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Norman officers continue shooting prominence at regional championships

By Jacob McGuire | Transcript Staff Writer Aug 5, 2018



About 50 competitors from the region, which consists of Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, Mississippi, Tennessee and Iowa, compete at the Dale DeBerry Memorial Regional and State Police Pistol Combat Championships.

Kyle Phillips / The Transcript



There were nine Norman Police Department officers considered among the top sharpshooters in the state in 2017.

Norman's finest continued that success again this year.

"Last year was the first time that we put nine officers on the Governor's 20," Norman Police Sgt. Joshua Barker said. "Fundamentals are something we try to hone here at the Norman Police Department. If we are ever involved in a shooting, it dramatically increases our chances at staying alive. God forbid that would ever happen."

The Governor's 20 recognizes the top twenty law enforcement officers shooters from each state. Barker, who was named the department's range master following Sgt. Shon Elroy's retirement in October, was among the top gunslingers last year, as well as this year.

Barker, along with other members of the department's pistol team competed against the best shooters from around the region at the annual the Dale DeBerry Memorial Regional and State Police Pistol Combat Championships.

Barker said there were representatives from Texas, Colorado, Mississippi, Tennessee, California and Iowa at the competition. He said in the past, there have been competitors come from Alaska and Vermont who were visiting family at the time of the competition and decide to compete.

"We have people that come every year, and they say it's the best regional that there is in the nation," Barker said. "It means a lot for us to be able to continue that heritage. We really appreciate the chief letting us host it every year."

The shooting competition allowed competitors to showcase their skills with pistols and shotguns. It started Aug. 2 and ended Saturday. Participants shot from as close as 3-yards, and as far as 50-yards.

Other Norman representatives that were named to the Governor's 20 include Lt. Jeremy Garnand, Sgt. Robert Wasoski, MPO Robert Maldonado, officers Jamie Crowe and Elliot Gribaudo, and retired officer David St. John. The officers now set their sights on the national shooting competition in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in September.

Barker said that success started with the department's first range master, Lt. Royce O. Weddle.

Weddle was a national champion shooter, displaying proficiency with any gun that was put in his hand. His accolades include five National Rifle Association Regional Police Combat Revolver Championships, a U.S. NRA National Police Department Revolver Championship, and a National Shooters League National Championship with a record-setting score.

"That's who our heritage began with; and we continue to build on it today," he said.

Barker said it isn't just about the feeling of competition, but also honoring a fellow officer. He said it is named in honor of Sgt. Dale Ellis DeBerry, who died in 1998 during a physical training exercise.

“It’s such an honor,” DeBerry’s widow Tonya said. “Dale loved shooting and competing.”

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Jacob McGuire is the Crime and Courts reporter for The Norman Transcript. He earned a BA degree in Communication from the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma. McGuire is currently pursuing his MPA at the University of Illinois-Springfield.