

A Parent's Guide to Rifle – West Potomac High School

Congratulations! Your son or daughter just informed you that they want to be on the rifle team. Rifle is a great sport that competes in the Olympics, in Collegiate Athletics, in High Schools, and in club teams around the country and the world. It is also a sport that your son or daughter can start now and can become a collegiate and Olympic champion! The Rifle Team is also one of West Potomac's most consistently successful sports teams.

Regardless of whether they actually become a world-class shooter, your son or daughter has chosen a sport that will benefit them in so many ways. They will, in a short amount of time, be better at time management, be more disciplined, more responsible, more focused, more social, and a source of pride for you and your family. At the same time, you will learn about a sport that you probably did not know much about and will find yourself explaining it to others.

You will also become busier driving them to practice and matches, more flexible when it comes to spending money on their sport, more knowledgeable on the sport, and will spend a lot of time with their teammate's parents. You will also deal with a whole host of anxieties and emotions as your shooter has good days and not so good days. You will learn about sport psychology and how to be a better mentor, coach, parent, and life skills counselor.

About Competitive Rifle

West Potomac competes only with Precision Air Rifle; however, some shooters compete on their own with .22 caliber smallbore (sometimes called rimfire) rifle. At the High School level shooters compete primarily in three position (kneeling, prone, and standing). On occasion, a fourth position, sitting, is added. At the college and international level, air rifle only competes in the standing position and we will compete in several matches of this type.

One thing you will quickly notice about rifle, unlike some other sports, is that your relative standing on the team and in matches is solely determined by your score. There is little concern about coaches favorites as your score (usually a rolling average of scores) determines who shoots in matches in which we are limited on entries.

While rifle is technically a winter sport at West Potomac practice; however, there are matches occurring year round. There is simply no way to progress to high levels in the sport without year round practice. Competitors normally enter the sport in their freshman year and occasionally in their sophomore year. Team members may elect to compete in precision air rifle, and eventually broaden their shooting to include small bore (.22 caliber). As with any sport, practice, repetition, skill clinics and camps along with physical and mental conditioning and commitment are the keys to success.

Competitive rifle is an NCAA collegiate, Olympic, and international sport. A number of colleges provide athletic scholarship support for rifle shooters. Many West Potomac Rifle Team graduates have gone on to shoot in college, including the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

Shooters are Athletes: In addition to developing shooting skills, shooters are athletes and need to focus on their nutrition and fitness. As in all sports, having a healthy mental approach to training, competition, and dealing with success and setbacks is essential.

Safety: Complying with range rules and firearms safety standards is our highest priority and will be strictly enforced. The West Potomac Rifle team requires all members to wear eye protection at all

times in air rifle events and eye and ear protection in smallbore events. Failure to follow safety rules and norms can result in disqualification from a match and/or dismissal from the team. Coaches and adult supervisors are present at all practices and competitions.

Governing Organizations:

There are three major rifle organizations – the Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP), USA Shooting, and the National Rifle Association (NRA). Both CMP and NRA maintain national record programs in a myriad of categories. *Shooters should get a competitor ID number from each organization.*

Civilian Marksmanship Program. The Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) was spun off from the Department of Defense in the mid-1990s and operates as a standalone organization to promote marksmanship skills. The CMP organizes and sponsors air rifle matches throughout the country. Of special note is their series of state championships, which leads to a national championship at the end of June. West Potomac has frequently competed in the CMP national championship and won the championship in 2010. The CMP recognizes both individuals and teams. Get a CMP competitor number for free at <http://thecmp.org/competitions/>

USA Shooting. USA Shooting is the national governing body for rifle shooting. At the high school level, USA Shooting runs the Junior Olympic program in both air and small bore rifle. They also run a series of state level qualifying matches for individual shooters. The top shooters are invited to the Junior Olympic match at the national training center in Colorado Springs. West Potomac frequently has shooters qualify for the Junior Olympics. USA Shooting offers incentives for referrals so be sure to list one of our shooters as the referring source. Join USA Shooting and get a competitor number at <http://www.usashooting.org/membership/45-everyone/newmembership>

The National Rifle Association (NRA) sanctions two types of matches for both air and smallbore rifle. They sanction *Regional* matches which are essentially stand-alone matches. There are also *Sectional* matches where the matches are conducted throughout the country during a specific time period. The sectional results are compiled at NRA headquarters to determine overall standings. The results can also be broken out to specific winners for specific categories such as juniors, for teams such as scholastic or ROTC teams, and for specific stages of the match such as kneeling. Join NRA and get a member/competitor number at <http://membership.nrahq.org/>

At the college level, athletes compete under NCAA rules in 3-position small bore (SB) international rifle and standing in air rifle.

