

# What Being a New York State Junior Meant to Me

by *Viktor Volpe*

When asked to reflect back on the seven years I spent as a New York State Junior, the thing that strikes me most is the support I was given by the senior shooters of the state. As a result of their endless hours of coaching, loaned equipment, and numerous rides given before I had my license, I was able to achieve my goals much sooner. At the age of 18, my teammate Sergi and I had made the President's 100, earned our Distinguished Badges, walked on stage at Perry to accept an award, and earned our master classification (I think after accomplishing this last goal, all the experts were happier than we were.)

Beyond these achievement-based goals however, being a member of the junior team gave me much more. At the age of 13 I was trusted to interact with adults more than twice my age, and by the time I was 16 I considered these individuals my peers. I doubt there is another sport that could have taught me the responsibility that I learned, nor is there one that would have forced me to be so mature at such a young age. I am sure all the shooters reading this have met Mr. Considine, Mr. Carney, Mr. Simmons, and Mr. Alfonso, and know the values and attitudes they keep. At times I wonder what would have happened to me had I acted like your typical teenager in front of these men (even at the age of 21 I still make sure to shave before every match.) Initially being coached by these men and later working with them on team decisions gave me the skills and personality that I use everyday at business functions and meetings.

Along with the maturity that this sport and my interaction with fellow shooters has given me, it has also taught me how to give back to something important to me. Because of work, I have to miss Camp Perry for the first time since I first started attending eight years ago. Over the course of those eight years I watched the team grow in numbers, win numerous awards along with a National Championship, and earn the respect of the nation's competitive shooters. While I wish I could still contribute to the junior program as a team captain, I know that Vicky and Rory will do a better job than Sergi and I did (and hopefully won't get yelled at by Mr. Carney as much as we did.) I would have loved supporting the team as so many others have in the past, whether acting as a coach just as Kay Anderson, Rich Meade or Bob Modica did, a team captain as Evan Jordan has, or as the most important person on a team: the pit puller, a duty at which I could never surpass Bruce Kraft, or Ed Walden when Bruce is called upon by the big team.

While I will miss the friendships and camaraderie, what I will miss the most is the ability to support our state's effort to win a Whistler Boy medal, or even more importantly the six-man team match. For years a senior coached me, took on the responsibilities of team captain, or pulled the pits for me. While I want to help the organization that gave me so much, I am disappointed that I will not be able to.

As a junior I was able to watch the program grow as a direct result of the support given by others. Those already mentioned, along with many others gave their support in order to create one of the largest junior programs in the country, along with educated young shooters to give them an advantage both on and off the range.