

HAMMERDOWN

ACCURACY. IT'S WHAT LAKE YOKE STRIVES FOR IN THE CLASSROOM AND ON THE RIFLE RANGE.

By Tim Brouk

Yoke is a senior member of the Purdue Rifle and Pistol Club, which placed second overall in the 2016 National Rifle Association's Intercollegiate Rifle Club National Championships. He is also a stellar statistics major who already has a job as a systems and data analyst for an agency that serves Harley-Davidson and MasterCraft Boat Co.

Since Yoke joined the team, the Purdue club has finished in the top four at nationals. Of course, Yoke keeps statistics for the team and helps with statistics for the Western Intercollegiate Rifle Conference.

"Being a statistician and mathematician, I'm very analytical," Yoke says. "That's what I do and love, and that's how I was drawn to the sport. I love running rifle numbers. ... I am able to predict people's scores throughout the year and get a good idea who is on the team and who's not, because you only get to choose five team members of the 10 to shoot for the team score."

Yoke and his teammates compete in a sport that had the media spotlight during the Summer Olympics. Virginia Thrasher, then only 19, was the first gold medalist of the games in Rio de Janeiro for her skills in the women's 10-meter air rifle event. She shoots for the West Virginia University team during the school year.

Like Thrasher, Yoke takes aim with a smallbore rifle. Yoke's Anschütz rifle is an expensive piece of equipment that shoots bullets that leave clean, precise holes on paper targets 50 yards away. A typical competition sees Yoke firing 60 shots, each shot being scored from 1 to 10 points.

The sport of rifle shooting includes much more equipment than the rifle and pellets. Yoke suits up in thick, heavy protective pants and jacket. A padded glove is worn on his left hand as it delicately cradles the gun. Special boots offer flat, rubber soles for maximum grip and balance. All of this is extensively checked by judges before competition, as the slightest edge could mean a slightly improved shot, which could mean big points.

"Even the thickness of our underwear is checked," Yoke laughs. But he is serious. The sport demands preciseness in all facets.

It takes a strong mind to go with that skilled trigger finger to excel at rifle shooting.

"This sport is 90 percent mental and 10 percent physical, all the way," Yoke says. "Every shot that you take is a game of its own. When you take 60 shots, it's 60 times you have to follow a process and really be mentally tough

the whole time. If I shoot a 7, I can't let that affect the 9s and 10s that I want to shoot the rest of the match."

A native of Naples, Florida, Yoke has elevated to a team leader. His contributions go beyond keeping statistics.

"Lake is one of our best and most consistent shooters," says Mike Reckowsky, a team advisor and assistant coach. "A lot of being on the team is consistency and helping everyone stay consistent between each shot and relay, and Lake is one of those people who keeps everyone grounded."

Yoke plans on picking up a business intelligence master's degree to go along with his analyst job. With a career waiting in the wings, Yoke knows there will be room for rifle after he receives his College of Science degree.

"I shoot four days a week and hope to continue that for the rest of my life," Yoke says. "I just got my coaching certification, so one day maybe I'll be a collegiate coach and compete against Purdue, or maybe coach for Purdue."

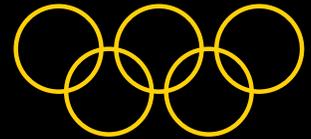
"Purdue is a great place for mental training, and you have to be mentally tough. Getting through those exams is like getting through 60 shots."



RAND[🎯]M SHOTS ABOUT RIFLE SHOOTING



Precision shooting, which is what the Summer Olympics sport is all about, has many different categories and classes, including rifle and pistol.



There are different positions and combinations in precision shooting. Some shooters concentrate on certain positions while others compete in "three position," which includes shooting from standing, kneeling and prone positions.



The Winter Olympics biathlon combines cross-country skiing and three position. Being from Florida, Yoke has competed in a biathlon that combined running and shooting. "I can say that's pretty difficult," Yoke says.



The Purdue Armory is home to one of the largest collegiate indoor shooting ranges in the nation.

