

28 Years in the Making! Prep School Championship Title Returns to Wilbraham & Monson Academy

The Prep School portion of the 86th Gallery Match Championship, sponsored by the Connecticut State Rifle & Revolver Association, Inc. (CSRRA) was held on Wednesday, February 15, at Blue Trail Range in Wallingford, Connecticut. Buses from Avon Old Farms (AOF), Suffield Academy, and Wilbraham & Monson Academy (WMA) dodged snow banks and mud piles so that 36 young athletes could put their three months of training to the test to vie for the Prep School Gallery Match individual and team championship titles.

High individual score was WMA's Dan Wesson with an excellent score of 196 including 15 center shots, edging out teammate Erika Convery by 4 center shots; her final score being a 196-11. 3rd and 4th places were determined by center shots as well with 3rd place going to Junyeop Ahn from AOF with a 190-8x and Kari Vinje of Suffield settling for 4th with 7 center shots. Suffield's Leticia Sadilina garnered 5th place overall with a score of 189-9. y 1 center shot.

Thanks to Dan and Erika's outstanding shooting, WMA's Team Easler won the Prep School Team Championship, 5 points ahead of Suffield Gold's score of 750. WMA's win was their first since 1989—a 28-year long stretch, when Dan Wesson's father, Erik fired on the Wilbraham team with Jim Remaly, Joe Zike and Tim Hogan. Another interesting fact is that Jim Remaly's dad, Len, was coaching the AOF team at the prestigious tournament. WMA has been working hard for the last several years to rebuild its rifle team back to the championship level from their 1980 accolades. During the 80's, their athletes won several league championships, set national records, won state games, and even had some of the high school shooters go on to claim some national collegiate championship titles.



86th Gallery Match Prep School Team Champions: LtoR - Assistant Coach Dean Guarino, David Jiyan Zhan, Erika Convery, Prep School Individual Champion Daniel Wesson, Leo Liu, Head Coach Bill Passy

Suffield and AOF performed at outstanding levels as well. Six-time High School League champions, power-house Suffield, losing 7 seniors to May 2016 graduation, managed to pull off a 2nd place team effort. The Gold “Siberian Tigers”, consisting of Matteo Calderan, Pat Cordes, Collin Parrow, & Leticia Sadilina tallied three 187’s and one 189 for a 750-35 score, just five points behind WMA. Sporting 9 new freshman in their 12-member squad, Avon’s “Gold” team of Feng Lu, Matt An, Jiapeng Zhou, & Preston Sayyah, fired a 723 for 5th place overall. Without a doubt, the team shooting produced some amazingly contested performances.

Other team news – Suffield’s Bronze “Bengal Tigers” fired a 735 out of 800, just one point ahead of Avon's Gold team. WMA's Team Finley posted a 698 to beat Avon Bronze by a paper thin one-point point margin. Suffield Silver “Tiger Lillies” tallied a 688 over Avon's 687, again by one point, giving Avon the all-time unwanted championship record of having three teams lose to the next higher place by a microscopic 1 point out of a possible 800.

Avon had a number of their new shooters excel. Feng Lu won 10th place with a 187; Seongwoon Cho shot a personal high 184; and, team manager Matt An, recovering from a hand injury that kept him from shooting for nearly 80% of the season, shot a personal best of 179. Until the last few weeks, hard-working Gary Zuo and Ho Young Lee had trouble hitting the scoring rings in the standing position. Both shot good standing scores, with Gary shooting two ten's and one 9 in the sighting bull and eliciting a comment, "I can't believe I am capable of shooting 10's and 9's in the standing position". Suffield’s top performer, sophomore Kari Vinje, from Voss’ snowy-capped mountains in Norway, posted a 190. With WMA on top of the heap this year and Suffield and AOF building their teams, next year should provide for some exciting matches between these three prep schools!

Orion Results of Match: <http://www.orionresults.com/csrra>
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Released 2017.02.20

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Credits to: Leonard Remy for providing 99.99% of the content of this article