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Aiming to inspire students for 50 years

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2. [Districts](#)
3. [North Canterbury](#)



Smallbore rifle shooting coach Ross McQueen with a plaque commemorating his 50 years of service at Rangiora High School and the teacher in charge of shooting Anna Commons. PHOTO: JOHN COSGROVE

Smallbore rifle shooting coach Ross McQueen's dedication and commitment to mentoring Rangiora High School students has been marked with a plaque commemorating 50 years of service.

McQueen started coaching and mentoring students in 1974 when the Rangiora Smallbore Rifle Club was invited to help students learn about shooting and firearms safety.

“For them to undertake the courses, we (the club) needed to have a member who was a range safety officer on site whenever they were there and that’s how it all started,” McQueen says.

Now 50 years later, McQueen continues to facilitate the training of a growing number of future shooting champions at Rangiora High School.

Samantha Plows, a former student and now a law and science student at the University of Canterbury, says she was a very “wound-up kid” at school.

Through her participation in the small bore shooting group, she learned to calm down.

“He was an incredible support over the years I was shooting and competing.

“He helped me to overcome my fears, as he showed me how the patience and concentration needed to shoot well would calm me down, he’s an amazing person.”

Finishing her last year at Rangiora, champion shooter Georgyna Orchard says McQueen is an inspiring man who offers massive support.

“He is my number one supporter and is always very helpful.”

The teacher in charge of shooting, Anna Commons, says she is proud to work alongside Ross.

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“For an impressive 50 years, Ross has dedicated himself to the betterment of Rangiora High School through his unwavering commitment to coaching and mentoring students in the nuanced art of Smallbore rifle shooting.

“His passion for the sport has left an indelible mark on the school's sporting legacy.

“His tireless efforts have not only produced champions within the school's ranks but have also contributed significantly to the broader landscape of New Zealand's competitive shooting scene.

“Both this year and last, Ross's coaching prowess guided a young woman to secure four prestigious New Zealand titles, a testament to his ability to nurture talent and inspire excellence.”

She says the achievements underscore the profound impact he has had on the lives of over 1200 young men and women he has coached, as well as the enduring legacy he has cultivated within the school's rifle shooting programme.

McQueen says he was humbled by the recognition and has thoroughly enjoyed teaching the students at Rangiora and also at Kaiapoi High School.

“It’s been a fantastic relationship between the schools and the club and through the 50 years.

“ I have only had to remove one student from the programme.”