

Shotgunner Strikes Solo Gold

A 17-year-old woman won the country's only shooting-sports gold medal in Atlanta.

At the Atlanta Centennial Olympic Games, the United States shooters came away with three medals in the shotgun events—one of which was a gold won by Kim Rhode in the women's double-trap event.

Rhode, a 17-year-old shotgunner hailing from El Monte, California, led going into the finals, breaking 108 (120 possible) targets. She held her lead by shattering 33 of 40 birds in the final, beating Susanne Kiermayer of Germany and Deserie Huddleston of Australia by two targets.

Rhode's winning 141 total made her the youngest U.S. shooter to have won a gold medal, and she was already the youngest U.S. shooter to have competed at the Olympics. She said she knew going in to the July 23 final that she was number one. "I knew I had one bird ahead of second place, and it dropped down to two or three after that. I knew where I was at."

Two days before, U.S. teammates Josh Lakatos and Lance Bade earned the silver and bronze medals, respectively, in the men's trap event. Michael Diamond of Australia won the gold with a near-perfect 149/150 total. Lakatos and Bade were two birds back at 147 and had to shoot off for the silver. Bade missed his 28th target in the shoot-off to fall to third. A third U.S. shooter, Bret Erickson, finished 20th with a 119/125.

"I don't know how Lance felt," Lakatos said, "but I was pretty relaxed. I could have flipped a coin and been happy."

Bade said, "I couldn't lose it to a better guy. We're in the finals a lot. I've beat him and he's beat me. When you're at this level of competition, one little slip and it's over."

National shotgun coach Lloyd Woodhouse said the three U.S. shotgunners didn't win the medals at the Olympics. Instead, he said, "They won them six months ago, one year ago, back in Colorado Springs when they were training in the wind and the cold when everyone else was warm inside."

Four other Americans made the finals in their respective events but didn't medal. Shooter Terri DeWitt of Cincinnati, Ohio, just missed the women's double trap medals. She finished in fourth place with a 137. The results of the other shotgun events are as follows:

Men's Skeet

Ennio Falco of Italy broke 149 of 150 clay targets to win this event. Shooting a Beretta ASE Skeet model shotgun, Falco also set an Olympic record. Mirosław Rzepkowski of Poland took the silver, and Italian Andrea Benelli won a shoot-off with Ole Rasmussen of Denmark for the bronze.

The top U.S. shooter was Alamogordo, New Mexico, resident Bill Roy, who placed ninth with a 121/125. Todd Graves of Laurel, Mississippi, was 15th with a 120/125, followed by George Quigley of Cincinnati, Ohio. Quigley placed 26th with a 118/125.

Men's Double Trap

Australia's Russell Mark took the gold with a 189/200 score, followed by Albano Pera of Italy and China's Zhang Bing. Mark shot a 141/150 in the qualification round, setting a new Olympic record in the event. He followed that up with a 48/50 final-round tally to set a new finals Olympic record with his 189 total. David Alcoriza of Lodi, California, was tied for the sixth finals slot (138/150) coming out of the preliminaries, but he missed the second shot of a tie-breaker and finished out of the finals in eighth place. Teammate Lance Bade broke 136 targets in qualification to place tenth.



*Above: Gold medalist
Kim Rhode*