The Sacrifices of an International Shooter

Build the Pipeline: Teach a Kid about PPP

Dynamic Duo: Bud Kucera & Jim Shaver

It's Not Too Late for Xmas Tens

Is Your Grip Solid?

Channel Your Nerves Into Gold Medals
**ELEY**

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British made target ammunition of the highest quality

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**ELEY World Cup 2010 medal tally**

**2010 ISSF World Cup 1 – Sydney**

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Visit ELEY website to download guides and locate your local UK dealer.
Did you know? Rachael Heiden & Collin Wietfeldt both got their start in the Scholastic Clay Trap Program. Now, they are members of the National Shotgun Team, training for the upcoming World Cup season.

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Looking Forward

As you read this article we will already be well into 2011. The first World Cups and the trade show season will be behind us but there is much to look forward to as well. The National Junior Olympic Championships for rifle and pistol is a priority April event. The talent that continues to emerge from our National Junior Olympic Championships (shotgun included) is very impressive and is a credit to our clubs and coaches nationwide.

The World Cup circuit will be characterized by the strongest competition ever with the majority of 2012 Olympic quotas being awarded this year. USA Shooting is excited to host our tenth International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) rifle and pistol World Cup at Fort Benning, in Columbus, Ga. We look forward to this event as it has proven not only profitable, but many USA Shooting Team athletes find success statewide. The ISSF World Cup USA will be hosted May 14 to 23 with the help of the Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, Valley Hospitality and U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit, all of whom have been excellent partners.

The ISSF activity schedule dictates a change in our USA Shooting National Championships. The shotgun championship will now be hosted in June at the International Shooting Park in Colorado Springs and the rifle and pistol nationals will be held in July at Fort Benning. Both programs and schedules are available on the USAS website and by contacting the Competitions Division.

As the result of growth in the shotgun sports, we will co-host a separate national championship for the Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) that will be followed directly by the USAS Junior Olympic Shotgun National Championships with both events at the International Shooting Park located at Fort Carson, Colo. We look forward to working the Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation to promote and build the SCTP athlete pipeline.

In the early fall, the USA Shooting Team will send athletes to the World Clay Target Championships in early September to Belgrade, Serbia. This competition includes junior events that provide the experience and motivation for future world-level success. If you recall, our juniors had outstanding success at last year’s World Shooting Championship which bodes well for the future.

Speaking of juniors and youth programs, Mike Theimer is now leading that effort and will be actively promoting the Progressive Position Pistol program, three-position air rifle shooting and working with SSSF to grow our youth development programs and athlete talent pool. Theimer and National Paralympic Coach Bob Foth will also be actively involved in hosting the bi-annual Coaches Conference in November. That event not only offers continuing education to our network of coaches but in conjunction, also offers the opportunity to attend NRA-USAS coach certification courses. The Level III shotgun coach course is being finalized and will become available later this year as well. Please watch for announcements and more information on the coach college and certification courses on the website.

Another exciting development is the implementation of our gifts program. While establishing a formal gifts endeavor has been a priority for some years, this effort has come to realization with the hiring of Tom Harris as the Chief Development Officer. Tom will work with the USA Shooting Team Foundation and Buddy DuVall in implementing a program that can have a most positive impact on the future of USA Shooting.

The activities and events mentioned above are only a representation of the 2011 calendar which points to a busy year for everyone involved in Olympic-style shooting. We look forward to sharing those rewarding experiences with you!
At the start of your competition you will face a number of challenges. How do you deal with them? Athletes often ask, “How do I keep from getting nervous in competition?” The answer, short and sweet, is: “You don’t.” Your body is naturally programmed to respond to threats or fear in a certain predictable way and you cannot prevent it. You can, however, mitigate the effects of anxiety.

Anxiety is a natural physiological response to fear, pain or a perceived threat. It is commonly referred to as the “fight or flight” response and is associated with the symptoms experienced during a major competition: increased heart rate, increased blood glucose, increased blood flow, increased respiration and pupil dilation. These physiological symptoms are designed to prepare your body to engage in battle or to run from it. Yet, our battles on the field or range are mostly waged in our heads as we struggle to achieve top performances during competition. While an optimal level of these physiological changes is desired, too much of a good thing is disruptive.

Typically, athletes will employ one of two coping styles when faced with too much anxiety or nervousness—an approach or an avoidance style. The approach style of coping addresses the situation directly, with an aim to problem-solve. The avoidance style of coping is a short-term solution that usually involves repression, disengagement or rejection of emotions.

Repressing feelings of nervousness is difficult because these feelings don’t disappear simply because they were ignored. In fact, they often loom larger in your mind. Meeting mental challenges head-on and finding a solution that works is preferable. When athletes possess well-developed and practical coping skills, they are more effective in managing the stress and demands of training and competition over the long term.

Most coping strategies can be categorized as thought control (self-talk, positive thinking), attentional focus (concentration), emotional control (relaxation, visualization) and behavioral control (rest, set routines, control of environment). Because coping strategies are dynamic and fluid, successful athletes might use one or more of these tools during the course of a competition, depending on the situation.

Almost all athletes use self-talk, whether deliberately or not. Self-talk is a personal dialogue in which the athlete interprets feelings, perceptions and convictions and gives him or herself instructions and reinforcement. Obviously, for self-talk to be productive, it must be positive. Cue words or phrases can be used to key in on specific tasks (“See the target”) or provide encouragement (“I can do this”). Concentrating on the things you can control is an example of positive self-talk.

Worrying about weather, who’s on your squad or mechanical break-downs are all elements out of your control. The only thing an athlete really has control over is the next shot they are about to shoot. Affirmation statements are a form of self-talk that an athlete prepares in advance of competition to reinforce the belief that he or she possesses the skills, abilities and positive attitude necessary for successful performance. Affirmations should be believable and vivid (“I have a laser-like focus on the leading edge of each target”).

When used on a regular basis, both self-talk and affirmation statements give the athlete a tool to use when anxiety interferes with attention control. There are four distinct zones of attention; as athletes, we often switch our focus between them as needed. These attention zones are as follows: Broad Internal (e.g., analysis of a missed target), Narrow Internal (e.g., feeling your finger on the trigger), Broad External (e.g., attending to environmental cues) and Narrow External (e.g., seeing the leading edge of the target). All of these zones are needed at any given time, but keeping our attention in the right zone at the right time is a challenge for most of us.

