

# COLLEGE COACH Q & A



By Corporal Matt Rawlings

*“Looking back at my junior year of high school, I remember how anxious I was to ask questions regarding collegiate shooting.”*

Picking the right college can be an intimidating experience for a young shooter and their parents as well. Corporal Rawlings, NCOIC of the Fort Benning Junior Rifle Club, compiled a list of questions and answers from National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Rifle coaches from across the nation. These are important topics that should be discussed when pursuing a collegiate shooting career.

***If you were a junior coach what events (PPP Air, Precision Standing, Sporter Rifle, Smallbore, etc.) would you recommend your shooters compete in to prepare for college?***

- USA Shooting National Junior Olympic Championships, USAS National Championship junior events, some three position air and NO sporter unless limited or no access. We need athletes accomplished in both guns now.

- All shooting is good; we know smallbore access is down among juniors, to have smallbore experience is a plus.

- What is available will be the big thing. Three position air is fine, although it does not always correlate to three position smallbore. Precision standing matches offer the best information for projecting the future in collegiate air rifle. Smallbore is great, not enough shooters have smallbore scores we can use.

- I really don't look that much into three position

air rifle. I look more for athletes that shoot both smallbore and air rifle. If they shoot three position and have good standing, then I am more apt to look in that direction.

- Shoot as many events as possible, try to work into smallbore if at all possible. Sporter will be “kind of” looked at. I know most kids in JROTC shoot that because it's the only thing available, but I don't know how serious they are if that's as far as they are willing to invest in the sport.

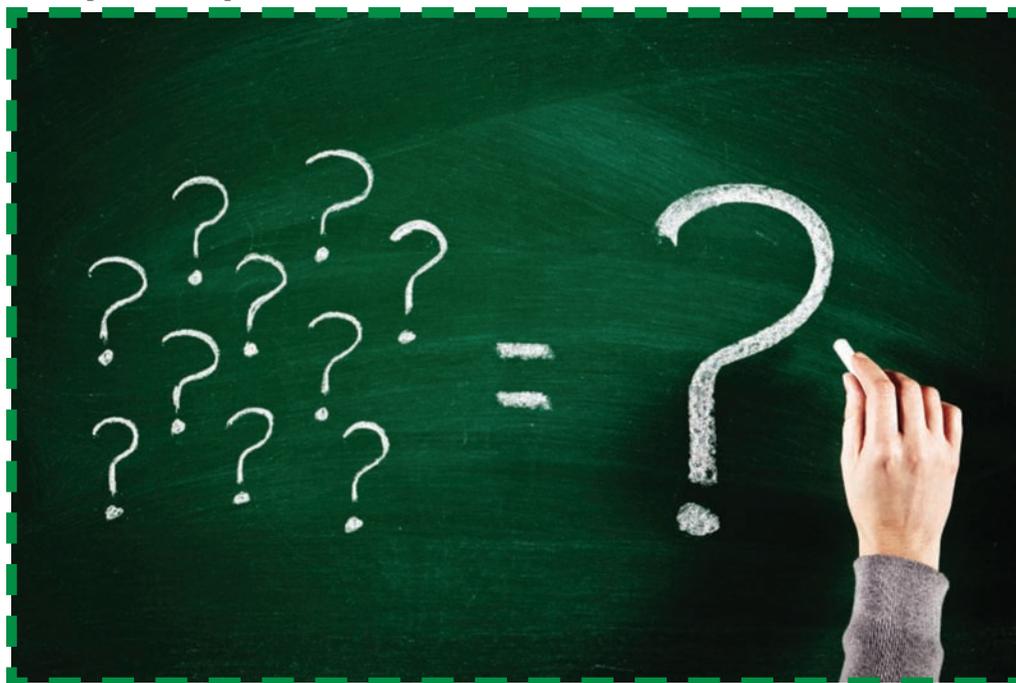
- I think all of the above will get them ready to compete in college. The sporter is not the best as they get into their sophomore year in high school or later but it is a good place to start young. It really varies from kid to kid depending on their skills and work ethic. Most of the time I like recruits to have plenty of precision air and three position smallbore experience, yet we have had some great success with limited smallbore but a lot of three position air shooters.

- We are happy with them shooting anything.

- Since three position smallbore and precision standing are the two events in collegiate competition, they are top priority for preparing a junior shooter for college. Because of the number

of competitions available thru American Legion, CMP, high schools, NRA and USA Shooting, the three position air at the precision

level is also quite valuable. Many of us look mainly at the standing scores, multiplied by three to get a feel for how they would score in a collegiate event.



