

From: Matt Emmons (mailto:mdel0s@hotmail.com)  
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Subject: My Olympic Adventure

Hi everyone,

It's a nice jet-lagged 4am morning and there's nothing better to do this early in the morning than write emails. I figured I would write a mass-email about my Olympic experience instead of writing a million personal ones - that would have taken forever! Ok, so to the story.....

It all started on July 31 when we left for Athens. We arrived on August 1. The team was going over early to do our in-processing (where we get our clothes, apartment in the Olympic village, and all that junk) before going up to Germany to train for a week. We were only in Athens for a couple days and flew back up to southern Germany on August 3. The in-processing was surprisingly painless since we were there two weeks before the Games started. Not too many other athletes had arrived yet. The in-processing can often take a very long time when there are tons of athletes, but this one was quick. We got some great stuff, too! A bunch of track/warm-up pants, a bunch of shorts (most of which are way too big for me to wear), several jackets, hats, shoes, two bags, a small digital camera, tons of shirts.....well, lots of stuff! I was loaded down coming home.

Germany was so wonderful. I would go back to the place we went just for a vacation. We flew into Munich, then rented cars and drove about an hour and a half down to a little town called Ainring, which was right on the Austrian border next to Salzburg in the Alps. As we drove in, the town was exactly what one would picture of typical Bavaria - beautiful wood houses, chalet-style, amazing hanging flower boxes... simply beautiful. Everyone wanted to live there it was so pretty. We got there by way of pistol Olympian Daryl Szarenski. He shoots in the German Bundesliga (state league) for the Ulrichshoegl team, which is based just next to Ainring.

Pretty much every day we would get up and be at the range around 8am, train until about noon, do some sort of physical workout, then go sightseeing in the afternoon. The team captain of Daryl's German team was a guy by the name of Andreas Steuer. He pretty much took care of us the whole time. A simply wonderful guy and we were amazed at how greatly he took care of us. He organized our afternoon trips, dinners, etc.

Our smallbore shooters trained at another range about 15 minutes away in a town called Bad Reichenal. We shot air at the Ulrichshoegl range. Both ranges were extremely nice and we have nothing like it in the US. The Ulrichshoegl range was 3 stories - basement had a very nice 14-point electronic airgun range, middle floor was the bar/restaurant and 25 meter range (pistol), top floor was a 12 or 14-point 50 meter range with returning targets (you hit a button and the target zips out on strings, hit it again and the target comes back). Gorgeous facility.

Bad Reichenal was really nice, as well. That particular shooting club can trace its existence back to the year 1309 - yeah, no joke! I guess way back then they must have shot crossbows and longbows, but they can seriously trace it back that far. The modern building can be traced back about 150 years, I think. They have these things in Germany called Schutzenplaques - they are basically a wooden disc about a foot or two across and are very nicely painted with some sort of depiction celebrating whatever occasion it was for. They then shoot at them and put wooden dowels in the shot-holes with the shooter's name on them. They've been doing this for hundreds of years and the Bad Reichenal range had ones dating back to the 1700's! These plaques are then hung up in the range somewhere. Every shooting club in Germany has a bunch of these things and is completely unique to the club.

