

**USPE - Report – Police Sport UK Shooting Section – 17th USPE, Suhl, Germany
17th to 21st June 2019**

I was asked in January 2019 to attend the USPE in Suhl in June 2019 as an assistant to the rifle section manager Toby who was likely to be selected as a competitor at the event and as such would be better to concentrate on his event rather than everyone else. As this is the first USPE for us since 2011 I was more than happy to attend to assist him. I think my comment was yes as long as I don't have to organise it.

At the beginning of February 2019 while at a competition in Den Haag I received a text message that read, "Toby's Dads not well he is not going to USPE you need to organise, all paperwork will be emailed to you." A little taken back at this point but hoping that Toby's dad would be ok I continued with my event for the day, although a little distracted.

My first task was to find out what had been done in relation to our entry, who was attending and what paperwork had been completed. Urgent text messages from Holland to our shooters followed with requests for them to attend the event as part of the UK team. I also needed to find out who our delegate would be as I was aware our section Chair would not be going.

The team was a small one as a lot of our shooters have either retired, taken a career break or due to the late nature of the call, have other things in play but we managed to scrape together a rifle but no pistol team.

Male

Prone Rifle	Matt Dixon	West Midlands
	Mel Mutch	MOD
Three Positions	Kevin Sinclair	Metropolitan
Air Rifle	Kevin Sinclair	Metropolitan

Female

Prone Rifle	Leah Brough	Metropolitan
Three Positions	Leah Brough	Metropolitan
Air Rifle	Leah Brough	Metropolitan

**Delegate
Judge**

Ian Campbell
David Goodfellow
Phil Smith

On my return to UK the official paperwork was completed and sent over to Suhl for our confirmation paperwork to be finalised. Team clothing was agreed with PSUK (they agreed extra tracksuit bottoms as rolling around on the floor in prone does not do the kit a lot of good) and ordered from Zoo sports.

Next came the flights and as usual which airlines do and do not accept rifles. I spent some time looking through the different airlines for a carrier that flew to Frankfurt and carried rifles. The result decided the departure airport as Birmingham and the carrier as Lufthansa. Flight secured and transport arranged for Germany from the airport to the venue, 3 hours away. Speaking to the team we decided against meeting up the night before at Birmingham as it was easily within driving distance for us all.

The kit arrived in good time and fittings were completed at the short-range championships with a couple of pairs of tracksuit bottoms being exchanged for alternate sizes. Kit sorted, flights sorted, paperwork sorted it was then, for me, just wait for the date, for our team it was get a bit of practice in and get themselves ready for the competition.

Departure date arrived and we all arrived at Birmingham airport early to make sure we got the rifles safely through and onto the flight, I remember spending 2 hours in Manchester last time and seeing our rifles sat on

the tarmac. I must say it was surprisingly easy to get the rifles and bags checked in, everyone had the correct paperwork with the correct rifles – bonus, extra time for coffee and nibbles before the flight. Lufthansa flew us into Frankfurt on time and discharged us along with the rifles into the airport giving us plenty of time to meet with the reception team and some of the other competitors. A bit of a route march to the bus park and then on to Suhl. First stop was the range to drop off the rifles etc then onto the Hotel Ringberg, rooms sorted twin rooms in the main with a single room for one of the guys; evening meal enjoyed, giving a welcome end to a long day travelling.

Day one and over to the range, equipment control completed – no issues all sailed through and onto the ranges for unofficial training in the morning. The afternoon saw Leah and Kevin on their pre event training they would be our first competitors on the firing point. They would both be in the same range at the same time just different ends of the range. At the team discussion a decision was made that athletes would not be expected to be at the qualification shoots of the others as they had their own preparation to complete, however should a final place be achieved it was hoped people would try and attend.

Back to the hotel and changed into blazers and slacks for the opening ceremony held at the 'Place of German Unity' (the town square) it was hot in the square so shade was sought out by most prior to and after the parade took place. The welcome addresses completed and party followed but for Leah and Kevin it was back to the hotel and prepare for the next day's competition. The technical meeting that evening did not throw up any low ballers so things were looking settled for the competition start the next day.

An early breakfast for Leah and Kevin and first transport out to the range. Both shooters collected their equipment and made their way to the ranges for an 0830 call to the line.

