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With the Help of CMP, USA Shooting Wraps Up 2021 Winter Airgun Championships

COLO SPRGS, CO (Dec. 2021) – Super-finals, team events, competitive fun, and cash prizes are all part of the Winter Airgun Championships (WAG) hype. With the generous support from the Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP), USA Shooting hosted the end-of-year airgun event for the second consecutive year at both CMP locations in Alabama and Ohio from December 5-12, 2021.

Breanne Orey, Director of Competitions at USA Shooting, describes this year's WAG as the culmination of competitions in 2021.

“WAG has always traditionally been a year-end championship event, but with the help of CMP, we’ve been able to add in some friendly competition with super finals and more comradery through team events, said Orey. It’s really become the culmination of USA Shooting airgun events and the spirit and emotions that we want all competitors and the organization to carry on well-into the next year.”

Both pistol and rifle event formats featured familiar and new competition components like individual open and junior finals, super finals, three-person team finals, and mixed team finals that mimic the new team events seen at World Cups and the most recent Olympic Games.

Pistol sent the first shots down range in Anniston, Alabama where a mix of Olympians, collegiate athletes, and juniors alike dominated the individual and team events. Two-time Olympian, Nick Mowrer finished with the men’s overall high score of 581 and Laura Acosta from Puerto Rico finished with the women’s overall high score of 571. Mowrer would go on to win the Men’s Individual final with Jason Gregoire taking the silver and Anthony Lutz taking the bronze. Acosta won the high-international award, but it was Katherine Ahn, Jenny Noh, and Tokyo Olympian Alexis Lagan who won gold, silver and bronze respectively in the women’s finals individual event. Noh proved that age is just a number when it comes to competitive shooting as the only U15 athlete in the open finals who ended up taking home the silver.

"It's so exciting to see (for the second year in a row) how welcoming CMP has been to USA Shooting and their athletes. The team events worked extremely well. Nick Mowrer and I train together and have a great dynamic, so it was fun to share that camaraderie with Lisa for our



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three-person team. The team matches also open the opportunity for experienced athletes to team up with junior shooters and create mentorship opportunities,” said Alexis Lagan, Tokyo 2020 Olympian.

Lagan and Mowrer competed together in the mixed team pistol event in Tokyo.

The junior individual finals also saw their fair share of recognizable athletes, including many members of the El Salvador Team who competed earlier this year, as well as the Junior World Championship team who competed last month. On the junior men’s side, Nathan Bae, Remington Smith, and Jonathan Dorsten went one, two and three, while Suman Sanghera, Ada Korkhin, and Katelyn Abeln went one two and three for the junior women.

The three-person team of James Hall, Nathalia Tobar, and Gregoire squeezed out a victory over Mowrer, Lagan, and Lisa Emmert. Emmert would get redemption with teammate and Tokyo Paralympian, YanXiao Gong where they won gold over the mixed team of Gregoire and Sandra Uptagrafft. Gong took home the gold in the men’s para category ahead of teammate Marco De La Rosa and Josue Lopez who medaled silver and bronze respectively.

While there’s no overall WAG winner, it’s safe to say that Gregoire is one of the few who completely dominated and departed Anniston a triple-medalist, including two silvers and a gold.

“It was super exciting to have everyone present for WAG. I saw a lot of our juniors throughout the fall but getting them back together and mixing with our National Team and open competitors is always a great time for them and for the level of competition. There was a ton of positive talk about the team events, and I know a lot of the pistol athletes are already figuring out their teams for the three-person WAG event next year,” said Jason Turner, USA Shooting National Pistol Coach.

Immediately following pistol, it was rifle’s turn to take their shot at the three-day competition format, taking place simultaneously in both Anniston, Alabama and Camp Perry, Ohio.

Army Marksmanship Unit (AMU) soldiers Ali Weisz, Sagen Maddalena, and Sarah Beard’s scores stood at the top of the women’s overall three-day aggregate scores in Alabama. Weisz, a Tokyo 2020 Olympian, scored the highest individual score and personal best of 632.8 on day 1 of competition. Weisz and Maddalena would win gold and silver medals in the Alabama women’s final with 2016 Olympic Champion, Ginny Thrasher winning bronze. Tim Sherry, another strong AMU athlete, scored the highest aggregate three-day total earning him a spot in the men’s open finals where he placed third behind second place finalist Brandon Muske and 2021 Men’s Anniston WAG Champion and Olympic Silver Medalist, Lucas Kozeniesky.