Understanding the dimensions of attention and different types of coping strategies will assist the athlete in putting together a successful plan for competition. Attention training teaches the individual how to eliminate negative thoughts and to bring concentration back to the appropriate focal point. Because our conscious minds cannot give quality attention to more than one demanding task at a time, recognizing a negative thought and replacing it with something such as your routine (what it specifically takes for you to execute the shot) gives your mind one right thing to focus on.

Once the negative thought is replaced with positive self-talk, the next step is to center the attention internally by taking a deep breath and directing your thoughts to make a conscious adjustment in attention—“Bring it back” or “Redirect.” Now narrow the focus to a task-relevant cue—“See the leading edge”—and execute.

Being continuously aware of what you are thinking about can be a difficult and weary task at first, but with practice you can be proficient at “thought stopping” and have a powerful tool in your competition arsenal. Stay Army Strong!

* Sergeant First Class Terri DeWitt
The Minute Man Sportsman's Club (MMSC) in Burlington, Mass., embodies USA Shooting's mission of promoting the shooting sports and encouraging participation in Olympic-style shooting. As a club fully immersed in grassroots development, MMSC strives for the growth and betterment of the sport and its young athletes.

Established in 1934, MMSC shoots American Trap, American Skeet, five-stand, wobble trap and International Skeet. The club owns its 100 acre range, consisting of 10 skeet fields, 14 trap fields and one five-stand/sporting clays field. As home to the Minute Man Sharpshooters, an SCTP junior clay shooting team, MMSC works with athletes as young as 10 years old all the way up to college age. With 350 members, the club sponsors a number of youth sanctioned shoots, including the Massachusetts State Junior Olympic Championships and the New England Collegiate Shotgun Championships.

In an effort to increase its Olympic shooting involvement, MMSC is working towards constructing a bunker and becoming a USA Shooting Certified Training Center. MMSC is collaborating this year with USA Shooting and Midway USA Foundation to run a youth camp to introduce more young athletes to International Trap and Skeet with USAS athletes and coaches assistance. With raising enough fund, MMSC has high hopes that gaining Certified Training Center status will increase its membership and interest in international shooting.

MMSC contributes much of its success to a great volunteer staff. When most clubs worry about getting enough shooters interested and involved, MMSC struggles with getting enough volunteers and coaches to cover the demand for instruction in New England. With over 300 collegiate shooters alone, keeping up with the numbers of athletes can be difficult. MMSC not only struggles with having enough staff but having a sufficient number of guns to train a large group at their facility.

Along with a great volunteer staff, a few key people that make MMSC run smoothly are Hank Garvey and his wife Mary Garvey, Bob Hawkes and the late Bill Anzaldi. Hank has played a major role in growth of collegiate involvement with the club. Currently 5 teams are associated with MMSC: Harvard, Harvard Law, MIT, Tufts and Northeastern. Mary became involved in the sport through her husband Hank, and the two of them serve as the head coaches of the club. Hawkes and Anzaldi both brought over 60 years of shooting experience and knowledge to the team.

MMSC views its young athletes as the future of its club and of the sport. USA Shooting is thrilled to have the support and involvement of such a great club with a powerful mission.

MMSC brought its young talent to the International Shooting Park in Colorado Springs, Colo last year with the success of its Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) team. Placing 3rd in the SCTP Open Team Division, this outstanding trio of Nate Lundie, Tyler Auger and Hank Garvey are strong representatives of MMSC and junior shooting.

Fifteen year old Nate Lundie first began shooting after attending a gun safety class with his father. A SCTP team was being formed, and Lundie jumped at the chance to join. Now, with five years of shooting under his belt, Lundie has participated in the State and National Junior Olympic programs for the last two years. Outside of shooting, Lundie is currently a freshman in high school, plays the guitar and is a member of the freshman jazz ensemble. Lundie has high hopes to make a USA Shooting
team and would someday like to take his efforts to the collegiate and Olympic level. One of the biggest challenges he faces is finding a bunker to train that isn’t an eight hour drive from his home. Nevertheless, Lundie appreciates the importance of commitment and persistence even in the face of adversity that shooting taught him. Lundie says that sticking with shooting is one of the decisions he has made in his life.

Tyler Auger, 17 years old, started shooting rifles with his father at the age of six. One day he picked up a shotgun and was hooked ever since. Auger’s first involvement in the Junior Olympic program came in 2009 when he joined MMSC a month before the Massachusetts Junior Olympic competition. Auger continued his participation in 2010 and saw much success both statewide and nationally. When not on the shooting range, Auger spends his time at school, working or with his friends. With eyes on the Olympic Games, Auger believes that through determination, anything can be achieved. Like Lundie, Auger’s biggest challenge is finding adequate training time with bunkers being 4 to 7 hours away. Not only is commuting time consuming but costly as well. Bottom line, Auger loves to shoot and will continue to do so well into the future.

At 12 years old, Hank Garvey is the youngest member of this team. His father, also Hank Garvey, is his coach and brought him into the shooting world at 5 years old. Garvey has competed in both the 2009 and 2010 State Junior Olympic programs and made his first appearance nationally in 2010. As the top J3 in Double Trap at the 2010 NJOSC, Garvey shows great promise. Currently a sixth grader, Garvey enjoys playing basketball, hunting, fishing and writing on his blog. Garvey looks to the future with a long term goal of becoming an Olympic shooter. Working his way there, he hopes to make a USA Shooting team and become a NJOSC Champion. Similarly to his teammates, Garvey travels hours to the nearest bunker for training and finds the lack of nearby competitions difficult. As a young shooter, Garvey hopes to see more shooters his age participating. Garvey believes shooting has opened many doors for him and is proud to carry on the fun family tradition.

With an exciting 2011 Junior Olympic season ahead, USA Shooting is thrilled to see where this SCTP team takes its level of shooting this year!

Nicole Levine
Releasing a shot is easy. *Trivially easy.*

What about when the results matter? That is, in a practice session when no one is watching and when we do not care about the result. How often do we painfully struggle to release a shot that counts? Why do we repeat thought and activity patterns that perpetuate the pain and fail to meet our outcome goals?

Have you ever had a shot where the gun seemingly shot “by itself”? That is, a completely effortless and painless shot. You were disengaged from the activity at the moment of delivery and may even have been startled by the shot going off. How often does this happen to you? What causes this phenomenon? Is it desirable or should it be avoided?

The answer to the last question depends on who you ask. When describing such a shot to one coach, his response was that such shot deliveries were serious errors and to be avoided at all costs. “We call those ‘Christmas tens.’ Those are incorrect shots and must be avoided,” said the coach. This coach teaches athletes to take full, active control of the shot process and release.

