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Archery Tournament Was a Record-Breaker

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Submitted by

Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor

Missouri - The sixth Missouri National Archery in the Schools Program (MoNASP) tournament at Tan-Tar-A Resort March 28 and 29 turned into a record-fest in which the state record score fell and fell again, and again.

The tournament brought together nearly 1,267 contestants in grades 4 through 12 from 81 schools to test their skills with bow and arrow. Contestants use identical equipment to shoot 15 arrows at targets from 10 meters and another 15 from 15 meters. An arrow in the 3-inch bull's eye gets the shooter 10 points, so the maximum possible is 300 points.

Going into this year's tournament, the record stood at 294 points. Eighth-grader Joe Wilder, of St. Peters, edged that figure up to 295 on Friday afternoon. The following morning, Hunter Berry, a 12th-grader from Sarcoxie, nudged it up another notch to 296. But Lee's Summit High School Freshman Shelby Winslow had the last word when she raised the bar to 297 points.

"That's just two points short of the world record," says Missouri Department of Conservation Education Outreach Coordinator Eric Edwards, who coordinates MoNASP. "She had shot that score before in local tournaments, so a lot of people

knew she was capable of doing it. Sustaining the necessary focus at a big, state-wide event can be difficult, but she pulled it off.”

Focus is essential to success in archery. It also takes discipline to follow the steps in drawing and aiming a bow with proper form. These are skills that anyone can develop. They also are fundamental to academic success.

“Teachers are our best spokesmen,” says Edwards. “They tell absolutely remarkable stories about students who struggled with classwork and behavior problems until they got into NASP. The kids get excited about archery, and since participation in the program depends on good behavior in the classroom, their behavior improves. When shooting, they learn how to focus their attention and apply a process to a challenging task. The next thing you know, their grades improve, and seeing their accomplishments in higher shooting scores and better grades boosts their self-esteem. It’s no wonder teachers love NASP.”

MoNASP participation grew at an amazing rate early in the program’s history, and continues to accelerate. Edwards estimates the number of shooters and spectators at this year’s state tournament at more than 10,000. The Osage Beach Police Department had to be called in to direct traffic.

Asked what is behind this remarkable growth, Edward says, “Kids say it’s just fun. They enjoy spending time with their friends and shooting with them. They like the fact that they all use the same equipment, so kids of all sizes and shapes have an equal chance and can succeed. It’s great for spectators, too. You aren’t 100 yards away from the action. You are right there.”

Scores at the state tournament also are on the rise. Edwards says he thinks this is because students who joined the program while in grade school now have years of experience and practice under their belts. Winslow is an example. She has been part of the program since 4th grade. With another three years of practice, a MoNASP shooter could post a perfect score of 300.

“I am so impressed with the scores this year” says Edwards. “Each year the scores just get better and better. Kids from Missouri should have a very strong chance at making the podium at the national tournament in May.”

Missouri will send 500 shooters to the national NASP tournament May 9 and 10 in Louisville, Ky., where they will compete against 10,000 other shooters.

MoNASP is an affiliate of the National Archery in the Schools Program. It is coordinated by the Conservation Department and the Conservation Federation of Missouri in partnership with more than 300 participating schools and numerous state and local supporting organizations.

Sarcoxie R-II High School, whose MoNASP program got started just two years ago, won its team division for the second year in a row. George Guffey Elementary School in Fenton has dominated the team competition, winning first place all six years Missouri has held a state tournament.

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