



Rifle

By Lones Wigger; Five-time Olympian, two-time Olympic gold medalist & Olympic silver medalist

WHAT MAKES A CHAMPION SHOOTER?



Shooting is a unique sport because it doesn't require exceptional strength, size, athletic or natural ability to become a champion. The learned attributes are much more important than the God-given ones. Champion shooters consist of both sexes, come in all sizes and from all walks of life. There are, however, certain elements which contribute to the development of a shooting champion. Although these qualities may vary from individual to individual, the most important factors include: above average intelligence; learning to shoot at an early age; complete dedication to the sport with definite goals and plans; an environment which provides the opportunity for an individual to train, learn, progress and achieve goals; the development and training of the mental aspects; and the most important attribute for competitiveness—a desire and determination to become the best.

Intelligence is a key factor in developing a champion shooter. It is important during both the mechanical and mental phases of development. Shooters must be able to think for themselves, analyze fully the techniques involved, weigh all courses of action and make the right decisions concerning development and training during the mechanical learning phase. In the mental learning phase they must train to exercise complete control over mind and body to cope with match pressure in order to produce the results necessary to become a champion.

Shooters have a much better chance to become champions if they can begin their mechanical learning process during the formative years. A competent coach and/or a supportive parent are necessary to help instill the desire to learn and improve. Those adults must avoid pushing young shooters beyond their capabilities or to the point where they rebel—that happens too often in parent-child relationships in sports. The athlete must shoot because he or she wants to shoot, not because of the desires of the parent. The desire, will to win and competitive spirit will develop with proper support and encouragement.

To excel in any sport, the athlete needs complete dedication to the endeavor. Shooting is no exception. During my collegiate years I attended a shooting clinic hosted by the United States Army Marksmanship Unit (USAMU) where I learned the Army could help me reach my goals in international shooting. From that point on, more than anything else, I wanted to be a part of that unit and ultimately represent the United States and the U.S. Army in international shooting competition. This decision became an all-consuming goal and played an important role in my life and in my success as a competitive shooter. My determination to become a champion may differ from yours, but total dedication certainly contributes to and enhances the odds of achieving success.

Most shooters recognize their problems and know how to solve them, but an annual, individual written training plan is mandatory because it provides direction and the specific path to accomplish goals. A universal or generic training schedule is not very beneficial because individuals need a personal training plan to address the specific needs and focus areas unique to that shooter. The shooter and coach should work together to develop an individual training plan to include physical, mental and mechanical training, as well as a logical competition or match schedule. This plan will provide direction and commitment to improve and accomplish intermediate and long-term goals.

Organized athletics and team sports practiced in moderation are great means of physical training because they inspire competition, aid reflexes and coordination, encourage teamwork and do not build unneeded muscles. Shooters need muscle tone, not strength. Of course, the best exercise is live fire practice on the range—nothing else can develop the muscle memory and fine motor skills necessary for shooting. To achieve your goal to be among the best shooters in the world, matches or competition against other great shooters in the world must be part of the training plan.

Environment also plays a key role in the development of a shooting champion. Intelligence, background in shooting and dedication are of little use to an aspiring young champion without the availability of time, equipment, facilities, atmosphere and monetary and family support. Simply stated, it takes several years of full-time, intense training to achieve the performance and scores necessary to compete on a world level. It then takes several more years to learn to shoot those scores when they count, and learn how to win. To gain the time and support necessary to accomplish winning goals, an aspiring champion should be either a Resident Athlete at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, a member of the USAMU in Fort Benning or similar situation. These environments will provide another critical element: competition with other top shooters, which provide the opportunity to learn from talented teammates and top-notch coaching.

The mental learning phase is more important than the mechanical phase. Many shooters are unbeatable in practice but come unglued in a match under pressure. Learning to control emotions and reac-

DISCIPLINES

tions is the key to combating match pressure. Learning to concentrate and focus, as well as having confidence in ability and equipment, are necessary and developed through hard work during training and by competing in as many matches as possible. Distractions or problems with finances, family or work should be avoided since they will affect the ability to concentrate and thereby hurt performance.

Desire or will to win, which includes determination and dedication, are the most important attributes a shooting champion must possess. These are the reasons you see the same athletes on the medal stand time after time, and are the most important difference between merely good shooters and champions. The true champions are fierce competitors and their desire and determination to win is stronger than the other competitors. They want the victory more than the other competitors and are willing to make any sacrifice to prepare to win. They thrive on competition and the only feeling of satisfac-

tion comes in winning. They hate to lose more than anything and being a good loser is not in their psyche. They are not necessarily bad losers but neither are they good losers, because "good losers usually do."

A champion must possess all these attributes, but the secrets to success are preparation and hard work and there is no substitute. I once heard an interview with Bobby Knight, a very successful former college basketball coach at Indiana University. He was asked if his team had the will to win. He replied, "Hell yes, everyone has the will to win, but only a few have the will to prepare to win."

A shooting champion gains little notoriety and receives

very little in material value or compensation. Usually, competitive shooting costs much more than any possible gain. For the true champion shooters, the compensation is the personal satisfaction of winning, knowing they have bested the best and perhaps the most important aspect of all, being true masters of the mind.



MONARD - innovative products for all levels of shooters



PRECISION

The latest model with the new synthetic fabric ProLiner. It has superior support and fit, and the synthetic fibers allow for a longer life than canvas.



ULTIMATE

The model that allows you to choose between a large number of options including a choice of 4 different materials for most of the panels to create your ULTIMATE shooting outfit.



SUPER

Our most popular model. The SUPER EXTENDED with a ProLiner back was used to win an Olympic Gold in Beijing. The SUPER Paralympic model was used to win three Paralympic Golds in Beijing.

See our website for our other models including the **STARTER** and **JUNIOR** models perfect for clubs.

www.monardusa.com

We carry accessories including:



PRECISION Glove made with the new ProLiner material



Shooting mats with side zipper for easy change of padding to fit you

We also carry:

SCATT

Electronic Trainer

MEC

Shooting Accessories



Kustermann outfits were used to win one gold and two silvers in Beijing. We are now a proud importer of Kustermann products. See our new website for more information:

www.kustermannusa.com



Clothing and Accessories

Try&Bom, Inc.

www.monardusa.com
 Phone: 503-419-6310
 Fax: 503-488-5859
info@trybom.com
 Hours: M-F 10 - 6 PST

