

Cadet earns silver as marksman

By Jake Courtepatte

Growing up with brothers over a decade older, Tyler McKechnie took to challenging video games at a young age.

"I played a lot of shooting games growing up," said McKechnie. "It got me into the aspect of marksmanship then."

While some teens may be content with hours playing the latest Call of Duty title, the Aurora teen has taken his talent from the couch to the real world.

Now 15, McKechnie has turned his passion for marksmanship into more than a hobby. His four years in the Army Cadet Corps have proven he's a skilled shooter.

McKechnie was one of five local residents from 2799 Queen's York Rangers Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps to represent Aurora at the Regional and National Marksmanship Championship last month.

As a team, the cadets overtook some elite company to secure second place out of 291 teams in Ontario. Individually, McKechnie took home another silver medal, good enough to be selected as a member of Team Ontario for the national competition later that weekend.

The competition is based on a combined score of prone and standing shooting positions, of which McKechnie says the technical aspects vary greatly. That particular day, his standing shooting made up for a poor prone performance.

"My standing was amazing. I've never shot that well standing before."

With a score of 81 standing, it was a personal best for McKechnie.

"I was really proud of that score."

However, there wasn't much rest for the silver medal champion. Wrapping up provincially on the Saturday, the nationals took place on the Sunday.

"Really, all you could do was hope for a good night's sleep," said McKechnie on his short preparations.

Following a short practice relay, it was a grueling day of over a handful of championship relays. As of press-time, the final results have not been released, but McKechnie believes Team Ontario is "hovering somewhere in first or second place right now. It was tiring."

While the Cadet Corps' main aim is to provide instruction on the proper use and safe handling of a firearm, there's no denying the physicality of the sport.

Captain Christopher Barron added that the sport is both physically and mentally demanding.

"Having to shoot in both the prone and standing position means that these cadets are truly skilled, physically fit, and able to focus their concentration under varying conditions."

Physically, McKechnie works on keeping himself in good form, and continues to play hockey within the Aurora Tigers organization.

He has three more years of making a name for himself within the Cadet Corps. Even then, he doesn't plan on giving up the guns.

?I'm already looking at getting into civilian marksmanship. It's something that I think I'll be a part of for a long time.?