Shooters Classification: Your athlete will need to know her or his classification in addition their competitor ID number for just about every match.

NRA:

Junior - A person may compete as a junior through December 31 of the calendar year in which his or her 20th birthday occurs. Individuals who have National Guard, Reserve, or active duty status and receive support (as defined in Rule 2.2) may not compete as juniors.

Intermediate Junior - A junior may also compete as an Intermediate Junior from January 1 of the calendar year in which his or her 15th birthday occurs through December 31 of the calendar year in which his or her 17th birthday occurs.

Sub-Junior - A Junior may also compete as a Sub-Junior through December 31 of the calendar

year in which his or her 14th birthday occurs.

USA Shooting:

J1/ Intermediate (age 18-20) USA Shooting recognizes and encourages competitions with junior events or special junior awards in open events to promote youth shooting and competitor development. Juniors are competitors who will be under the age of 21 on December 31 of the year of the competition. USA Shooting recognizes two additional junior age groups that may be used by competition organizing committees. Special age designations may be provided for based on the competition.

J2/ Junior (age 15 - 17) Competitors who will be under the age of 18 and over the age of 15 on December 31 of the year of the competition.

J3/ Sub Junior (age 14 and under) Competitors who will be under the age of 15 on December 31 of the year of the competition.

The most proficient shooters practice and compete regularly. Success and rapid progress requires PRACTICE and COMPETITION, including frequent dry firing and live air rifle practice at home (if possible). Athletes are highly encouraged to use a shooters journal to track what is and is not working as they progress in the sport. This is sometimes called a performance journal. Making journal entries after every practice and competition is a key to improving. Competition and practice with other rifle clubs is encouraged when it does not conflict with scheduled West Potomac practices or matches (generally, this would be during the off-season). West Potomac team members may not compete on another team against West Potomac. Additional air rifle practice opportunities are available with the Izaak Walton NOVA Sharp Shooters on Monday and Friday evenings.

All shooters are encouraged to enter as many matches as possible. The accumulation of experience gained through competition is invaluable. It helps you work through the nervousness and teaches you what to do when things do not go right, when equipment malfunctions, and how to build mental resilience and physical stamina. It also builds comradery among the team members and the parents.

Camps and Clinics: Each year the CMP and NRA conduct camps for junior shooters. In addition, West Virginia University holds a camp and some clubs such as Palmyra may also conduct a camp or clinic. The U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit (AMU) has as part of its mission to conduct clinics around the country. They also host a smallbore camp in August.

Preparing to Shoot in College:

There are countless opportunities to shoot in college whether it is on a Division 1 NCAA team, a Division 3 team, a college club team, or with a local club. For the NCAA Division 1 teams, they are limited to 4.6 scholarships per team. Each college carries a different number of shooters and some colleges have a women's only team. The NRA website has a list of college shooting opportunities. There are limits on when and how a college coach may contact a shooter or their parent. There are no limits on shooters contacting coaches to let them know of interest in their team. In general, at the end of a match, a college coach may make small talk with a shooter who is not yet a high school senior. College coaches can reply to notes and make conversation with high school seniors except during designated time windows.

What are college shooters shooting? Many college teams make their statistics readily available on their team website. In the web links section at the end are links to several schools.

WEST POTOMAC RIFLE TEAM

The West Potomac High School Rifle Team is recognized by school administrators as a co-ed

varsity sport and a club activity. As a varsity sport, student athletes can earn a school letter and be recognized as a scholar athlete. As a club activity, the rifle team must be completely self-sustaining and receives no school funds.