The week of training was very good. I got a lot done and was shooting great. We took some great trips, too. One day we went to see this thing called the Eagle's Nest. I had no clue what exactly it was other than a building on top of a mountain. Well, we get there and talk about a great history lesson! Andreas knows a ton of people in the area and he had worked with a guy that now worked at the Eagle's Nest - his name was Gerd and I'll have to tell his story because it's amazing. Anyways, the Eagles Nest is the American name for Hitler's house in Bavaria. When we weren't in Berlin, this is where he lived. The main complex was not on top of the mountain - it was part of the way up the mountain where originally a bunch of farmers had settled and were living a nice, quiet life. Hitler visited the area in the late 1920's and fell in love with it. As he gained more power with the Nazi party, he eventually had all the farmers run out of there so he could build his own complex. He had his own home there, which was almost leveled when the Allies bombed the place, a guest home that still stands and is now the museum (people like Winston Churchill and Mussolini stayed there), barracks for troops, and several other houses for his important people - all the names you've heard if you've studied WW2 history. Connecting all these houses and buildings was a series of underground, extremely fortified bunkers - which we got a tour of from Gerd. Some of the places he took us in the bunkers hadn't been touched in a really long time - I saw writing on the wall from the French troops who first invaded them, writings from the German soldiers who manned them (stuff like "Heil Adolf")....it was truly breathtaking to experience it. The actual Eagle's Nest is a building up on top of the mountain overlooking the town of Berchtesgaden. This building was built in 1938 and given to Hitler for his 50th birthday in 1943 as a teahouse - problem was Hitler was afraid of heights. Anyways, we saw that a couple days later on another trip and that was really cool - the view was fantastic and the building itself was beautiful.

Now for Gerd's story - this guy was born in 1945 right before the war ended. He lived with his mother somewhere in eastern Germany while his father was away fighting for the Germans in the war. When Russians came through, they basically told them "get out in 15 minutes or suffer the consequences".....so they packed up what they could and took off. They ended up at the Eagle's nest after it had been occupied by the Allies. They were able to live there in the barracks while his mom worked there supporting the American troops. Gerd grew up there and he showed us the house where his sister was born. So, he's lived there almost all his life. However, his father had become a POW in the war. After the war

he had been released, but how was he supposed to find his family and how were they supposed to find him??? After a lot of talking to people here and there trying to find info, they eventually found each other. Amazing story.

That was probably the highlight of the trip, but we saw other nice things. Saw the Koenigsee, which is a picturesque lake between two mountains with a chapel on the south end of it that can only be reached by boat. Absolutely gorgeous place. Also visited Salzburg one afternoon. Nice town and got to see Mozart's birthplace there.

As a whole, the Germany trip was fantastic. Met and made friends with some of the nicest people on earth, ate some great food, shot well and did about the best thing we could have done prior to the Olympics.

On August 10 we flew back to Athens. What a zoo when we got back! The airport was nuts - people everywhere, fifteen different volunteers telling you different things...."you need to go over there and do this"....."No, no, you need to go over here".....no one really knew what the heck to do. Eventually we got through it all and got our tired butts back to the village.

For a couple days we just trained and did some little stuff exploring the village, but nothing major. I really didn't do much sightseeing or anything while I was there. Never saw any other sports, didn't go anywhere. I had enough to do on the range and was competing the whole time....besides getting sick halfway through the Games. The opening ceremony ranks up there as one of the coolest things I have ever done in my life. Walking into that stadium was electrifying, to say the least.

We gathered up and got on busses at 6pm in the village. Drove to the stadium and then they took us into the gymnastics hall to sit and wait to be lined up and taken into the main stadium. We sat for like two hours and while we were doing that, got to see and meet some cool people - saw Martina Navratilova (famous tennis player), Lebron James, Allen Iverson (huge dickhead...), Tim Duncan and the rest of the basketball team, whichever Williams-sister was there, Andy Roddick (tennis star), Jenny Finch (softball pitcher), Misty May of beach volleyball, talked to Rulon Gardener (heavyweight wrestler gold medalist from 2000). A couple of my teammates got pictures of a lot of these people. Mike Anti got one with Martina, Sarah got pictures with Duncan, James and a few others.....the whole thing was really cool.

Anyways, so when we finally walked in the stadium, the crowd went nuts. A lot of media people asked questions about how we might be greeted and it was nothing but positive. We got the biggest ovation next to the Greek team. If you saw the ceremony, the US team was right in the middle of all the teams standing in the stadium. I was right next to the circular area where the IOC president and the head organizer of the Games went up and talked. In fact, I was directly in-front of them about 15 feet away. The torch-bearer ran right by me....I was right there in the middle - so cool. Actually being there and being a part of the ceremony was a feeling that is indescribable. I was willed with pride and joy just to be there and was filled with excitement. One of

those feelings that you never know if you will ever experience again.

