

# AR-15

# 6

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# OVERCOMERS



**CAMP PERRY'S FIRST ALL-FEMALE SERVICE RIFLE TEAM PROVED TODAY'S YOUNG SHOOTERS HAVE THE RIGHT STUFF.**

BY SERENA JUCHNOWSKI

IN A DAY AND AGE WITH AN UNCERTAIN POLITICAL CLIMATE, screen time surpassing outdoor activity, and a public fear of black rifles, the New Jersey Garden State Gunners set an example for the masses with the first-ever, all-female, high-power, service rifle team at the 2018 National Trophy Infantry Team Match – an event better known as the “Rattle Battle.”

# OVERCOMERS

Not only was this team entirely female, but all were junior shooters. By Civilian Marksmanship Program rules, an individual is a junior through the year of his or her 20th birthday.

Sponsored by the Central Jersey Rifle and Pistol Club, the team brought 12 juniors split into two squads of six boys and six girls to Camp Perry for the national matches. They competed by engaging targets out to 600 yards.

## IMPACT OF STATE LAW

As the competition commenced, the New Jersey competitors soon found themselves at a disadvantage due to their state's gun laws.

"Our magazine capacity is now limited to only 10, while everyone else had 30-round mags," said Amy Flood. "We didn't have any 30-round mags, but someone had 20-round mags, so we got to use those."

Flood also expressed her amazement at the differences between her rifle and others on the firing line. "I was talking to someone on the Massachusetts team, and they are allowed adjustable stocks and we are not," she said. "I wish I could do that to mine!"

According to coach Walter Bachmann, the differences didn't stop there. Gun owners in New Jersey are not allowed to have a bayonet lug or a flash hider on their rifle.

Persevering through multiple magazine malfunctions from their borrowed 20-rounders, the girls still managed to beat the New Jersey boys team, 592 to 265. However, Flood did admit the boys had it "way worse" than the girls with the malfunctions. The girls' score was good enough for 18th place out of 28 teams in the Infantry Trophy Out-of-Competition division.

## BUILDING BONDS

According to Shelby Falk, it also showed what this generation was made of.

"It brought a lot of recognition to our team, which was nice. It shows people that juniors are taking the sport seriously and are the future of shooting," Falk said. "We are trying to bring more people into it."

Being a part of this team impacted each of the girls differently. Flood revealed that it made her so much more aware of what not only women can do, but what teenagers can do.



New Jersey's teams either had to compete with their 10-round mags or borrow extra 20 rounders from other competitors.



# The "Rattle" in the "Battle"



The National Trophy Infantry Team (NTIT) Match is sometimes called the "Rattle Battle" because it emphasizes extremely fast, accurate fire. It is also an exciting competition for spectators to watch and get a feel for how intense the competition is.

Teams of six shooters begin with 384 rounds, which is allocated among the team members. Beginning at 600 yards, shooters must distribute their fire so that, if possible, all targets receive at least six hits.

The course of fire sees the teams work their way back to targets at 200 yards. At each stop, shooters are required to engage targets from either the prone, sitting, kneeling or standing positions. Points are awarded for every hit, with the more difficult 600-yard shots counting four points. Teams earn bonus points when targets are hit more than six times.

The National Trophy Rifle Match was first fired in 1922. Only two civilian teams have ever won the prestigious Infantry Trophy. The first civilian team to win this honor was the Nebraska civilian team in 1930. Then it wasn't until 79 years later when the California Grizzlies Junior Team won the trophy in 2009.

## INFANTRY TEAM MATCH COURSE OF FIRE

Stage	Distance (yds.)	Firing Position	Time Limit (sec.)
First	600	Prone	50
Second	500	Prone, sitting or kneeling	50
Third	300	Sitting or kneeling	50
Fourth	200	Standing	50



Competitors engage targets from 200 to 600 yards from a variety of shooting positions.

“It just made me feel so much more empowered and driven to compete more and do so much better than I have in the past,” said Flood.

Victoria Wheatley, team member and a U.S. Marine Corps reservist, is especially grateful at being a part of the first all-female team at Camp Perry.

“It was nice to set that standard and open that pathway by showing other girls it’s not just a male-dominated sport,” she said. “Hopefully, that will inspire girls to pursue the sport or continue in it.”

**INFLUENCING OTHERS**

Being on the team isn’t limited to just shooting. Its members volunteer with Women on Target programs, youth days and in other events to help promote the sport. While each of the girls shoot at a different skill level, each seeks to promote the sport.