The Potomac High School Rifle League (PHSRL) is an association of High School rifle teams in the Washington, DC Metro area. Current teams include: Landon (MD), St. Johns College High School (DC), WT Woodson, Lake Braddock, Yorktown, Washington-Lee, West Springfield, Robinson, the Mavericks (shooters who go to High Schools that do not have a team).

The league organizes matches during the winter months so that each team competes nine times (once against each team) in air rifle. The league also runs a series of opportunities to compete as individuals in small-bore rifle. At the end of the season, the top six shooters in each discipline are recognized as the All-Metro First Team. The next six are the All-Metro Second Team. Recognition takes place at the regional tournament in February.

The rifle program is conducted according to the eligibility rules of the Virginia High School League and under the direction of the West Potomac Activities Director. Both boys and girls in grades 9-12 are eligible and encouraged to participate. The competition season runs from November to the end of March. Training for each season begins in October, but competitive opportunities and practices are available for individual rifle team members year-round.

Getting Started:

Equipment: The team has some loaner equipment but it is primarily used by new shooters while they explore if this is a sport for them. In general, all rifle team members purchase their own target rifles and equipment. *It is recommended that you not buy any equipment until you have attended several practices.* Make certain that you want to be a part of the rifle team before you invest in equipment, which can total between several hundred to several thousand dollars, depending on the equipment you wish to buy. After you have decided to join the team, the coaches will provide detailed information and advice about buying rifles and equipment. We want to make certain that you want to be a part of the rifle team before you purchase any equipment.

Spirit Wear: Team members and parents will have an opportunity to purchase warm-up jacket, pants, and other spirit wear items at the beginning of the season. Look for a team representative at practice and watch for e-mails with forms and turn-in information.

Communication: The team uses e-mail as the primary form of communicating with parents and team members. It is recommended that both the team member and parents list their e-mail addresses for contact purposes. Practices, events, and competition opportunities are posted on our website www.westpotomacrifle.com

Adult Volunteer Opportunities:

There are opportunities for parents to help the team. First, you do a lot by helping your shooter get to practice and to matches (and probably your financial support for equipment and supplies). If you want to do more, the team can always use more volunteer coaches. You do this by attending the NRA Level 1 Coach Class. It is usually offered in the fall over a weekend. The team can also use help in coordinating the annual Christmas tree sale, the Rifle team portion of the West Potomac Winter Sports awards night, team registration, financial officer, and other assistance.

Practices: Required team small bore and air rifle practices take place at West Potomac JROTC range Monday through Thursday. Athletes should attend two practices each week as scheduled. Additional practice opportunities are usually available at IWLA on Monday and Friday evenings.

Transportation: Team members are responsible for their own transportation to and from practices and matches. Pooling arrangements are encouraged. Just ask for a ride!

Rules Regarding Movement of Rifles: Air rifles and ammunition will be transported to and from all shooting activities in vehicle trunks and baggage storage compartments, inaccessible to team members in the passenger compartments. No rifles should be brought to school except for practices.

Winter Sports Banquet: Rifle is considered a winter sport at West Potomac. The Winter Sports Banquet is held in late February/early March to recognize West Potomac's athletes competing in the fall and winter Sports season and celebrate the end of the season. All team members and guests meet in the cafeteria for dinner before a general recognition ceremony and each team then moves to another location in the school to have a team celebration. The evening features awards, recognition, food, and team bonding.

Team Captains: Each spring the team members elect two captains for the following year. The captains serve as a conduit between the team and the head coach, provide leadership for the team, assist new shooters in team acculturation, and organize team events to develop skills and build esprit de corps.

Recognition:

Varsity Letters: West Potomac athletic letters are awarded to team members in good standing who meet the following criteria:

- 1) Air Rifle--250/300 score in 3-Position air rifle during the current high school season;
- 2) Competed in two or more West Potomac sanctioned matches, tournaments, or competitive events;
- 3) Consistently attended practices; and
- 4) Favorably represented West Potomac at all times.

Matches:

In a typical year, West Potomac shooters will have opportunities to shoot in 25-35 matches with a match of some type occurring every month of the year. Some matches are for the entire team while others are limited (usually by range capacity).

