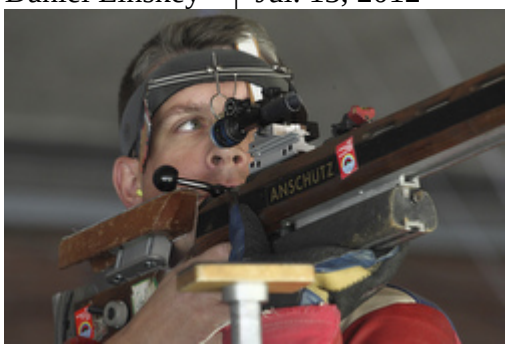
NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Xavier University grad shooting for medals at London Olympics

Daniel Linskey | Jul. 13, 2012



Sgt. 1st Class Jason Parker takes aim during the men's three-position rifle match at the International Shooting Sport Federation Rifle and Pistol World Cup in Milan in May. (CNS/Courtesy of U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit)

WASHINGTON -- One-tenth of an inch puts Sgt. 1st Class Jason Parker above some of the best marksmen in the country.

Fifty meters away from Parker, a bull's-eye less than the size of a dime has been pockmarked by his air rifle, signaling a trip to the Olympic Games in London.

This is Parker's fourth time competing with his air rifle at the Olympics.

"I'm a little bit more relaxed going into this. I know how to deal with some of the extra things the games bring now," he told Catholic News Service in a phone interview from Fort Benning, Ga.

A Nebraska native, Parker grew up around sport shooting. His dad, Dale Parker, was a competitive shooter for much of his early life. At age 13, Jason Parker's parents bought him a competition air rifle, and he used it to climb the ranks in local and state competitions.

He said his real breakthrough came when he attended Jesuit-run Xavier University in Cincinnati. The university had "just a great atmosphere. It was exactly what I needed during my life," he said.

Parker said his scores increased dramatically under Alan Joseph, Xavier's coach.

Not only did Parker end up making his first international team in 1994 as a junior at Xavier, but he also met his wife, Andrea. They now have two sons, Tommy and Wyatt, ages 8 and 5.

"Shooting is a high-pressure event," Parker said, "so it's a sense of security knowing my family is right behind me cheering me on."

His skills in the 10-meter air rifle competition and 50-meter three-position competition have led to a successful career in the military. Parker said one of the highlights of the past four years was being deployed in Afghanistan

with the Army Marksmanship Unit.

"We take our competition experiences over to Afghanistan and train the Afghan national army. Passing on our skills to those guys is a great experience, because they're fighting right alongside our soldiers," he told CNS.

Parker, a Methodist, said his faith helps him tremendously: on the range, with his family, and in Afghanistan.

"If I have a bad day on the shooting range, knowing that it is just a small piece of the puzzle makes it more acceptable," he said.

Those bad days on the shooting range do not come too often for Parker, who last year won bronze for the rifle prone competition and gold for the rifle three-positions competition at the Pan American Games.

He has stopped shooting the 10-meter to focus on the 50-meter competitions.

"I didn't do very well in 2008, and I wanted to focus on the three-position event. It has made things a little easier for me," said Parker.

Despite his professionalism on the range and his more relaxed take on this year's games, Parker said every Olympic event will make him a "ball of nerves."

The Next Step FORWARD [1]

DONATE NOW [1]

Enjoy this article?
Help support more like it by **donating today!** [1]

Source URL (retrieved on *07/07/2015 - 18:59*): http://ncronline.org/news/global/xavier-university-grad-shooting-medals-london-olympics

Links:
[1] http://ncrnews.org/webathon/donate/article-end