After that, it was time to go to work. I watched my teammates as much as I could while they were competing. Heck, these guys and girls are my teammates, so I wanted to support them as much as I could from the stands. I shot airgun on the 16th. That was the event I was most worried about - well, not worried, but perhaps least confident in. I did a ton of mental work in preparation for the match and it really paid off. Yeah, I was ninth and missed the final, but I shot a very good match. I was very very happy with my performance and fact of the matter is, my skill level in airgun just isn't as high as the guys who made the final. Yeah, I have and can shoot a 596 or 597, but sometimes a good performance may also yield a 594, like I shot. I was not at all disappointed with the match. I walked away knowing I had prepared as best I could and shot the best match I could.

Just so you know, my main goal for the Games was to go in and walk away knowing I had prepared as well as humanly possible and that I gave it everything I had while I shot and simply performed well. If I did that, good things would happen and I could walk away satisfied no matter where I finished because if I got beat, then I got beat by better shooters - which I did in airgun.

The day after airgun I got sick. I caught some sort of virus and had a head cold. I never felt completely horrible, just not 100%. In fact, I'm still not feeling perfect. My voice hasn't been right since the day of prone.

Prone was on the 20th. The girls shot 3X20 in the morning, so I was there to watch them. Our girls gave it a good go, but neither made the final. We shot in the afternoon. I felt great about prone going in - I had been shooting really well for a couple weeks and I knew my gun was good enough to win. It was a breezy day, but readable if you shot smart. I had the wind figured out and shot a great 599 with one little miss of the wind somewhere in the middle. I was shooting so tight, too - my groups were amazing. I got done and Dave told me I was going in first into the final. Athens has an indoor finals hall, so there is no wind. I knew I could finish it off from there. I got in the final, sighted in really well and shot a good final of 104.3. I had to adjust my sights a little during the final, but I kept a clear head and shot well. Winning my first Olympic medal was so cool. I can't say I expected it, but was prepared for it. It was just a great feeling to have something pay off just the way you planned. All the hard work, sacrifice, planning and training that went into it paid off like I wanted it to. Such a satisfying feeling. That afternoon and evening I had a ton of interviews to do. Since I was sick, my voice already was kinda crappy and by the end of the evening, it was pretty much gone. I could barely talk the next day.

Two days later on the 22nd was 3X40. Most, if not all of you, have heard about this one. Going in that morning, I felt a little flat. What I mean is that I think I was on the tail-end of my performance peak, or past it all together. It was really hard for me to get into the game mentally that day and I had to work my butt off to do it. I shot a really good prone and standing. I got to kneeling and had absolutely no hold. I was waving all over the place! I took a ton of time in the

sighters to get it to settle down and finally had to go for record or I was going to run out of time. I wasn't happy with my kneeling at all - if I had a good hold, there was no reason I couldn't have shot 6 or 7 points better. I was happy with the effort I put forth for it, but was ticked off that my hold was so bad and the score was so bad. So, when I finished I wasn't a happy camper, but someone told me I was going into the final in second. That was a surprise because I thought I'd shot like crap. I'd been anticipating that final for a long time because I figured I would be in it. Once we got out there, I was nervous, but was able to control it somewhat. I guess I should say I was able to control it enough to make quality shots. I was shooting a decent final for 9 shots. I was really happy with how I was handling my nerves, but that was something I had trained for. For the last shot, I was feeling the last-shot-jitters and was working really hard to calm down enough to break a good shot. I never have natural point of aim problems, so I set up like normal, came down on target and shot it when it crossed the black. I looked down and didn't see anything on my monitor.....uh-oh.....I figured the target malfunctioned, so I told the judges that I shot. After a minute, someone realized I had shot on the target of the guy to the right of me. It was an 8.1, which would have been more than enough to win the gold. I think I would have won by a point. In one shot, I pooped away a second gold medal and \$25,000. I put my gun down, was in a bit of shock because I think I've only ever cross-fired once in my life and that was a long time ago. I walked back to Dave, he gave me a big hug and I think he was more upset/sad than I was. I turned around to look at the scoreboard and saw the Mike had won the silver. Immediately my I got excited and ran over to him and give him a huge hug because I was so happy for him.