Air rifle home matches in the High School league are competed at Izaak Walton and other facilities as may be designated. PHSRL matches are fired with five-person teams. Squadding will be decided before each match by computing the five highest averages on the team, determined by the last four scores from matches and/or record practices, dropping the lowest score and averaging the highest three scores. Shooters with the five highest averages will be the team for the next match. When range capacity permits, additional shooters can participate in the match to develop experience.

Air Rifle shooters not competing in varsity matches will shoot in the PHSRL Development Team competition, which are varsity letter qualifying events. Small bore and air rifle shooters are

strongly encouraged to compete in any sanctioned NRA matches. When West Potomac competes as a Team, West Potomac and Virginia High School League rules require team members to compete for West Potomac. This includes all matches, tournaments, and other competitive opportunities, including the NRA National Junior Sectionals.

Matches in a Typical Year:

Potomac High School Rifle League, 9 air rifle and 3 smallbore matches (November to February)
PHSRL Regional Match, IWLA Centreville, 3x20 air rifle match with one team from each school in the league and then room for additional top individual shooters up to range capacity. Usually held in February.

- Queen Anne, Maryland, 3 or 4 matches, 60 shot standing + 3x20 smallbore (September, October, November, and sometimes in the spring)
- King George, Virginia, 2, 3x20 air rifle matches (October and March)
- Fairfax Rod and Gun, Virginia, 2-4, 50 and 100 yard outdoor smallbore matches (August, September, May, June)
- U.S. Naval Academy, Maryland, 2, 40 shot (women) 60 shot (men) standing air rifle + 3x20 smallbore (January and April)
- Landon School, Maryland, 3, 3x10 air rifle matches for novice (1st year) shooters (November, December)
- Landon School, Maryland, Bob Long Classic, 2 person team (veteran and novice) the veteran shoots 40 shots standing and the novice shoots 40 shots in prone (December)
- Palmyra Sportsman Club, Pennsylvania, 60 shot standing air rifle + 3x20 smallbore (USA Shooting). Usually held on MLK Weekend in January.
- NRA Sectionals, various locations, 4 matches on different days, 60 shot standing air rifle; 3x20 air rifle; 3x20 smallbore; 4x10 air rifle (4th position is sitting) (March through May)
- U.S. Army State Qualifier, NRA or IWLA, 60 shot standing air rifle (November)
- IWLA, Centreville, Virginia, Wendell Thompson open, 60 shot standing air rifle (July)
- Arlington Rod and Gun, Maryland, 2 matches, outdoor prone smallbore and 3x20 smallbore (summer)

National Matches:

- CMP and Junior Olympic 3 Position Nationals, Anniston, Alabama or Camp Perry, Ohio. Team and individual. Must qualify through a regional match. (June)
- USA Shooting Junior Olympics, Colorado Springs, Colorado, standing air rifle and/or 3x20 smallbore. Individual. Must qualify through a state qualifying match. (April/May)
- USA Shooting Nationals, Fort Benning, Georgia, open match for individual air rifle and outdoor smallbore. (July)
- NRA Smallbore Nationals, Bristol, Indiana, open match for individual outdoor smallbore. (July)
- U.S. Army Air Rifle Nationals, Fort Benning, Georgia, 60 shot standing air rifle. Team and individual. Must qualify through a state qualifying match. (January)

FORMS/PAPERWORK REQUIRED PRIOR TO JOINING THE TEAM

Dues: Team dues are \$100 per member per season. The dues cover expenses for team supplies (targets, backers, etc.), team entry fees, range costs, awards, high school league fees, Izaak Walton range fees and junior membership, and other services.

The following forms and paperwork need to be completed and returned to the coaches and/or

school prior to joining the rifle team and competing. Please do not wait until the last minute. Failure to comply will result in removal from the team for the season. There will be no exceptions.

VHSL Physical. You must have a current (done after May 1, 2020) on file with West Potomac Secondary School. Please write "Rifle Team" on the top before you turn it in to the Athletic Director's Office. Please let the coaches know when you have turned it in or if you have one on file for another sport. <http://www.vhsl.org/doc/upload/adm-form-physical-2013-141.pdf>.

Online Concussion Training. Each student and at least one parent must complete the concussion training on line.

Extra-Curricular Participation Policy. Please turn this in to the team.

Emergency Contact Form. Please turn this in to the team. The form is available on Blackboard FCPS 24-7 in the Parent View accounts.

