

# Press Release



## Battle Ground Public Schools

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## ROTC teams overcome handicap, take top honors at national air rifle match

Battle Ground High School won the national championship in the “Precision Class” at the recent ROTC Junior Air Force ROTC air rifle match in Anniston, Ala. By one measure, BGHS and Prairie High’s ROTC squads were the top two performers overall, outscoring 24 other schools from around the nation.

But there were obstacles along the way for the two Battle Ground Public Schools’ teams.

Imagine a major college football team foregoing spring drills and then getting a late start – by several weeks -- in fall practice before beginning season competition. That hypothetical handicap is about what the district’s two ROTC air rifle squads faced this school year.

Last March, concerns surfaced of possible contamination caused by the use of lead ammunition in indoor shooting ranges. That led to a shutdown of the two schools’ air rifle practices while ROTC leaders, led by Col. Brian Brown of BGHS, researched other kinds of pellets for ammunition. It was October of this school year before a deal was reached and practice could begin again with non-lead pellets to replace the lead pellets, which are made in Germany.

Now, a Colorado Springs company, Predator, supplies pellets from the Czech Republic made of tin and bismuth.

Brown and his counterpart at Prairie High, Col. Pete Gray, said their teams were the only ones shooting the non-lead pellets in the Anniston match Feb. 25-26. Other instructors and competitors showed plenty of interest and were impressed at the accuracy of the Battle Ground district schools with the different pellets.

“This was the first time non-lead pellets were used in a national junior ROTC match,” Brown said. “Once the other coaches started seeing our scores, they knew these pellets were for real.”

In addition to accuracy concerns, which the Battle Ground teams’ performances might have dispelled, the ammunition is more expensive. Brown noted that those and other ROTC costs are not paid with school district funds but with private donations and grants.

BGHS and PHS also broke ground by being the first schools to compete in the “Precision Class,” which involves more elaborate and expensive rifles, clothing and boots – also paid by private funds. While it is new for the Air Force Junior ROTC program, Precision Class competition has

long been part of the competitive scene for the other services, Brown said.

“Somebody had to start this class of competition in the Air Force ROTC,” Brown said. “We’ll do well against the other branches” in inter-service competition next month.

The new national champion BGHS Precision Class team comprises Cody Johnson, Cordelia Schadler, Christian Harris, Sarah Barnes and Tyler Koistinen. Their total score for the two-day event was 4,319 and involved shooting at targets 10 meters away while kneeling, standing and prone.

The PHS team finished with 4,220 points. No other schools entered the Precision Class, but the highest score in the other division, the “Sporter Class,” came from a Texas school with 4,165 points. By that measure, BGHS and PHS were the two top teams of the 25 at the match, although differences in equipment might account for some scoring differences.

“We will now shoot against the national champions from the Army, Navy and Marine Corps in Anniston March 24-26,” Brown said. “They will all be using lead pellets while we shoot non-lead.”



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