USA Shooting’s Certified Training Centers Helping Build Pathway to Excellence

In Part 1 of our Pathway to Excellence series we featured the affiliated organizations that help build a stronger USA Shooting. Pathways such as the NCA A Rifle program, STGR ACUs, 4-H American Legion and Boy Scouts all help funnel athletes toward USA Shooting. In Part II, we feature 15 unique shooting clubs that have the distinction of being Certified Training Centers (CTCs) an behalf of USA Shooting. These centers of excellence carry both the honor and burden of helping fuel the pursuit of champions. We recognize them for all they do to contribute to USA Shooting’s success.

Fifteen USA Shooting clubs to date have been charged with the task of defining the future of Olympic-style shooting in America. Recognized for their contributions to the shooting sports then labeled to help be a remedy for success, USA Shooting’s CTCs are helping build our Pathway to Excellence, one brick, one bullet and one shell at a time.

“Our CTCs are a major contributor to the Olympic athlete pipeline,” said Michael Theimer, USA Shooting’s Manager of Youth Programs and Athlete Development. “They mentor not only new shooters, but coaches who are interested in advancing their own knowledge and skill to help their own club’s emerging talent in their local area. We frequently refer to our CTCs and USAS coaches as ‘multipliers.’ They reach and help more athletes than USA could from the OTC.”

The perks of being a CTC aren’t as a fruitful as the name may imply: given the limited resources and funding capabilities. There is no golden ticket provided that eliminates financial burden of club ownership, nor eases the strain of rising ammunition costs along with tighter political and regulatory constraints.

A read through the year-end reports provided by these clubs identifies a common set of challenges that includes everything from equipment, facility and financial management as well as outreach, parent and volunteer recruitment and retention. Despite the challenges, these clubs, owned and operated by those with the greatest dedication and conviction to the cause, are ultimately successful.

Los Angeles Rifle and Revolver Club, under David Kimes, hosted National Team members during the Road to the 2012 Olympic Games. WillaWalla Creek, under Dwayne Weger, helped host the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders for their CMS television show as part of the Shot for Gold Fundraiser that helped raised $100,000 to help support the 2012 U.S. Olympic Team for Shooting. Despite mounting gun-control efforts in New Jersey, Beltita Perez and the International Marksmanship Center continues to progress in support of Olympic-style shooting; Ole Mill Range in Georgia, overseen by Roy McClain has begun a series of successful pastmatch with German shooting teams and owns the highest rate of club activity of any CTC. Under the leadership of Alan Chubb, the Keystone Shooting Park provides youth members an opportunity for an Italian Training Camp, promising shooters an opportunity to gain international exposure well before they may become National Team members.

A parent, whose daughter found the Ole Mill Range Complex, succinctly describes the benefits of any of our CTCs. “Four years ago as my daughter came home and told me she wanted to shoot on her school’s AFJROTC rifle team my reaction was ‘huh.’ Two years later she jumped to the Precision level. Since then, I have learned that it is not an air gun but an air rifle, that if you use the W word, it will cost you, and, having had gymnasts, that a 10.0 is not a perfect score, it is 10.9. Of course, I have also learned that whether I believe it or not, there is a dot in the center of the target and I do not do kneeling. When she wanted to transition to Precision we were directed to Roy McClain who headed up the Ole Mill Complex, our nearest USA Shooting Certified Training Center. The time she spent there was invaluable. Not only did the center provide the necessary facility but also provided coaching that helped her achieve her goals. I have since seen that while two years ago my daughter was being mentored by the more advanced athletes, she is now being a mentor to others. The discipline involved with the shooting sports has assisted her in all other aspects of her life. I credit a lot of her current achievement with the time spent at Ole Mill. In the past few years, she has learned a skill which she can carry with her all the rest of her life.”

“Our CTCs have qualified, enthusiastic coaches who are dedicated to helping aspiring athletes to become Olympic champions,” Theimer adds. “Their commitment to creating this path on behalf of USA Shooting and youth competitors across the country is reflected in the quality opportunities they create to practice, perform and perfect their craft.”

Of course, Theimer also recognizes that USA Shooting is lucky enough to have almost 300 affiliated USA clubs where beginners and emerging talent are being introduced to the Olympic shooting sports and are able to benefit from the coaching as well. In order to reach CTC status, a club must meet certain requirements that position them to provide Olympic-style shooting with regard to both facilities and coaching.

The goal with this article and the one to follow is to help USA Shooting and its members find the Ole Mill Range Complex in their local area to help them find the support and resources they need to help them to achieve their Olympic aspirations. The bridges and roads we are building today will be the starting point will guide athletes/parents to identify with a local training center site, and allow communication to begin to all involved.

On the pages ahead, we highlight the remarkable programs in place with the CTCs and highlight their accomplishments along with the recognition and coaching that come to make it all work.

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USA Shooting currently partners with 15 Certified Training Centers across the U.S. that support international-style shooting.

After a year, junior membership grew to over 25 shooters and the place became too small, so they decided to start looking for a bigger place. The new facility is located at a small commercial warehouse business center in La Puente, Calif. Facilities consists of 17 10-meter shooting lanes (12 electric and 4 manual target carriers) arranged in two levels (bottom, 9 above). 22 caliber practices are at the Pro-Mark Shooting Park in Chino. The club has several SCAT machines constantly being used for training. The club currently has over 55 Junior members and 23 active Junior Pistol Shooters (10-17 years of age). Some of their junior male members include junior national team members Brian Kim and Tony Chung, Brian Kim finished third place overall in Air Pistol at the 2013 Jr Olympic Championship recently held at the OTC in Colorado. Oh finished second J2 on Air Pistol and third in Sport Pistol at the recent Jr. Olympics. Janice Choi finished second in J2 on Sport Pistol. Janice is the club’s most decorated shooter having achieved several podium finishes at many national matches throughout her career.

Junior shooters must attend training at least three times a week. To prepare shooters to shoot in different time zones, members sometimes shoot until midnight, or sleep at the club and wake up at 4 a.m. to train and get their bodies ready for competition. Sometimes hikes up mountain are taken before sunrise with no light to teach them to fight darkness and fear.