

The Best-Kept Se



By Tanya Gorin – TCU Women's Rifle Team 2005-2009

Mention NCAA Sports, and most people conjure up images of BCS Football, March Madness Basketball, or the College World Series. Not too many will think of rifle competition as a college sport, and are even surprised to learn that approximately 35 universities have NCAA teams whose team members can earn an athletic scholarship. The head coach of Texas Christian University's (TCU) Women's Rifle Team, Karen Monez, an International Champion herself, is working on changing that image in the TCU/Fort Worth area.

NCAA Rifle is divided into two disciplines – small bore (.22 caliber rimfire) and air rifle (.17 caliber). Although it is a highly individual sport, four team members' scores are added together to comprise a team score. Each member shoots a small bore match, which consists of 60 shots fired single shot at 50 feet – 20 each in the prone, standing, and kneeling positions. Air Rifle also consists of 60 shots, but all are taken in the standing position at 10 meters. The ten-ring, the goal of every round fired, is approximately the size of the period at the end of this sentence. This leads to a perfect individual score of 600 per gun, a total of 4800 points in a match.

The match is fired on electronic targets, which means four microphones pick up the sound of the bullet passing through the target and give its location to the tenth of a point. This is relayed to a monitor that sits in front of the shooter so he/she has immediate feedback to where the shot landed.

This type of competition requires much equipment to reinforce stability. Each shooter



sports heavy canvas pants and jacket, high-top flat-bottomed boots, a glove for the support hand with grips to hold the rifle, an off-hand stand to rest the rifle between shots in standing, a sling to support the weight of the rifle in prone and kneeling, and a kneeling roll to support the ankle. Some shooters also use a visor or hat, blinders, and a glove for the firing hand. Many also

have a different butt plate and set of sights for each position, not to mention all the wrenches and tools to make the numerous adjustments allowing the rifle to fit the shooter.

The Rifle season is one of the longest in collegiate sports, starting in August and ending with the Championships in Mid-March. During that time, the NCAA allows each team to compete in 13 days of competition, each day usually consisting of one small bore and one air rifle match. Coach Monez prefers her ladies to practice at least two hours a day, but due to NCAA rules they can't practice more than four hours a day. During the fall semester, the team practices five to six days a week, but no more than 20 hours a week, again due to NCAA rules.

Despite of all the time practicing, Monez emphasizes academics above all else. This is reflected by many of the girls on the team who hold academic scholarships along with their athletic ones. TCU's Women's Rifle Team also held the "Highest Team GPA Award" out of all the school's athletic teams