Whereas, many athletes will report that the “accidental” shot was a deep ten or a good bust (nothing but dust). Yet, they do not try to learn why this happened or how to use the technique because it isn’t status quo.

The “Christmas ten” or “auto-magical shot” is not an error. It is not an unearned lucky gift, rather an honestly earned reward. It is a reward for hard work, focus and a properly managed shot process—especially the mental (e.g., appropriately directed focus and awareness) and emotional (e.g., outcome and control issues, and anger management) aspects of the process. Because trusting the deeper parts of the mind is a foreign idea with western thinking. We are so focused on outcome and ingrained in physical and technical matters. Because we are culturally biased against anything psychological, we depend on physical and technical aspects of releasing the shot, while under active thought and control.

Athletes and coaches will often say that shooting is 90% mental without understanding what that truly means, and then spend 99% of their time and effort on physical and technical aspects. We pay lip service to the mental and emotional aspects, fooling ourselves into believing that we know what they are, that we have them mastered and that we just need more practice or adjustments. We are rarely taught about the immense, seemingly unbelievable, power of the human mind or how to “tap in” to that power.

In 2002, after reading a description of these things, Abhinav Bindra wrote: “I have been a shooter trying always to make things happen. Meaning I have been always very conscious. But accidentally sometimes it happens to me that I got into the zone of forgetfulness and shot 597, 596, 598. ... It is the biggest key to performance which can be written only once experienced. I have experienced it two times in my life... results were 596 and 597 at World Cups.”

At the time, Abhinav held the junior men’s world record for air rifle, having won a World Cup at 18 years old. He was also the 2006 World Champion and 2008 Olympic gold medalist in Men’s 10m Air Rifle. Despite these experiences and eastern childhood, he was later exposed to western training, which caused him some difficulty. He employed an active process called “manufacturing the shot,” yet he is unable to train as he preferred. Not too many years ago, a quite lengthy discussion thread took place on a popular online target shooting forum. The topic was about the “subconscious shot.” The originator of the thread, a well-respected and experienced pistol shooter, explored his experiences and engaged others in the topic. It was clear that a very few of the participants understood the topic, while most were lost. While the handful had experienced the “surprise shot” and noticed the typically excellent results,
they were unsure if it could be trained and reliably applied in competition. They did an excellent job of describing the experience, yet were troubled by “fliers” which came too often and which were quite wide of the mark.

Whenever an athlete makes a fundamental change in their “program” they must expect their results to be less than before while they train the new aspect. This is backwards from how most athletes and coaches evaluate a change—after a trial that is too short to be valid, they accept or reject the technique based solely on whether the score went up or down. The results are not valid. Similarly, these athletes needed to maintain their levels of score and could not afford the time to devote to the new technique.

When one has been trained to shoot with active thought and active control, it is difficult to relinquish the perceived control and work with a foreign technique. Athletes who have made this change have discovered that groups open up and at first, fliers are pretty bad. Yet, just as when they began their shooting careers, both groups and the number of fliers began to shrink, and before they realize it they have surpassed their old level of outcome.

What causes the good “surprise shot”? When the active part of the mind manages the shot process, it usually harshly judges mistakes and worries about the past or future, it results in fatigue and/or distraction. Whereas when the deeper parts of the mind are allowed to manage the shot process, it knows how to hit the center every time without fail.

“When the active part of the mind manages the shot process, it usually harshly judges mistakes and worries about the past or future, it results in fatigue and/or distraction. Whereas when the deeper parts of the mind are allowed to manage the shot process, it knows how to hit the center every time without fail.”

And then it happened. At one point in one of the shooting sessions that day, the coach noticed a profound change in the athlete during a shot. She became much steadier, all the tiny muscle tremors disappeared in her body and the rifle settled on target as if held by magnets, the shot release came almost at the instant the rifle arrived on the area of aim and it was released with incredible smoothness.

The athlete noticed a profound change—having been surprised by the completely different “feel” of the shot process—turned her head to the coach with a look of awe. The coach, knowing what had happened and not wanting to destroy the moment, smiled, and without a word gently gestured for her to return to shooting. Shot after shot she prepared herself mentally, focused on the “doing” of the present moment, then aggressively and decisively performed her shot process without care or worry of outcome, and allowed the shot to shoot itself without trying to take control of the shot. She was stunned at the results, at the ease of shot delivery and in the feelings it evoked within her as she shot.

The next day she wrote: “You’ve taken me back to the source of all shooting... why’s and how’s and it is AMAZING! Until now, I’d never had that floating peaceful shooting feeling carry over at ALL, let alone so strongly into the NEXT DAY!!”

What had happened? How did she do this? Through careful assessment and polish of her physical and technical game, she gained confidence and the
foundation was set for working on the mental and emotional aspects of her game. She was a quick study, intelligent and thoughtful in her analysis and evaluations, self-aware and had a very open mind. They worked on her self-talk and self-thought, replacing unhelpful techniques with techniques proven to facilitate and aid ultimate performance. As all this work “came together” for her, she began to trust herself and her game. Her trust became deep enough that she could begin to let go. Eventually, she allowed it to happen and that’s when she and the coach noticed the big change during one of her shots, and then on the subsequent shots.

This did not take place in a comfortable and familiar environment, nor in a pressure free practice session. She was on an unfamiliar range with a coach she had only just met and loud center fire rifle noise around her. She was also being asked to perform unfamiliar intensity drills that truly emulate the intensity of the highest levels of competition. The conditions she faced were quite challenging. She channeled the pressure in positive ways, had faith in her capabilities and challenged herself to perform without regard or concern of success or failure.

Those who have studied “flow” (popularly called the “zone”) will recognize that the degree of challenge she faced, which is often debilitating for many athletes. Yet, it is an aid to the well trained athlete. She experienced “flow” and the “auto-magical” shot which seemed to “shoot by itself.” There may be distractions looming around you, but you must be inwardly calm, quiet, confident and decisive while in the eye of the hurricane . . . and the shot will release itself. Remember, tens or nice clay target busts are like babies, puppies and kittens—you can helplessly chase them all over the house to no avail or sit down on the floor, smile and relax and effortlessly catch all of them. The choice is yours.