IWLA Junior Chapter Membership Application, Please turn this in to the team. (IWLA Membership and Range Usage Fees are paid by the team out of the dues.)

IWLA Waiver Form. Please turn this in to the team.

Team Dues. The team dues for the 2020-21 season will be \$0. Will be waived

Standards of Conduct: Team members are required to sign the West Potomac athletic pledge to abstain from the use tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, and to conduct themselves in a manner that is a credit to West Potomac.

Satisfactory Academic Progress: Virginia League eligibility rules require that each team member must have passed at least five of seven courses the preceding semester. The rifle team coaches will provide a form to each team member in January to be signed by their teachers verifying passing grades in their courses.

USEFUL WEBSITES:

IWLA Arlington-Fairfax: <http://www.arlingtonfairfax-iwla.org/>

Governing Organizations:

CMP: <http://thecmp.org/>

USA Shooting: <http://www.usashooting.org/>

NRA Competitive Shooting Programs: <http://competitions.nra.org/>

NRA Indoor Competition Results: <http://competitions.nra.org/championship-results/nra-nationalindoor-rifle-pistol-championships-results.aspx>

Suppliers:

Champions Choice: <http://www.champchoice.com/store/main.aspx>

Champion Shooter Supply: <https://www.championshooters.com/>

Killough Shooting Sports: <http://www.killoughshootingsports.com/>

Camps and Clinics:

CMP (usually opens in February): <http://thecmp.org/air/>

NRA (usually opens in April): <http://coaching.nra.org/national-junior-shooting-camps.aspx>

Army Marksmanship Unit: <http://www.usaac.army.mil/amu/>

Team Websites:

<http://www.WestPotomacRifle.com>

Rules:

CMP: <http://thecmp.org/air/national-standard-three-position-air-rifle-rules/>

USA Shooting: <http://www.usashooting.org/7-events/usarules>

NRA: <http://compete.nra.org/official-nra-rule-books.aspx>

ISSF: <http://www.issf-sports.org/theissf/rules.ashx>

Selected College Teams:

University of Akron: <http://www.gozips.com/sports/rifle/index>

The Ohio State University: <http://www.ohiostatebuckeyes.com/sports/c-rifle/osu-c-riflebody.html>

West Virginia University: <http://www.wvusports.com/teams.cfm?sport=rifle>

North Carolina State University: <http://www.gopack.com/index.aspx?path=rifle>

RIFLE TERMS

Smallbore rifle- A .22 caliber gun with a metallic sight used in competition. It can be customized with special accessories and/or alterations (barrel length and style, stock, design, etc.) to fit the shooter's needs and comforts.

Air Rifle- A gun that uses a .177 caliber lead pellet propelled by compressed air or gas instead of a gunpowder charge. The rifles can weigh up to 12.12 pounds.

Bull: Short for bull's-eye. There are 12 bulls per target, 10 for competition and two for sighting shots. The 10 ring is actually a dot in the center of the bull's-eye. In smallbore, the 10 dot is slightly smaller than the period at the end of this sentence, while in air rifle, the 10 dot is slightly larger than the period at the end of this sentence.

Full course: In smallbore, a full course consists of 120 record shots, 40 in each position, fired in the following order: prone, standing, kneeling.

Half course: In smallbore or air rifle, a half course consists of 60 shots, 20 in each position (prone, standing and kneeling).

Quarter Course: In junior 3P air rifle, a quarter course consists of 30 shots, 10 in each position (prone, standing and kneeling).

USAS- USA Shooting, a 501c3 non-profit corporation, was chartered by the United States Olympic Committee as the National Governing Body for the sport of shooting in April 1995. The organization implements and manages development programs and sanctions events at the local, state, regional, and national levels; developing shooting athletes from grassroots to Olympic medals.

CMP- The Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) is a national organization dedicated to training and educating U. S. citizens in responsible uses of firearms and air guns through gun safety training, marksmanship training and competitions.

NRA- NRA's Competitive Shooting Division offers a wide range of activities in all types of shooting, for everyone from the novice to the world-class competitor. The NRA sanctions over 10,000 shooting tournaments and sponsors over 50 national championships each year.

