

# Don Heinzman Column: More high schools giving trap shooting a shot

By [Don Heinzman](#) on June 21, 2013 at 9:53 am

*by Don Heinzman* - With gun purchases and requests for gun permits at record levels, it's no surprise to learn that one of the fastest-growing high school sports in Minnesota is trap shooting.

In just four years, this sport has grown from 30 to more than 3,400 male and female shooters from sixth through 12th grades and from three to 115 teams.

In trap shooting, the shooters use shotguns with shells and fire at clay pigeons. The winner destroys the most pigeons.

The Minnesota State High School League, in a close vote, sanctioned the state high school trap shooting tournament for 2014, just like all of the other high school sports. A state high school trap shooting championship meet also was endorsed by the Minnesota High School Coaches Association, the Minnesota Association of School Administrators, the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals and the Minnesota School Boards Association

In June of next year, Minnesota will be the first in the nation to have a high-school-sanctioned state trap shooting tournament.

Recently, 2,039 young shooters competed in the State High School clay target competition at the Alexandria Shooting Park. A team from St. Michael-Albertville won the championship, followed by Hastings, Hopkins, Prior Lake, Jordan, St. Francis, Worthington, Rogers, Wayzata, Alexandria and Elk River.

Members of the Minnesota State High School Clay Target League hope the high schools will treat this like any other sport with a photo in the yearbook and a letter for the participants.

Proponents of the sport claim it is safe. Since the Minnesota State High School Clay Target League was formed in 2001, there have been no injuries and no school gun policy violations after 3,000 participants have fired 1.5 million rounds.

Participants cannot have a shotgun in their car when it's parked on the school lot. After school, they get their guns and ammo from homes and practice at local gun clubs.

They first must pass the Minnesota Firearms Safety Training Certificate to be eligible for the teams.

Proponents say the teams are well organized. A minimum of five is needed to start a team and there must be a coach for every 10 shooters.

It's a coed sport, and it's open to disabled shooters as well.

Moreover, it gives kids who can't make the varsity sports something constructive to do.

Proponents point out that the sport also prepares young people to use a firearm safely and to be careful and accurate hunters.

The coaches in the league are all volunteers. Students pay on average a fee of \$300 to participate, so little direct payment comes from the school district.

All that said, some wonder if under the high school curricular umbrella, teaching students how to shoot a shotgun in a recreational sport and bringing the gun culture into the school house is part of the school's mission.

That's no longer a question, because high school trap shooting teams are here to stay and the number of participants is continuing to grow. The case has been made that educating students on how to use firearms safely and properly while practicing good sportsmanship are good lessons to teach.



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