- J.P O’Connor

Based in the Atlanta, Ga., area, J.P O’Connor (jpoc@acm.org and http://www.america.net/~jpoc/) is involved in shooting as a competitor, is a former Assistant National Coach – USA Paralympics Shooting Team, serves on the National Coach Development Staff in both rifle & pistol, coaches the rifle and pistol teams at North Georgia College & State University, and coaches a junior club. He enjoys working with a number of pistol and rifle athletes from around the country, ranging from beginners to the highly advanced, in clinics and one-on-one private coaching. Previous installments of this series may be found at www.pilkguns.com.
Pistol Trends for 2011

It seems like we just came back from the Beijing Olympic Games, but it is midway into London 2012 already. So, what has happened in pistol world since Beijing?

The entire shooting world was busy in preparing for the World Championships last summer in Munich, Germany. This is the biggest match of the quadrennial and a checkpoint on the way to the Olympic Games. It was also a start in earning Olympic Quota places for London 2012. We have overcome one hurdle, the World Championships, and are busy preparing for the Olympic Games. The World Championships crowned several champions and identified the athletes and countries that are ahead of the competition. China is traditionally strong in all pistol events, yet did not dominate this time and finished with only two pistol medals along with Russia, Korea and Japan. The surprise performance of the match came from Serbia with three medals.

Statistically, more than half of the World Championships medalists and finalists will make the Olympic finals. In pistol events, 9 out of 15, 2008 Olympic medalists were in the finals of the preceding 2006 World Championships in Zagreb. Medal winning scores in pistol events were in line with Olympic scores and most of them higher than at the 2006 World Championships. Top qualification scores in 2010 World Championships were: 572 points (570 points in 2006) in Men’s 50m Free Pistol, 587 points (583 points in 2006) in Men’s Rapid Fire Pistol, 590 points (584 points in 2006) in Men’s 10m Air Pistol, 588 points (591 in 2006) in Women’s Sport Pistol, 386 points (387 in 2006) in Women’s 10m Air Pistol. Eight countries had two to six appearances in the final and nine countries had one appearance. The top three countries were China with six, Russia with six and Serbia with five appearances.

This year will be the last opportunity for competitors to win Olympic quota places. For the USA Shooting Team, we will have four World Cups and the Pan American Games this season to acquire especially at the first World Cup in Sydney, Australia.

In late January, the U.S. Pistol Team returned from the Bavarian Airgun competition in Munich, Germany. This is one of the largest international competitions in air pistol and air rifle. It is a season opening match and the final stop before the road to World Cup competition. Bavarian Airgun is a good indicator for the expected results in air events for 2011. Once again, athletes demonstrated very high performance levels in air events. It took 391 points to win in both matches in Women’s 10m Air Pistol and 588/589 to win in Men’s 10m Air Pistol. A score of 383 points in Women’s 10m Air Pistol resulted in a 12th place finish, while a score of 583 points made the finals for Men’s 10m Air Pistol. I had a chance to talk to the Ukraine’s Olena Kostevych winner of both days in Women’s 10m Air Pistol and 2004 Olympic gold medalist. My main question was: “What does your training day look like in preparation for a major match?” Here answer is Figure 1. Clearly the rest of the world is working hard to secure quotas and medals in 2011 with grueling schedules such as the above. Our U.S. Pistol Team has proven its competitiveness winning medals and making finals in ALL major competitions in the last three years including the Olympic Games. I have no doubts that we will win more medals and quotas in 2011. Good luck to the pistol team this year and competition abroad and at home. I just want to remind all shooters that luck comes with skill, and skill comes with hard work.

National Pistol Coach Sergey Luzov
FUNDAMENTALS OF RIFLE SHOOTING: Aiming & the Eye Part III

Many beginning shooters use too small of an aperture in the mistaken belief that they can aim more precisely at the middle of the target. If you walk into a photography darkroom without benefit of a flashlight, you are unable to see due to the lack of light. Likewise, a person standing in a thick fog bank during the day cannot see anything; even though there is plenty of light, everything appears white.

What is it that allows us to see objects? It is the difference in brightness or the amount and color of the light reflected from the surface of objects in the viewing area. We call this difference brightness contrast. Brightness contrast is one of the factors affecting perception. Under optimal conditions, the contrast of the black bull and the front sight ring (that absorb most of the light) and the white background (that reflects the majority of the light) results in a high level of brightness contrast. Thus, we are able to clearly see the target and the front sight ring. However, under certain conditions of brightness contrast, the target and/or front sight ring cannot be seen clearly when aiming. Rather, it may appear gray or as an indistinct blob.

The exact cause is not well understood and the amount of the effect varies per shooter; however, it appears to be related to the ratio of contrast to the total amount of light entering the eye. The practical solution is to alter the ratio by changing the amount of light entering the eye through one of four methods. First, the rear aperture opening may be changed. Second, reduce or enlarge the front aperture size to change the ratio of the amount of light in the ring of white around the target. The third option is to use filters or tinted shooting glasses. These work by reducing the amount of total light entering the eye. Be cautious of the filters used, as some remove portions of the spectrum that may make vision difficult, i.e., a yellow filter removes blue and violet light. Another option is to change eye relief slightly, which has a similar effect to changing the rear iris.

Adjustable Rear Iris

The artificial pupil of the rear sight aperture already takes advantage of the spherical aberration problem by allowing only those light rays that will pass close to the center of the lens. However, ambient conditions are not always ideal for vision. For greater control, an adjustable rear iris can compensate for different light conditions to make the front sight ring and the target (the contrast between the sight picture elements) as clear and sharp as possible for the current light conditions. The artificial pupil (aperture of the rear sight) is smaller than the pupil of the eye, so adjusting the iris diameter results in a barely perceptible difference.

Image clarity is controlled by opening or closing the rear iris. A reasonable rear iris setting method is to close the iris down (slowly, to give the pupil time to adjust) until the sight picture perceptibly darkens and then open it up until maximum contrast is seen between the black and white areas of the sight picture. The result should be the clearest sight picture possible. Assuming no other filters and “normal” eyes, the crossover between too dim an image and sharp image to grayed-out image often occurs around 1.0-1.2 millimeters or so. This is why all fixed size metal irises provided with sights are 1.1 millimeters.

