

Old Gun and Bullets Inspire Martynov

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Sergei Martynov of Belarus competing with his 13-year-old gun on Friday. **Sergio Moraes**

LONDON — Using a 13-year-old gun and bullets from the Soviet era, shooter Sergei Martynov easily won the men's 50-meter prone rifle with a world-record score to give Belarus its first gold medal of the Olympics.

The 44-year-old, who serves in the air force at home, scored 705.5 on Friday to finish ahead of Belgium's Lionel Cox on 701.2 with Slovenia's Rajmond Debevec third on 701.

The mark bettered that of previous world record holder Germany's Christian Klees, who scored 704.8 at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

"I am absolutely delighted. This will mean everything to my country," Martynov said through an interpreter, before going off to smoke a cigarette. "I have been over 15 years in this discipline and it is one of the best feelings."

The Belarussian was using a 1999 rifle and rounds that were made in 1985, a combination that

brought him bronze medals in the discipline at the 2000 Sydney and 2004 Athens Games.

"A rifle isn't a wife, but you have to look after it and give it tender, loving care," Martynov said of his prized possession.

"I'm not exactly prejudiced against any recently made rifles or rounds. It is just when you choose you choose something that feels more comfortable," Martynov told reporters. "I have a [new] rifle back at home, but when you are getting ready for the Olympic Games, it is too late to change anything, so I am yet to lay my hands on it."

The stone-faced Belarussian could probably give the new gun away, such was his precision Friday. He equaled the world record in the 60-shot qualifiers, where he scored a maximum 600 to finish one point ahead of Cox.

Martynov then started the eight-man final, where shooters fire 10 shots aiming for a maximum score of 10.9 with each, strongly as he extended his lead over Cox to 3.2 after six rounds.

With a lowest score of 10.2 in the final, Martynov showed a consistency that could not be matched by his opponents. He shot a maximum 10.9 in the ninth round to bring the crowd to their feet and afford himself the luxury of a massive 4.1 lead ahead of the finale.

After firing a 10.6 with his last shot, Martynov cracked a shy smile and punched the air in delight in front of a packed crowd in the indoor range at the Royal Artillery Barracks.

Cox fired a 10.4 with his final shot to claim the silver and hold off a charge from 49-year-old Debevec, who had started the final three points behind the Belgian.

The 31-year-old Belgian was surprised as anyone to be standing on the podium.

"I will be back to my job as a public service inspector in two weeks' time. I work full-time but I will stay until the end of the games," he told reporters.

"I did not expect to make the final, so I have not made any plans. I don't know if I will do anything today but I am sure I will celebrate."

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