Jessica Peoples mentors new members of the team and hopes to do more coaching after she finishes her criminal justice major at Stockton University. This year, she earned 10 points towards



Supporting a shooting team with everything from ammo and rifles to extra shooting gear and travel takes a lot of team logistics and family involvement.



her Distinguished Rifleman’s Badge and is actively pursuing that goal as a competitor in addition to mentoring.

Volunteering is often seen as paying it forward. And that’s how the shooting sports have changed the life of Dorothy Speers, the eldest member of the Garden State Gunners.

Speers enjoys working with high-school-age kids, especially when shooting.

“When I came to shooting, I was around that age and shooting was like an oasis,” Speers explained. “It was away from the chaos of school, away from the chaos of my family, and it was a place where nothing mattered except the bullet in the chamber.”

Speers revealed that much of what makes the shooting sports special is that they are family oriented. “Parents are so often overlooked,” she said. “While it’s great to get younger girls involved, getting moms involved is also important. If the daughter has never been exposed to firearms, chances are the mother has never been exposed either.”

**Rifle of Choice – The AR-15**



**H**igh-power service rifle is a competitive discipline that involves shooting modern sporting rifles at targets set at 200, 300, 500 and 600 yards. While the M1 Garand, M1A and other rifles have been used over the years, the current service rifle of choice is the AR-15.

There are some variations for states with restrictive gun laws, but the rifle must be similar to the M16 U.S. service rifle, except it can only be capable of semiautomatic fire. The cartridge used is .223/5.56x45mm NATO. The two main styles are an A2 and A4.

The A2 has a fixed carrying handle and iron sights. The A4 National Match AR-15 has a removable carrying handle to accommodate an optic. Competitors may shoot an iron sight post or a scope not exceeding 4½ power. Adjustable buttstocks are permitted as well as an extended bolt release. Trigger pull can be no less than 4½ pounds. A military web or leather sling may be used.

Two popular rifle manufacturers most seen on the firing line are ArmaLite and Rock River Arms. Geissele is often the trigger of choice and Krieger barrels has a strong following. Many competitors have two uppers, one used for matches and one used for practice.

The New Jersey Garden State Gunners lean on White Oak Armament uppers with Rock River lowers and Geissele triggers. According to coach Walter Bachmann, most of the barrels have 1:7-inch twists, although you can find a few with 1:8-inch twists. The faster twists allow the use of heavier 77- and 80-grain bullets.

Competitive service rifles run about \$1,100. Add to this the cost for an optic, ammo, gear and travel, and the cost to field a team starts to add up.

There are specific rules on what rifles are “National Match” compliant and what can be changed or altered to keep the rifle eligible for competition. For more about the rules for high-power service rifle matches, go to: [thecmp.org/competitions/cmp-competitions-rulebooks/](http://thecmp.org/competitions/cmp-competitions-rulebooks/)

# OVERCOMERS



Being the first all-female team brought the young women together to prove to the naysayers that they could do it.

## PARENTAL SUPPORT

Sue Voros does not shoot competitively, but she has become a large part of the New Jersey team through her three sons. While she has no official role, the kids and coaches call her “Team Mom.”

According to Voros, parents help with everything from ride-sharing to pit pulling and logistics to fundraising.

“Growing, promoting and supporting the shooting sports is a founding principle of the Garden State Gunners junior team,” Voros said. Through volunteering at events and being open about their activities, Voros hopes that members will change people’s attitudes towards competitive shooting.

## THE FUTURE

With the national match now history, it doesn’t mean the firearms are put away. Flood, for one, is

using the skills honed through these experiences to continue to serve others.

“I really hope to use all my skill and knowledge from my 10-plus years of shooting to do something in a career that involves shooting or carrying a firearm,” said Flood, currently studying homeland security at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida.

New Jersey’s Garden State Gunners girls’ team participation in the 2018 NTIT should not be viewed as a publicity stunt but an effort to promote the shooting sports while celebrating team camaraderie and the spirit of competition.

New Jersey has not only set an example for women but for what all young shooters can do. They’ve also set an example for how the shooting sports can unite families and strengthen our communities and nation. ❁



Left to right: Jessica Peoples, Victoria Wheatley, Dorothy Speers, Shelby Falk, Amy Flood and Sierra Loutraris.