I think I gave just about everyone in the building a heart attack and I was probably dealing with it better than anyone. Hey, stuff happens, even to the best of them. An honest mistake that every shooter will make at some point in their career.....just so happened that my time was at about the most inopportune time it could have been. I have always said that things happen for a reason....I'm still not completely sure what the true reason for this one is, but I'm sure I'll figure it out soon. I'm really not too upset about it all. Partly because I have one gold medal already. That's pretty cool. However, also because that is the game we play and that's sports. You'll win some and lose some. I could get really upset, look at the negative side of it all and make it a demon that will haunt me for the rest of my shooting career and life.....but you know what? That sure as hell ain't productive for anything, so there's no reason for me to even begin to think that way. I'll live to shoot another day, life will go on.....and it will go on happily.

The only part that hurt was watching the medal ceremony. I wanted to see Mike up there on the medal stand. I walked out and unfortunately could only take about a minute of it before I had to leave. I wasn't upset that Mike was up there or jealous of him in the least - the guy has more than earned it and deserved it after the great career he's had. I was just sad for myself and that I wasn't able to be up there celebrating with him.

The show of sportsmanship after the match was over was something that I will never forget. It was one of the most amazing things I have ever

seen both on my part and everyone else who was there. Almost every shooter and coach came up to me and said how sorry they were and that they knew who the best shooter in the world was - me. Everyone in the shooting world knew who the best guy was and that's enough for me. I know how hard I worked and I how well I shot. No one can take that away from me. I may not have another gold medal or the money that would have come with it, BUT it's not always about that. It's how you play the game. You win with grace and lose with grace. You have to. That's what champions do. I sucked it up, accepted my mistake and simply moved on. I did a few interviews and handled the whole situation very well. After it was all over, several us went outside to where they were selling food and drinks and had some much-deserved beer. Quite a few of the shooters were out there. The Aussies, the guys from the Eley ammo company who have so wonderfully supported me over the past couple years, the Japanese team, Czech, Swiss, and some others. I was taking pictures with people, signing autographs and having a good time like one should after a big competition is over with. The head of the Japanese shooting federation pulled me aside to talk with me for a bit - I've know him for several years. He told me something that meant so much - he said that I am the best ambassador for my country that there could be. Lots of other people would hide their heads and talk to no one - just run and hide, but there I was having a good time with everyone else.

Seeing what I saw that day from everyone who was there and after all that I have heard from people in the US and around the world, I know even more why I play the game I play. The sportsmanship has been amazing. That is what sports are all about. Heck, that's what life's about. It's not always what you win, what you lose - it's how you've gotten there.

If nothing else, the 3p mistake will make one heck of a story that they will be talking about for years to come. I'm sure it has also drawn a lot of attention to shooting, which is good for our sport. That is completely fine with me and if that's what it takes to get people interested, good deal!

So that was my Olympic adventure. Adventure is such a good word because it was filled with so many highs and a few minor lows. Now I'm back in Colorado and will be starting work on my masters degree in business. I'm going to take about a month off from shooting and then start getting ready for the World Cup Final, which will be at the end of October in Bangkok, Thailand. I will be shooting all three events there.

Thanks to all of you who have supported me over the years. There are so many people who have made a difference in my life and I would not be the person I am today, or done the things I have done without them. Thank you so much.

Matt Emmons