

Jr. pistol

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According to team member Kelsy Imig, there is a certain level of maturity that goes along with the sport of shooting because it is a mental game. Kelsy along with her brother, Tyler, are members of the Massachusetts Junior Air Pistol Team.

The Westminster siblings each started shooting around the age of 10. Tyler, who is now 19, started shooting air pistol competitively six years ago and joined the national team three years ago. Tyler said he started shooting competitively because the opportunity was there. Now, he likes the aspect of the competition.

"It is about manipulating your body and mind to slow down and concentrate so you can produce the perfect shot," said Tyler.

Sixteen-year-old Kelsy only starting shooting air pistol about a year ago but jumped onto the national team right away.

Although there are four members on their team, only three compete at an event. They have an extra at each competition as a precaution. The team members said they decide ahead of time who will sit out.

According to Tyler, in an air pistol match, 60 shots are taken over the course of 1 hour and 45 minutes. For females, it is 40 shots and 1 hour and 15 minutes. Tyler said this averages out to 75 seconds per shot, however one can take as long or as little time as he/she wants on each shot.

The air pistol is filled off of a scuba diving tank of compressed air. This shoots out pellets, which are loaded into the gun individually. The competitor stands 33 feet away from the bull's-eye target. A perfect shot is scored with a 10, so a perfect match adds up to 600. According to Tyler, the aver-

age score ranges between 550-560.

He said it is easy to get your score up quickly when you first start shooting, then it plateaus. Going up one or two points is considered major progress.

"The goal is to reject what you think will be a bad shot, and to keep the good shots," said Tyler.

The teammates agreed that it is a mental game, not a physical one. Tyler said it starts out being 90 percent physical and 10 percent mental, then quickly changes to the opposite



GOAL's Junior Air Pistol Team (l-r) Russ Doucette, coach, Chris Tourigny, AJ Tourigny, Tyler Imig, Gov. Mitt Romney, Kelsy Imig, and Dick Parker, coach.

Courtesy Photo

degree once one gets their technique down.

According to Kelsy, the only real physical thing is building up strength in one's shooting arm. She likes that the game is a mental one.

"Your technique can be perfect, but your mindset can ruin you while you are shooting," said Kelsy. "It is important to not think about anything at all besides your shot while you are shooting."

She says she stays calm and keeps her mind clear before a match by listening to music. She said before a competition, most of the people there are listening to their iPods and MP3 players. The members of this team agreed that Tom Petty is a good choice to listen to before a match.

The team practices on Tuesday nights in Hudson. Both families have shooting ranges in their basements, so they can practice at

home as well. Right now, they spend about five to seven hours every week shooting.

Tyler said as they get closer to their next competition, which is in December, they will train harder. He said it is important to not peak before the competition. They also all compete in individual events as well.

The team is sponsored by Gun Owners' Action League (GOAL), the official firearm association of Massachusetts.

Team members said Massachusetts is not a very gun-friendly state. It is hard for manufacturers to sell guns in the state because of strict laws in place.

In July, the team went to the Statehouse not only to be honored for winning the silver medal but also to witness Gov. Mitt Romney sign new legislation pertaining to their sport.

According to Tyler, guns in Massachusetts are subject to the "drop test," which tests whether or not a gun will go off when it is dropped. This is costly to manufacturers, so it discourages them from selling guns in the state. Tyler said their air pistols would not pass the test.

The new legislation makes certain guns, such as ones used for formal target shooting competitions, exempt from the drop test.

Dylan Poulin

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AAU team – was approached by several scouts and invited to try-out for an elite 12-year-old baseball squad that would be representing Massachusetts in a number of different tournaments over the summer. Poulin, along with 90-plus other invitees from across the state, accepted the invitation and traveled to Cambridge for a series of try-out sessions. Wining down the talented pool of players was a difficult, time-consuming task, but in May, Poulin would learn that his stellar play had earned him a coveted spot on the 14-player squad.

While the news thrilled Poulin and his family, the person who likely took the greatest pride in this accomplishment was someone who had never even had the privilege of seeing Poulin play. George "Mike" Shattuck – Poulin's deceased great-grandfather – had also answered the call to "clean his plate." He did such an extraordinary job at it, that in 1933, the Boston Braves offered the then 17-year-old standout catcher a contract right out of high school.

But life – as it often does – threw Shattuck a "curve ball" when his father wouldn't allow him to accept the contract, saying that there was no money in baseball and that he needed, instead, to go to college. Shattuck would heed the advice of his father, go off to college, and went on to become an all-star in the political arena as a state representative out of Pepperell.

"I just know [my grandfather] is in his grave right now, giving a big thumbs-up to Dylan," said Corrie Swanson, Dylan's mother.

Swanson and her father were outstanding athletes in their own right and, along with Swanson's mother and brother, have nurtured and supported Dylan's passion for baseball throughout the years.

Poulin's baseball pedigree is not limited to just one side of the family, however, as his father, Roger Poulin, also crouched behind the plate during his baseball career. With all of this baseball blood coursing through his veins, it's been impossible to keep Poulin away from the diamond and the game that has been such a big part of his lineage.

"From the time he could sit up, we

Team members agreed that relaxing the laws would lead to more competitions in the state. They said the states that are gun friendly are also home to the teams that win the competitions.

Kelsy believes that education is the key. She said most people are unaware that shooting is one of the safest sports.

Statistically, it has the least amount of injuries, less than even Ping-Pong, according to Tyler.

As for the future of the team members, all four members plan to continue competing at the national level, and aspire to make it to the Olympics.

Kelsy has four more years in the junior class and plans on taking full advantage of it. If she places first or second individually, she could be on the National Development Team, which is a training team for the Olympics. She would then be sponsored to go to national competitions and train with national coaches.

Due to his age, this will be Tyler's last year with the junior team. After he leaves the junior class, he will enter into the Open Men's League. He hopes in his last year, the team will take first place.

would pitch him the ball and he would swing the bat," said Roger, adding that many of those early swings were right inside the house. "He was just a little baby, but you could see that he loved it."

Since those early days, Roger has spent thousands of hours helping his son to realize his "diamond dreams," throwing him batting practice until his arm was ready to fall off, taking him to pitching lessons, and helping to coach a number of his teams.



Dylan and Roger Poulin

Throw in an uncle, Bob Poulin, an aunt, Tracy, and cousins, Shelbi, Jesse, and Ryan — all of whom eat, drink, and breathe baseball — and you have a real family affair.

Many family members have made the summer sojourn to Cooperstown to watch Poulin compete against the best of the best 12-year-olds.

"It gives Dylan a chance to play with kids who are just as good, if not better than he is," said Roger. "He's being pushed and this will only help him to become a better player. This whole experience has also made him a more humble player."

In the opening game of pool play (six games total), Poulin and his teammates proved that they can more than hold their own with the other elite teams from across the country, notching a 4-2 victory over Alabama on Aug. 28. At the conclusion of pool play on Aug. 30, the top teams will advance to the play-offs, where one loss will send you home until next summer.

Championship or not, Poulin will return home after Labor Day, start 7th grade, and continue to hone his baseball skills in the hopes of competing at the next level. With commitment, determination,

and perhaps a small dose of divine intervention, Poulin may someday realize his great-grandfather's dream of playing professional ball. Seventy-three years removed from that Boston Braves contract, there is now money in baseball.

— Submitted by Nancy Bakanowsky

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