## *As a coach what matches do you look at when looking for prospects?*

- I give scores fired in state and National Junior Olympics, NRA, junior sectionals and open tournaments (hosted by many colleges), the most consideration since I know the match conditions and standards for those events.

- A national match like the National Junior Olympic Shooting Championships (NJOSC), nationals or other major events where there is a lot of competition is always good. Yet for some, it may be hard to find due to location or finances. Matches where they are challenged are always a good indicator.

- I look at all matches, especially the larger ones, but will use whatever they shoot under match conditions.

- I like to see how recruits do at USA Shooting National Championships and NJOSC. I also look at scores they send me from state matches and such.

- The matches that mean the most to me are the national matches, winter and spring airgun championships, Nationals, NJOSC, etc. I also watch for matches shot on electronic targets because I know what we are looking at for targets, time, etc.

- Any and all shooting.

## *What are you looking for academically? Grade point average (GPA), SAT/ACT scores?*

- We need a minimum GPA of 3.2 and ACT scores of 28 or better or SAT scores math/verbal of at least 600.

- Ah! Good scores obviously, ideally over 3.5 GPA and good test scores (upper 20's ACT and 1200 SAT), but I'm realistic . . . an athlete's shooting ability will make a difference too!

- NCAA Qualifier at minimum. With tight budgets and less than four scholarships to use, any money in the form of academic scholarships, that does not detract from the athletic scholarship total, helps us sign top shooters.

- I push for strong academics, mainly because it helps the team and shows a student/athlete who can handle the balance in college, but also because we have a lot of academic scholarships here.

Academic scholarships may have a big impact on the amount of money a good student pays each year.

- A shooter needs to be in the top quarter of his or her class

in regard to GPA. He or she must also enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) classes, score 580 or better on the SAT, a 27 or better on the ACT and high match scores.

- I like these numbers to be as high as possible. GPAs vary

from school to school, but I usually like recruits to have a B-average. ACT and SAT should be around 23-25 (on ACT) and the equivalent (on the SAT). That is not to say if you are lower we are not interested, but I am looking for some type of measure

of how well you will be able to survive in college and how much effort you will need to dedicate to school.

- Academically, the higher the better. One guideline would be 3.5 GPA in the 16 core courses used to qualify through the NCAA Eligibility Center and 26 on the ACT; or the equivalent score on the SAT since this is the standard used by the NCAA to exempt academic scholarships from rifle scholarship limitations.

## *What would you like in the shooting resume?*

- Shooting resumes should include the information from the above questions and a way to contact the shooter. A photo is also helpful. Resumes should be submitted early in the fall of the senior year since the early signing period for scholarships is in November.

- Things like type of equipment owned, scores indoor versus outdoor, number of training opportunities per week, goals for college and collegiate shooting, when you started shooting, the name(s) of your coaches, high school information and all other general questionnaire information.

- Your shooting resume should contain match locations, dates, scores and camps attended. Don't worry about the place finished, I'm more concerned with the scores.

- As a coach I look for good personality. Not all coaches look at this first, most see scores, but I want someone who can mesh well with my team. On a resume I look for manners, academics, scores and well-rounded individuals who are involved in other things besides just shooting. Also, proper grammar is very important!

- We have a questionnaire online that asks for most of the information we want. The thing that most shooters don't include when they are developing the resume is their training time. I like to know how much they are training on each gun and what is included in the training.

- Scores are important! Also, grades and ambition are good too.

## *When is a good time for a shooter to submit a resume to his or her top school(s)?*

- Shooting resumes and academic transcripts (with test scores) should be submitted to us no later than the spring of their junior year.

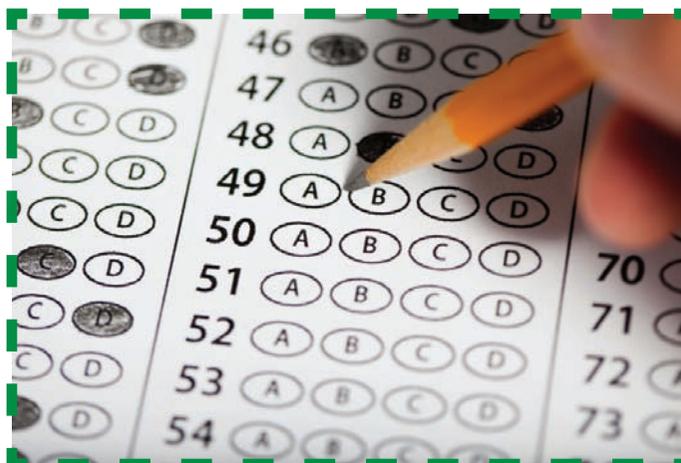
- As early as possible, particularly

the spring or fall of your junior year. No later than summer going into senior year as people are already arranging visits in the fall.