A shaky start for both Kevin and Leah but both settled as the match went on. Kevin achieving near his average and Leah achieving 7th place in qualification getting her a place in the final. A good result for both athletes however Leah was suffering still from an RTC last year and was feeling some pain. The finals hall (a separate range from qualification) so a move of equipment was in order and settling time for Leah, my first time sitting behind the shooter as a coach, sure I was more nervous than she was and I would rather shoot than sit behind worrying about someone else. The team were in force (as much as 3 people can be) in the stands behind supporting and encouraging her. Alas it was not her day and she finished in 8th place in the final, still no mean feat 8th in the USPE.

The afternoon saw the pre event training for Leah and Kevin in the mixed air rifle event this was the first time either of them had taken part in a mixed rifle event so a check of the rules was completed to make sure we knew them and were not going to make any silly mistakes the next day. Mel, Matt and Leah were also on the line in their pre event training ready for the prone. The next day would see all of our athletes in action with Leah taking part in 2 events.

An early start again for Kevin and Leah as their event was an 0830 call to the line. A good result for Kevin and Leah saw them achieve 6th place overall narrowly missing out on the final which is the top five teams. A rest now for Kevin and a short break for Leah before firing points are to be readied by Leah, Mel and Matt for the prone.

The prone event no longer has a final it is all on the 60 shots with the highest score taking the gold. The three shooters were at different areas on the range so my step count went up that day moving from one shooter to the other. Leah shot a steady match improving with every ten-shot string but alas it was not her day and she was down the table in 11th place, still one event to go for her though. Matt had a cracking start to his bid for glory with a 103.5 in his first string putting him into 3rd place after the initial string. Mel was not having such a good start and scraped through his first 2 strings only just breaking the 100.0 in each. Matt continued his steady shooting keeping himself in the top part of the table jumping between 2nd and 5th and back as he continued his shoot. Mel settled after his first 2 strings, relaxing into his shoot, each of his strings was better than the one before with his final string of 105.2 being the highest of the competition. Strangely enough three people achieved a 105.2 string each did it in their last string and all three were medallists. We then had an agonising

wait for the other shooters to finish to see where our shooters had been placed. When all the waiting was over Matt had achieved 5th position less than 2 points from a medal position with Mel taking 3rd place overall. A good shoot for both and the UK first medal since Paul Hatton in 1983 in Vingsted. A very pleased Mel, team manager and team on the bus back to the hotel that evening.

No let up for Leah and Kevin though with pre event training taking place for the 3 positions after the prone had finished and an early call to the line again in the morning so celebrations for Mel's achievement would have to wait. The following morning saw Leah and Kevin called to the line at 0830 hrs again for the longest of the matches they had taken part in with 40 shots in each discipline to complete. Leah's kneeling leaving her in a good position going into the prone dropping a place in the prone but still in good position the standing was the last discipline for her to complete leaving her in 10th position just 2 places away from qualification. Kevin had a good kneeling to start his bid in the 3 positions and continued to shoot well in prone and a steady standing to leave him in 14th place over all. A busy week for our shooters but a successful one.

<u>Final results</u>	<u>Air Rifle</u>	<u>Mixed AR</u>	<u>Prone</u>	<u>3 Position</u>
Leah Brough	Q 7th - F 8th	6 th	11 th	10 th
Kevin Sinclair	21 st	6 th	N/A	14 th
Matt Dixon	N/A	N/A	5 th	N/A
Mel Mutch	N/A	N/A	3 rd	N/A

All that was left was the evenings party and travelling home.

The evening event 'Award Ceremony' was held at our hotel so our only traveling was in the lift thankfully. The evening's festivities were enjoyable with details exchanged and special awards presented by our hosts. Our judges, David and Phil, managed to pick up a couple of Special awards themselves for their efforts during the course of the event.

The next morning saw us on an early transport (but not that early) for the 3-hour bus ride back to the airport. On arrival at the airport we had a slight trek again from the bus to check in which again, much to our surprise, after the initial 'you're taking rifles to UK, are you sure?' went quite smoothly and we were able to have a leisurely coffee prior to our departure for Birmingham. An uneventful flight saw us back on time and quickly through customs. As we had all arrived in different vehicles and with different people picking us up, our goodbyes were said in the airport before our onward travel home.

A very good result for us this year with four shooters, a 3rd place medal 6 top 10 finishes over 7 individual and 1 team competition. All that is left is for me is to thank the team for their work and their professionalism during this event. The way they conducted themselves and the effort they put into the event that was hastily organised on my part was excellent. I would also like to pass my thanks onto the PSUK for the funding that allowed us to attend the event.

Pauline Thornton
Team Manager USPE 2019