Flattening

Sometimes, one side of the target or aperture ring will disappear or grey out. A brightness contrast problem or astigmatism may aggravate this flattening, but the more likely cause is the shooter looking through the edge of their pupil. The light passing through the edge of the pupil refracts more than light passing through the center of the opening. The more radically bent light rays strike the retina at a sharper angle and may not stimulate clear vision. This is the same spherical aberration problem discussed previously. The solution is to adjust the cheek piece to ensure the shooter is looking directly through the center of the rear aperture iris. Using an accessory parabolic mirror mounted on the rear aperture can help the
AperAture SizeS for BeginnerS And intermediAte rifle ShooterS

Air Rifle Smallbore

Prone
3.8 to 4.0 mm 3.6 to 4.0 mm

Standing
4.0 to 4.3 mm 3.8 to 4.2 mm

Kneeling
3.9 to 4.1 mm 3.7 to 4.1 mm

Selecting the proper front aperture size depends mostly upon the athlete’s ability to hold the rifle still, but also on each individual’s eye and available light. Select an aperture size that allows the apparent movement of the entire target to remain inside the aperture during the best part of the hold. Using an aperture that is too small often leads to poor trigger control habits like “snap shooting” or jerking the trigger as the sights zoom across the bull. On the other hand, if the aperture is too large the shooter will have a difficult time determining if it is sufficiently centered on the target, though trigger control can be smoother. The optimal size front ring will allow the shooter to recognize instinctively that it is centered on the target and yet contains all the hold movements during the best portion of the hold.

Many beginning shooters use too small of an aperture in the mistaken belief that they can aim more precisely at the middle of the target. In some extreme cases, the shooter uses such a small aperture that it covers the edge of the target. The line of white that they see is actually a diffraction pattern from around the inside edge of the front aperture! Almost everything they see while aiming looks centered but they cannot really tell if the sight picture is centered or not. The athlete’s eye will also fatigue more quickly using the smaller aperture than with the larger aperture as they attempt to discern the very thin white line between the ring and the target. This is especially problematic with longer courses of fire.

In any case, the apparent size of the front ring should be approximately two times the apparent width of the aiming black. Only those shooters who have excellent holding skill should consider anything smaller than one-and-a-half times the width. Just like adjustable rear sight irises, replacing the fixed-size front sight ring with an adjustable front sight iris insert is useful for quickly and conveniently changing size between positions or adapting to variable light conditions.

The interesting thing about aiming a rifle is that it does not need to look perfect for the shooter to fire a 10. This is due to the finite size of the 10-ring itself and the size of the bullet or pellet. The center of the air rifle pellet hole can be as much as 2.5 mm (8.0 mm for small-bore) away from the exact center of the target and still score 10 points. This amount of error can actually look quite bad, but as long as the trigger is pulled smoothly the shot will still be a 10. In fact, as long as the edge of the target does not appear to touch the inner edge of a correctly sized front sight ring, and the trigger is pulled smoothly the worst value one should expect is a wide nine or a close eight!

Of course, if the sights are not aligned correctly, then the error can be much greater. Even with the aiming black perfectly centered in the front aperture the shots strike the target farther away from the center because of the angular error. Even a small error in alignment has a large influence on the location of the shot. The place to look for the solution is in consistent head position and cheek piece adjustment.

The table is a "Rule of Thumb;" start beginners with the largest size and as they improve move down in small steps. Actual sizes will, of course, depend upon the distance between the rear sight (actually, the shooters eye) and the front sight. This distance is the sight radius. Short sight radius rifles need smaller apertures, while rifles with long sight radius need larger apertures to achieve the same sight picture. Smallbore targets at 50 meters and 50 feet appear smaller than air rifle targets, and therefore need smaller apertures.
With smallbore rifles, shooters can extend the sight radius using an extension tube attached to the end of the barrel, often called a "Bloop Tube," because of the sound they make on firing. The idea originated as a way to improve vision for older shooters who had trouble seeing the sight picture clearly. Adding a tube requires a larger aperture in relation to the added length of the sight radius (i.e., a 20 centimeter tube will require about a 10-15% larger aperture). These tubes also change the relationship of the number of adjustment clicks needed to move the strike of the bullet on the target. The longer the tube, the more clicks it will take to move the shot the same distance on the target compared to the original sight radius.

**FILTERS**

Often found as an integral part of the adjustable rear iris assembly, different color filters can compensate for different light conditions. When used in conjunction with rear iris adjustments, filters provide greater control over the amount and color of the light reaching the eye. The advantage is that they are relatively inexpensive compared to individual filters that attach to shooting glasses. Moreover, it is also easier to change the filters by simply turning a ring on the assembly while in position. An important concept to understand is all filters, regardless of color, even clear glass in shooting glasses, reduce the amount of transmitted light, some more than others.

Gray filters absorb light over the entire spectrum, reducing intensities but not removing any particular wavelength. These are useful on very bright days where the sun is behind the shooter and the targets are brightly illuminated. Filter sets usually include two or three of these gray filters in varying density—light, medium and dark.

As they reduce the amount of all light colors transmitted to the eye, dark gray filters can reduce visual acuity. By decreasing the total amount of light entering the eye on very bright days, the brightness contrast can be fine-tuned with the adjustable iris to give a clearer sight picture. This can help reduce strain on the eye under extremely bright conditions and compensate for any loss in visual activity (as compared to not using a filter).

Yellow filters absorb wavelengths in the blue, violet and ultraviolet regions. Short wavelength light is easily scattered and these rays refract more when passing through the lens of the eye and decrease visual acuity. During days of moderate visibility due to fog or haze there are plenty of tiny water droplets or dust/pollution particles in the air to scatter the blue light even more. As the blue region of the spectrum does not help visual acuity, removing this portion of the spectrum is advisable. In dull, hazy or foggy conditions, the yellow filter can provide better contrast between light colored and black objects allowing clearer aiming. Yellow filters reduce the amount of light entering the eye by approximately 17–20%, so on days of heavy fog or darkness, it may not be advisable to use any filter. Ranges illuminated mainly with fluorescent lights also have more scattered blue light, so yellow filters may improve sight pictures.

Green filters transmit wavelengths of around 500 nm (green) as well as yellow, orange and red while absorbing some, but not all, of the blue violet region. The green filter is a good intermediate filter to use when gray or yellow does not seem right.

Reflected or scattered light has random orientations. Polarizers are a special category of filter that transmits light to remove the dazzle or glare reflected off shiny surfaces. They are gray filters that do not remove any particular portion of the spectrum. If two polarizers are used in tandem and their planes are parallel,
then the maximum amount of plane polarized light is allowed to pass. As the polarizers are crossed, less light can pass through until no light is transmitted when they are turned 90 degrees relative to each other.