- We can contact recruits September 1 of their junior year, and start to call after July 1 before their senior year. They can contact us at any time. It's good when they

send us info on their matches and how they are doing. Keep in mind—we can't initiate contact until the proper time.

- Submitting your resume the spring of junior year, or summer before senior year is good.





- I think the best time is the fall of their junior year. Even though the coaches can only email the kids during their junior year, the kids can always call the coaches. This way we can track them for a full year before they turn seniors and see improvements. If the shooter is going to be looking for money or has a large pool of schools to look at, the earlier the better and then he or she can narrow it down when they get to the junior spring semester. The thing that gets many shooters less money for scholarships is that they wait to commit. The longer a shooter waits to commit, the more inclined a coach is going to be to look at other talent. Yet this varies from school to school pending on academic money and financial aid.

Make an unofficial visit early to get a feel for the campus during your junior year, and then follow-up with an official visit in your senior year.

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also gives them an idea for what scholarship they might get, or if they wish to push to have higher scores. It also gives them goals to hit and allows them to follow the team as the year progresses and gives them something to compare their scores to.

- Of course we'd like scores in the 580s for air rifle and 570s in smallbore, but academically eligible recruits are very important. That being said, I also look at scores in the 570s air and 560s smallbore, but with high levels of motivation and work ethic.

- Scores are important for

scholarships yet the amount of training time, skill level and effort also plays a large role. I think most coaches are going to look at the needs of the team in regards to air versus smallbore. Theoretically, the higher scores will get the best offers. Yet, the shooter also has to be a team player and have a good attitude. A great attitude and work ethic can make up for not so great scores if the coach feels the shooter can improve. I like scores in the mid-580s air and mid-570s in smallbore for any type of scholarship.

### ***When is a good time to apply to the NCAA Eligibility Center?***

- Shooters should register with the NCAA Eligibility Center early in the senior year or late in the junior year. In order to take an official visit to a college where the college pays part or all of the expenses, a shooter must be registered with the Eligibility Center, provide the school with the ID number assigned by the Eligibility Center and provide the college with a transcript and test score.

- The best time to apply is the spring of the junior year, but make sure you know in advance what the requirements are, what classes you should take and what you need to succeed. This will also allow shooters to retake the SAT or ACT if necessary.

- They need to start their application with the NCAA Eligibility center before they can come on official visits, start that some time during their junior summer headed into their senior year.

- If they are serious about shooting in college, they should get signed up their junior year and send in transcripts. Then, shooters only have to send in their senior year transcripts. This makes it smoother to get through and approved.

### ***What types of scores are you looking for?***

- Scores of 560 in smallbore and 570 in air demonstrate competence. However, shooting scores are not as important as academics, and again we have no minimum shooting scores.

- We are looking for the best recruits that will compete nationally in college, which at present is well over 580 air and over 570 in smallbore. But scores don't mean everything, and it will always depend year to year. We may identify more potential in an athlete

### **OTHER HELPFUL TIPS**

- Ensure they know of the different options, different universities and do well in school and on the range will set you up for the future!

- Every year we take at least one shooter that has no shooting experience but does have superb academics and a great attitude.

- The most important thing you can do is emphasize the critical importance of academics. The kids need to be prepared for and take the SAT/ACT early and often until they achieve the best score possible. Making use of test prep services is encouraged. Requiring the kids to show you their report cards in order to practice is essential.

- Every recruiting class is a little different because we take all factors into consideration. The shooter should also look at how many other athletes are going to come out of high school that year that shoot competitively to his or her skill level. He or she should also realize how many spots are open at each school. I think this will give collegiate-bound shooters a better understanding of the opportunities for scholarship money. Yet I feel that many shooters make a mistake by selecting schools just based on money. They need to find the right fit in regards to academics, programs and coaching. Also, they should take into account personal goals. There are usually only a handful of shooters every year that have the numbers already on their resume that will get good offers.

