average with a score of 533. Lacey finished the second day with a 536 and Elizabeth matched that score. Lacey's total was 1073 and Elizabeth finished with a 1069.

The men's rifle matches were conducted the following week. Men's Air Rifle was shot on April 15-16. Joe Nikiforakis (J2 age 15-16) and Zach Wambsgans (Age 14 and under) represented New Hampshire well. Joe started with a solid 563 (out of a possible 600) on day one. Zach also shot very well shooting a 541 which was 21 points higher than his state qualifying score! On Day two, Joe improved on his performance shooting a 575 while Zach shot a decent 515. Zach's total for the two days of Air Rifle was 1056 while Joe's was 1138.

The Men's smallbore rifle events were shot over a 3 day period from April 17 to April 19. Joining Zach for smallbore was state gold medal winner Alex Martin (J1 Age 17 and above) who is also on the North

Carolina State University Rifle team. Day one of prone Alex shot a respectable 586 while Zach shot a 556. On Day two, both Alex and Zach improved on their day one performances shooting a 592 and 577 respectively. Zach finished the Prone match with a 1133 while Alex fished 10th overall just missing the finals by a single point with a total of 1178!

Men's 3 position smallbore is 40 shots prone, 40 shots standing and 40 shots kneeling. On day one of the Men's smallbore 2 position matches, Alex shot an 1132 while Zach shot a 1065 (out of a possible 1200). On day two, Alex shot an 1129 while Zach finished strong with a 1083. Finals scores for Zach and Alex were 2148 and 2261 respectively.

While none of the athletes managed to bring home any awards, the real reward was being invited to shoot shoulder to shoulder with the best of the best. All of the athletes should be proud for their achievement.



Alex Martin Pictured second from the right at the Men's National Smallbore Junior Olympics.



Roommates: Left to right: Maggie Flanders (of Taunton MA), Lacey Hamelin and Elizabeth Dutton.



Left: Joe Nikiforakis, Right: Zach Wambsgans



Lacey Hamelin



Elizabeth Dutton



Elizabeth Dutton



Elizabeth Dutton



Elizabeth Dutton