There are many other filter options with some of the new rear sight iris/filter accessories available. In some cases, two or more filters can be used in combination. Each filter removes a specific region or regions of the spectrum. The best way to learn how each will affect (improve or degrade) sight picture clarity is to experiment systematically in a wide variety of lighting conditions and keeping accurate notes as to their effectiveness.

**Eye Relief**

Rarely thought of as a way of influencing sight picture quality, proper positioning of the rear sight can improve sighting efficiency. Eye relief is the distance between the pupil of the aiming eye and the rear sight aperture. Shooting reference books commonly list one to four inches as the proper amount of eye relief, yet this also includes other variables.

The further the eye is from the rear iris opening, the smaller the amount of outside world the shooter sees around the front sight tunnel. This positioning makes it easier to keep the sights aligned properly, but produces a darker image as the amount of light reaching the eye is reduced. The closer the eye is to the rear iris, the more light reaches the eye and more things can be seen around the front sight, like wind flags and number boards, but, it is harder to keep the sights aligned. The position of the head on the stock, and thus the location of the eye, must be consistent and on the same point to maintain sight alignment from shot to shot. Key considerations are consistency in the placement of the cheek against the stock, both vertically and horizontally, as well as the distance to the sight. Errors in placement of the head are a prime source of many unexplained shots.

Since significant changes to the sights alter the location of the eye (subsequently the head also), it is important to zero the rifle, find the proper head position and adjust the cheek piece as needed to set eye relief. Then move the rear sight on its mounting dovetail until the shooter sees the appropriate amount of view around the front sight. For top performance, a shooter must negotiate the position of the rear sight to permit alignment of the sights.

A common error is setting the sight so close that it rests against the shooter’s forehead or glasses. This can cause reflexive flinching, blinking or anticipation of the shot caused by bumping the shooter on recoil. None of which are good for accurate shooting.

**Adapting to Changing Light Conditions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Potential Solution(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bright light conditions</td>
<td>Reduce the size of the front aperture, reduce the size of the rear aperture and insert filters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor light conditions</td>
<td>Remove all filters, open up the rear aperture and try a larger front aperture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright to Dark</td>
<td>A starting place for the shooter when the change is from bright to darker light conditions is to try a larger rear aperture, reduce the density of filter if used or remove completely and change to a larger front aperture in that order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark to Bright</td>
<td>Try a smaller rear aperture, increase the density of filter, and reduce the front aperture in that order.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Changing eye relief by moving the rear sight will change the center of the shot group on the target. This should not occur during the course of fire unless the shooter can take additional sighting shots. Assuming the mounting dovetail is machined parallel to the bore, moving the sight forward will cause the shots to strike the target higher; whereas moving the sight rearward will result in lowers shots.

**Guidelines for Adapting**

Utilizing all the various tools available to enhance the sight picture quality, the following are some general guides for the shooter and coach. Again, each shooter is an individual and must ultimately decide for alterations for different conditions. The objective is to find the combination that yields the best possible sight picture.

Though it may seem that having adjustable everything is essential to for success, it is not true. From a coaching perspective, stay away from tubes, gadgets or similar accessories when working with beginners and intermediate level rifle shooters. The extra complexity of detaching, cleaning and re-attaching the tube, for example, can create more problems than improvements. Teach beginners how to shoot and earn points through training, rather than attempting to buy points through gadgets. In many cases, gadgets get in the way or may become a crutch with shooters learning bad habits instead of how to shoot properly. Wait to introduce accessories until there is a valid need and after they have a thorough understanding of their function and use.

Successful rifle shooting depends on the efficient use of the shooters visual apparatus. With the basic understanding of how vision and aiming work, a shooter can negate the effects of unpredictable lighting. Handling those effects during competition is a tactical skill that can only be acquired through training. It would behoove a shooter and/or coach to have not only detailed records of ranges and conditions previously encountered, but also solutions that helped achieve an optimum sight picture.

- Marcus Raub
Canterbury Trap have developed another world first, a fully automated Bunker system that only requires one shooter to set up and operate.

The Canterbury Auto Trench replicates a traditional 15 trap ISSF layout with simple push button controls for set up and changing between ISSF programs.

The system comes complete with Voice release and control console.

Additional features include multi positional practice modes and ABT/Continental/Wobble trap facility.

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Growing up in Pendleton, Ore., and having been exposed to firearms at an early age, it wasn’t a surprise that shooting would end up being a large portion of my life. I began competitively shooting American Trap through the Amateur Trap Association (ATA) when I was 12 years old. Given my natural aptitude for the sport, it was easy to land a spot amongst the top ATA shooters and remain there with minimal training.

The world of Men’s International Trap, Men’s Double Trap and Men’s Skeet is a different animal. I wish I could say that when you start shooting the international events it will only take a year or two to become competitive, but that is not the reality. There is no set time period that dictates when a shooter is supposed to reach the height of the sport—I have seen people compete at a high level in only a few years and others in 14 years. That is a big reason why there are a lot of people who come and go, and tend to do so quickly. The international game is a very humbling experience.

There is one thing that these athletes have in common—sacrifice. When you look at an international shooter who is dominant and competitive at a national and world level, you are looking at a person who has sacrificed a lot of things, including family, friends and money. Once they commit, they have no choice but to place the majority of their everyday life on the back burner and dedicate an astronomical amount of time, energy and knowledge to the sport. We do this to achieve not only the high level of competitiveness, but to ultimately earn an Olympic medal.

Personally, my path to shooting world-class scores has taken longer than the average international medalist from the United States. I started shooting the Olympic discipline of Men’s Trap in May of 1998 and didn’t win my first National Championship until...
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I finally broke through on the world stage in 2009, winning my first World Cup gold medal in Cairo, Egypt, followed by a second gold in San Marino only a month later. That is 11 years of grueling training, day-in and day-out, to become a world-level competitor.

How did I do it? Well, I will start by crediting a great support group. I have a wonderful family, great friends and teammates. Surround yourself with positive influences. If you are around people who are negative, then you tend to think and believe that way. In order to go out on the field and beat the best in the world, you have to believe you are the best in the world. Dan Vitch off, the mental trainer for many U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit athletes, refers to it as possessing unshakable confidence. You don’t get that by being negative.

You have to be prepared to sacrifice things you want to do in order to get to top the charts and the podium. You have to assume that your adversary is practicing right now. You have to push when you don’t want to. You have to train when you don’t want to, and you have to overcome the mental blocks when quitting early or taking a day-off seems so much easier. Nobody is going to hand you anything. You have to want it, earn it and go take it. Dedication and commitment are critical to becoming an elite athlete.