Peninah D’Souza won gold in the U21 women’s junior category, Scott Rockett, the freshman on the Air Force Academy rifle team won the U21 men’s junior gold, Camryn Camp is the U18 women’s junior champion, Braden Peiser the U18 men’s junior champion, Tyler Wee won the

U15 men's junior gold, and Briley Sralla the U15 women's junior gold for Alabama. In addition to winning gold in their categories, D'Souza, Camp, and Wee scored the highest aggregate total in their entire age group that included both male and female competitors.

USA Shooting Para Athletes also gathered in Anniston to compete in R2, R3, R4, and R5 events. Leonard Esparza, Kevin Nguyen, and Robert Beach went one, two, and three in the R3 event, juniors Madison Champion and Benjamin Hays took gold and bronze respectively in the R3 event with Jazmin Almlie-Ryan earning silver, and it was Almlie-Ryan and Champion again with the silver and bronze win in the R5 event where Paralympian and Paralympic Finalist, Stetson Bardfield won gold. In the same R5 event, Hays won gold, Trent Clayton silver, and Haricharan Tadpatri won bronze in the junior category.

National Para Coach, Don Stith, had this to say about WAG:

"Well first, Breanne and CMP did an outstanding job. We had three times the amount of para athletes at the event this year compared to last year. We were also able to have those athletes see a classifier to understand where they would classify in their sport, which is extremely beneficial in the long run for the para movement. We had some athletes shoot their personal best every day of WAG, and there was a lot of camaraderie since it's one of the only times they're all here at the same time."

Up in Ohio, it was the same competition with a different story, where many USAS standouts took home the medals and proved their depth in the finals.

West Virginia University incoming freshman, Natalie Perrin scored the highest aggregate three-day total out of all competitors in Ohio earning her a top spot in the women's finals where she took home the silver behind future WVU teammate Molly McGhin's gold medal finish. Jeanne Haverhill, who had the highest aggregate three-day total out of all the open competitors, won bronze.

University of Alaska standout, Rylan Kissell totaled the highest aggregate score on the men's side, but it was Kellen McAferty, Matt Sanchez, and Brandon Evans who won gold, silver, and bronze in the men's final. Kissell barely missed out on a medal with his fourth-place finish.

Perrin and Kissell were crowned champions in their respective women's and men's U21 junior category, Emme Walrath is the U18 women's junior champion, Evans the U18 men's junior champion, Dietrich Bergman won the U15 men's junior gold, and Shannon Moriarty the U15 women's junior champ in Ohio. We cannot forget our senior Camp Perry competitors including Brian Parziale, Guido Lastra, Jon Speck, and Paul Borthwick who took home the gold.

"It's always great to see all the competitors who show up to WAG and what was even more wonderful was the turnout this year. I saw a lot of fantastic performances throughout all

categories, and it was fun to see team matches back again. This year's WAG was a great close to the 2021 season, and a great sign for another successful 2022 season coming up," said National Rifle Coach, Dan Durben.

After individual finals, it was time to form three-person teams and compete for additional WAG Championship titles

The Anniston three-person team of Maddalena, Weisz, and Roe claimed victory over the team of Beard, Katie Zaun and Rachael Charles. In Ohio, Chance Cover, Kera Kaufman, and Haverhill defeated the three-person team of Borthwick, Julie Klusmeier, and Brian Parziale to win the gold.

"We couldn't be more thankful to CMP for co-hosting this event at their amazing facilities. They've been such an integral part of our 2021 season including helping host our largest Rifle Junior Olympics on record at Hillsdale College this past spring," added Orey.

USA Shooting is proud to have offered the second consecutive Winter Airgun Championship competition at both CMP locations accommodating over 400 USAS competitors.

A full list of results of all competitors from both rifle and pistol Winter Airgun Championships can be found on the USA Shooting website at: <https://www.usashooting.org/7-events/nationalresults>

As well as on the CMP website at cmp.org:

<https://ct.thecmp.org/app/v1/index.php?do=match&task=edit&match=22306>

<https://ct.thecmp.org/app/v1/index.php?do=match&task=edit&match=22271>

And photos from the entire weekend taken by CMP can be found here:

<https://cmp1.zenfolio.com/f810287427>

About USA Shooting

USA Shooting, a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation was chartered by the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee as the National Governing Body for the Olympic Shooting Sports in April 1995. The organization develops and implements programs to promote growth in the sport and serves as a sanctioning body for local and national competitions. Headquartered in Colorado Springs, Colorado, at the US Olympic and Paralympic Training Center, USA Shooting has a full-time staff dedicated to our sport.