

## **Backgrounder on National Cadet Marksmanship Championship**

The National Cadet Marksmanship Championship is the fourth and final stage marking the culmination of a year's training for cadets across the country. This year's event takes place at the Major Holland Armouries in Ottawa from May 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> and involves approximately 130 cadets and their coaches from all across Canada.

This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> occasion of the annual Cadet Marksmanship Championship which brings together cadets from each province and territory to compete, work and live together for one week in the National Capital Region. While in Ottawa, the cadets participate in air rifle and smallbore rifle matches, and take part in cultural activities such as visiting Parliament Hill, national museums and other tourist attractions. Cadets can also take advantage of qualified teachers and tutors who assist them in keeping up with their studies while they compete. Best of all, the Cadet Marksmanship Championship allows the cadets to meet new people and make new friends while learning about each other's cultures.

### **Introduction**

The Cadet Marksmanship programme is an integral part of the Cadet Programme in that it teaches the cadets self-discipline, builds their confidence and allows them to compete equally in a recreational sport that is gender neutral.

The emphasis on marksmanship for cadets is on sport for recreational purposes only. In fact, most of the baseline Cadet Marksmanship programme is conducted using non-lethal air rifles that are not classified as firearms under current federal Gun Legislation. Of the 1,100 cadet corps and squadrons in Canada, only a limited number of units train with smallbore rifles in terms of Olympic-style Marksmanship and Biathlon programmes.

The Cadet Marksmanship and Biathlon programmes are two of the most popular activities in which the cadets participate regardless of whether they are aligned with the Army, the Navy or the Air Force. The benefits the cadets reap from participating in this sport have long been recognized as enhancing one's personal development. Cadets experience a sense of achievement and personal satisfaction by progressing through the Cadet Marksmanship programme. Acceptance of responsibility and gaining a healthy respect for firearms are other benefits derived from the Cadet Marksmanship programme.

### **Background**

The tradition of marksmanship training within the Cadet Programme is linked to the Canadian Forces through its mandate to support and familiarize members of the Cadet Programme with Canadian Forces customs and practices. However, the Cadet Marksmanship programme has been specifically designed for youth. For example, cadets do not participate in a military style marksmanship programme; they fire only on Olympic-style competition paper targets.

The Cadet Marksmanship programme is designed around an Olympic-style competition with an emphasis on the safe handling and care of firearms. The Cadet Marksmanship programme has produced several world class athletes such as Canadian Olympians Pat Vamplew and Mike Ashcroft, and Commonwealth Games participants Des Vamplew and Garry Bowman. Canadian Olympic Biathletes Myriam Bédard, Nikki Keddie and Martine Albert were also introduced to their sport through participation in the Cadet Biathlon programme. A number of these Olympians continue to work as instructors and advisors in the Cadet Marksmanship and Biathlon programmes in recognition and appreciation for what they and others received as youth in the Cadet Programme.

### **Safety**

Safety is paramount to the Cadet Marksmanship programme. Safety procedures are taught first and foremost to cadets before they are ever permitted to handle a rifle, and these procedures are continuously reinforced throughout their training. Furthermore, marksmanship training is continually reviewed and modified where necessary in order to ensure the safety guidelines and training standards set by the Department of Justice through the Canadian Firearms Centre are strictly adhered to and enforced.

Cadets learn to treat firearms with respect and to promote their use within the context of activities sanctioned by Sports Canada. To date there has never been a situation in which cadets have been injured as a result of participation in the Cadet Marksmanship programme.

### **Conclusion**

The Cadet Programme seeks to provide youth with a realistic outlook on firearms by teaching them the proper use and safe handling of firearms for recreational purposes only. Cadets who participate in marksmanship training understand the consequences of careless handling of firearms, and have chosen to pursue their interest in marksmanship in terms of achieving personal satisfaction in an Olympic-style sport.

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