Fitness has been a huge factor in my success. You may laugh because shooting is not a physically demanding sport, but I believe that a healthy body leads to a healthy mind, and it is widely accepted that shooting is a mentally demanding sport. When you are out-of-shape, poor fitness hinders your attitude with a low self-esteem and low performance. Again, you need confidence.

One common factor that I notice about many successful shooters is that they participate in as many matches as they can to feel the pressure of competition or they train with other top-level athletes. The best case scenario is to do both, but if shooting an abundance of matches is not feasible, it is good to train with other top-level athletes rather than solo. I prefer this because it allows athletes to push each other. Let’s be honest, if you can’t handle getting beat, you better hang the gun up and pick a different profession because the next level requires sportsmanship. You have to accept the losses with the wins.

A big key is coaching. Don’t ever think that you have shot long enough or won enough that you think you don’t need a quality coach. Also, don’t limit yourself to one person. I think everyone has something to offer. But be careful because some coaches or self-proclaimed experts believe that their method is the only way. In my personal opinion, a good coach is someone who takes your style and tweaks it a bit to suit the shooter. If you look at the overall spectrum of shooting athletes, nobody shoots...
the exact same style. So make sure that you use a reputable source when deciding who to work with.

Just like coaching, equipment is a factor that you can choose yourself. Don't talk to one person, run out and buy the first shotgun you see. Talk to other shooters, shop around, try out a few models and then decide what you like best. Three common shotguns used in international competition are Perazzi, Beretta and Krieghoff. They all have different models and variations that can be set-up to fit your build or style. Yes, these are more expensive than your average shotgun, but they will more than likely stand the test of time and you can hand it down to your grandchildren. I shoot a Krieghoff and have always had consistent performance, but the most important thing is finding a shotgun that fits your body and shooting style. These three companies produce a good quality product that will last a lifetime.

The best thing for a person to do is to get involved into an organization that will help you obtain your goals. In the earlier stages of the game, you might want to get involved with some groups such as 4-H programs, college shotgun programs, or the NSSF (National Shooting Sports Foundation). Later on you can join and shoot for USA Shooting. Another option, and the route that I chose, is the U.S. Army and the United States Army Marksmanship Unit (USAMU). It has been a huge contributing factor developing my shooting career. Everything I have previously discussed, the Army has provided for me. It is a place for my family and a place that I call home. It has surrounded me with outstanding friends and colleagues, that I also call soldiers and teammates. The USAMU is a first-rate organization that provides the means for soldiers to be the best shooters in the world in whatever discipline of shooting that they decide to do. The U.S. Army provides physical and sports psychologists to augment my training. The U.S. Army also provides all the amenities of fitness programs and outstanding facilities. These are just a few of the many things necessary to become a world class shooter. I think Lieutenant General Freakley said it best: “The Army teaches you Excellence, Responsibility, and Leadership.” Everything you need to be the best in the world or anything you aspire.

Staff Sergeant Ryan Hadden
Last time, we briefly covered some of the key elements of the pistol shooting position and posture (USA Shooting News, Volume 18, Number 6). Today, I would like to share some thoughts regarding Pistol Grip and the Gripping. When practicing shooting as a sport, it is very important to understand the role of your grip and way of gripping, determine your requirements and then choose the type, principles, technique and the modifications needed.

The idea behind this article is not to teach you the technique how to individualize your grip but to give you some ideas why and based on what principles you may need to plan and make grip adjustments. If you do not have the technical abilities and/or the tools needed, it is better to leave the job to a qualified gunsmith or stay with the adjustments available from the stock grip.

First, let us define the terminology. Pistol Grip is a device (part of the pistol) designed to help you to hold the pistol and allow you to control the gun when aiming. Gripping is the action of holding the pistol when shooting. Following the principle, Simplify - Rationalize - Improve, let start with:

**Pistol Grip**

Your grip is the adaptor, the connector that makes the pistol and your body one system. Here are some of the purposes that the grip serves:

- Easy and safe operation of the pistol;
- Allows you to hold securely the gun;
- Ensures proper alignment of the system: Target - Sights - Eye;
- Ensures desired direction and effect of the recoil, gravity, physical conditions and your reaction to them;
- Makes possible to perform consistently uniform gripping;
- Gives you the ability to control the gun with great precision.

In most cases, you have a very wide range of possible modifications of the pistol grip. Before you start any corrections of the grip or the production of a grip from scratch, you have to check the requirements for the specific event published in the rulebook.

**What goals do you try to achieve by modifying your grip?**

1. First and before all, do not make any changes and/or modifications to any part of your weapon that will or may jeopardize your or other individuals’ safety. Do not modify or disable any safety feature of the gun.

2. It is best to have the line of the sights to be as parallel and as close as possible to the line Hand - Arm - Shoulders. The reason - to have the direction of the recoil aligned with the planes of maximum stability (as described in the Posture and Position article) and ensure that the support against the recoil is where the maximum support is. (Figure 1) If you shoot with an angle between the shoulder line and the arm at less than 180 degree, the direction and the area of your palm that opposes the recoil shift to the left, toward the base of your thumb instead of align with the radial aspect of the arm. This results in increased movement of the pistol inside your hand and decreased strength and ability to recover after the recoil.

3. It is beneficial to bring the centerline of the bore as low as possible in order to reduce the leverage of the recoil. Before any changes, check the Rulebook. For example, in Rapid Fire Pistol “The centerline of the bore must pass above the web (between the thumb and forefinger)” - ISSF rule 8.4.2.1. However, this requirement is not valid for Free Pistol. There are two ways to lower the barrel. One is to “sink” the pistol more into the grip. This option is usually limited by the construction of the gun. Moreover, the designers most probably have already made everything possible to achieve this. The second is to increase the grip angle. There are different theories regarding this modification. Some call for increasing the angle to the limit, so that the hand is “fixed” in one of the possible directions of movement. Other recommend “straight” grip close to the angle of Colt 1911. The idea is to have consistency of the angle for all “bullseye” events.

In my opinion, the right position is somewhat in the middle. I like the idea of increasing the angle but without going...
close to the limits. (Figure 2) Keeping precise alignment of the sights into the desired aiming area is a very delicate job. Similar to the calligraphy, the precision and ease of the movements are of great importance. Take a pen, bent your hand to any limit and try to write your name. It is not easy or pretty, is it? It will be same with your ability to control the sights. Always keep in mind that you need this perfect balance between precision, control, stability, and strength.