Classification- The NRA system of dividing shooters into different skill levels for award purposes. (Master, Expert, Sharpshooter, Marksman)

NRA & USAS Age Categories- Sub-junior thru Dec 31 of the year of the 14th birthday; Intermediate-Junior thru Dec 31 of the year of 17th birthday; Junior thru Dec 31 of the year of 20th birthday.

Palmyra (Invitational) - An annual smallbore/air rifle tournament conducted in Palmyra, PA.

Annapolis/USNA- The range facility at the US Naval Academy typically hosts two major junior matches,

Junior Olympics- Annual invitation only match sponsored by USA Shooting. Invitations are earned through qualification at state level matches. Separate events for men and women and air rifle and smallbore. Usually held at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs in April and May of each year.

Colorado Springs- USA Shooting is headquartered at the Olympic Training Center (OTC) in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Located on the OTC campus, the Olympic Shooting Center was built in 1985 and is used for elite and resident athlete training, competitions, national championships, coaching seminars, camps, committee meetings and local clubs. Junior

shooters can qualify to attend developmental camps.

JORQ- Junior Olympic Regional Qualifier

Sectional- The NRA National Junior Indoor Rifle Championships are comprised of Sectionals where competitors can compete in their local area under the same rules and conditions required of all the Sectionals that are conducted across the United States. Scores from each Sectional are sent to the NRA; winning targets are validated by the NRA; and the NRA publishes the National Championship winners. West Potomac shooters will be able to shoot in several different types of optional Sectional matches. (Metric Position, Conventional Position, NRA International Air Rifle, Air Rifle Precision 3-Position) Regional- Stand-alone NRA matches.

PHSRL- Potomac High School Rifle League – The sanctioning body for the 9 teams in the DC area that compete in NCAA and Olympic-style rifle competitions.

Izaak Walton –Arlington/Fairfax chapter of the Izaak Walton League, in Centreville, VA; venue for Air Rifle practice and matches, and some non-league smallbore match opportunities.

FRGC- Fairfax Rod and Gun Club- venue for some non-league smallbore match opportunities.

King George, VA- Site of the Virginia State CMP/USAS 3PAR Championship match International air rifle- Air rifle discipline fired only in the standing position; usually 40 or 60 shots. This corresponds to Collegiate or Olympic Air Rifle.

Counter- League matches pit 5 shooters from one school against 5 shooters from the other; the highest 4 scores from each are totaled to determine the match winner. The names put forward are the 'counters' for the match; if space/time permits, other shooters from either team may also shoot under the match conditions for individual achievements.

Precision- Precision Air Rifle is modeled after Olympic-style shooting and allows the use of the specialized target air rifles and equipment, designed for use in Olympic and International Air Rifle Competition.

Sporter- A category of entry-level air rifle competition, with simpler rifles and no specialized clothing. West Potomac JROTC program conducts this type of shooting, and you may see it at some matches we attend.

Postal Match: A match in which competitor's fire on their home ranges using targets which have

been marked for proper identification. Fired targets and/or scores are then exchanged by mail.

3-P- 3-position; shooters fire from Prone, Standing, and Kneeling positions

4-P – 4-position; same as 3-P, plus shooting from the Sitting Position

Iron sights: Sights that employ no magnification. Also known as Aperture Sights

Aperture Sights -The standard type of sights used on air rifles and .22 rifles for target shooting. The sights consist of a rear unit with a small hole in it which is used to centralize the eye. A fore sight containing a ring, in the center of which the (round) aiming mark is placed.

Plug: A metal device the same size as the shot hole, used to score targets. Variations include the "inward plug" and "outward plug." With the inward plug, the score is determined by the contact point of the outside edge of the plug with the inside of the next lowest scoring ring. With an outward plug, the score is determined by the contact point of the outer edge of the plug with the inside of the scoring ring.

Offhand: The unsupported standing position (shooting "off the hand" rather than with the nontrigger arm supported on a knee or the floor).

Landon School- one of the teams in our league, the Landon School hosts league matches, and developmental matches, at their range on campus in Bethesda, MD

3PAR- 3 Position Air Rifle

PCP- Precharged pneumatic; type of air rifle that has an air cylinder, filled from a SCUBA tank, which propels the pellet.