4. Now, having this two main alignments done you need to make sure that even with eyes closed, when you lift the gun and point to the desired aiming area, you will find the sights properly aligned when you open your eyes. Succeeding in this will make it much easier to maximize the precision and control over the sights and increase the chance to execute a perfect shot.

5. If all these requirements are not complicated enough, add the need to finish the grip in a way that will ensure consistent position of the gun in the hand. The consistent posture, position and pistol holding will help you build muscle memory and develop ability for subconscious control and better focus and control of the front sight. What you need is create reference points on your grip. If you take a piece of smooth PVC pipe and try to grip it with closed eyes so that you hold it exactly the same way, in the same place and at the same orientation every time, your chances of success are nil. If you cover the pipe with a layer replicating the imprint of the palm (Figure 3), your chances for exact reproduction are 99%. The minor inconsistencies in gripping will be based on the different swelling of your hand due to variations of temperature, weather, body weight and others. This brings us to the second part of this article:

THE GRIPPING

The decision of how to hold the pistol should be determined by the shooting discipline, the individual specifics of the shooter, the technique and the selected strategy for the particular event.

It is a very popular association to hold the pistol as if one is “holding an egg”, firm enough so that it does not fall, but not too strong, so that it does not break. This may work for the single shot events, such as Air and Free Pistol. For the dynamic 25-m events, such as Rapid Fire, Sport, Standard and Center Fire Pistol and the “Time” and “Rapid” fire portion of the bullseye matches, you need to grip the pistol differently. The shooter has to recover the recoil kicking with 1/5 HP for .22LR or 2/3 HP for .45ACP (I am not aware of an “egg” that kicks that hard) for five consecutive shots done in a very short period of time with no option of readjusting the gripping. Steady, fix position of the pistol inside the hand is of crucial importance. To reduce the movement of the pistol inside the hand the shooter has to use more power when gripping the pistol. Just do not over squeeze, because this will bring undesirable increase of the muscle tremor. And do not forget - keep the gun align with the axes of support. (Figure 4)

Another theory teaches to hold the pistol with your thumb and middle finger, when the ring finger and the pinky are just laying on the grip. To me, it is hard to understand why we should use only two fingers if we can use four. It will be easier to overcome the leverage of the recoil if we use the ring and the little finger as well.

You can find different ideas regarding the position of the thumb as well. Do we have to extend the thumb along the left side of the pistol or have it in more aggressive, grabbing position? To answer this question we have to look again at the specifics of the event we are shooting. In the precision disciplines, where we have the ability to readjust the
way of gripping, it makes sense to have less pressure on the grip because less muscle work leads to less muscle tremor. Having the thumb extended along the gun will benefit the control of the pistol. Going back to the calligraphy example, if you need better control of any movement, and high stability, you apply less power and the fingers should be more extended and relaxed. Now, try to imagine that someone is trying quickly to pull the pen from your hand and you are trying to hold it. Your grip is suddenly tighter, the thumb is in “grabbing” position with the first phalanx flexed. You will automatically increase the tension and the power of your grip. This is exactly what you need when shooting dynamic pistol events. Of course, if you are changing the gripping, you need to change the shape of the pistol grip.

It is important to make sure that the work of the index finger on the trigger does not transfer any movement to the pistol and that most of the middle finger provides solid support to the gun. (Figure 5) Having a proper grip requires work from all fingers. The more muscles are involved in performing the grip, the less work is done by an individual muscle, which results in a more stable hold.

At the end, I would like to devote a moment to the order of actions for proper gripping. First, position the pistol in the web between the thumb and the index finger. Make sure the pistol is properly aligned with the radius (the bone of the forearm that is in line with the thumb). Second, make sure you give good support to the rear of the pistol against your palm. Third, close your fingers to fix the pistol inside your hand. Remember, the pressure of the gripping is based on the event and the need of fast recovery of the recoil. Do not over do it. I wish everyone straight shooting and good luck!

- National Assistant Pistol Coach, Vladimir Chichkov
Jim's shooting career began at his father's small shooting club, where he dabbled in air and smallbore rifle. His dedication and passion for the sport earned him a spot on the Western Michigan Rifle Team and eventually, the Air Force Rifle Team. After retirement from the Air Force in 1984, Jim was introduced to the National Training Center Club through a friend, whose son was a member. From there he began coaching and taking on a leadership role with the club, helping out as needed. The members and leaders of the club have changed over the years, but Jim has remained a staple and a contributor to the club's success. He admits there were hard times during the 90s, where the club struggled; participation, as well as the outlook for the club's future dwindled. Yet, perseverance and solid supporters such as Charlie Reed and Bob Foth helped revamp the program in the new millennium by developing opportunities to acquire the resources needed to revive and grow participation. Back in 1985, Jim remembers the club being small, approximately 15 juniors participating each week. Today, the club sees active participation of over 90 juniors. Jim's role with the club has evolved over the years from a running target coach to a rifle coach, yet one thing has remained—he has been and continues to be a dedicated leader.

When Jim is not on the range, he is busy with the administrative side of things and developing new techniques to encourage and retain young shooters. Jim is currently developing a Progressive Position Rifle program. With the success of the Progressive Position Pistol program, Jim saw an opportunity to apply the same concepts to rifle. These development programs provide young shooters with the opportunity to foster their skills and engage in matches with others of similar age and ability. For example, the club is now seeing kids as young as nine years old enjoying the sport without the discouragement that comes from lacking the physical muscle development and strength required to hold a standing position.
This duo would not be complete without the perseverance and expertise of Bud Kucera. Raised on a farm, it wasn't uncommon to find Bud hunting after school as he grew up around pistols, rifles and shotguns. He remembers racing home from school, so excited to go hunting, he would sometimes forget to change out of his school clothes. Bud is a retired fire truck mechanic and volunteer fire chief from Falcon, and he also serves as the Lead Pistol Coach for the NTC Junior Club. Bud learned about the club after his 11-year-old granddaughter Nichole took an interest in pistol shooting. He would take her out to the barn to practice, but she was putting more holes in the barn wall than the target. Knowing about the National Training Center Club, Bud brought Nichole to a practice. Nichole loved the experience and four years later, is still shooting twice a week. Bud also enjoyed the environment and community, and decided to get involved with coaching. He now holds a Level Two Coaching Certification and is the pistol guru of the club. He also handles all the range maintenance and technical issues that arise. He currently is learning the new electronic MegaLink system for the 25m range, so the club can promote and host more rapid fire matches. Bud’s ‘happy-go-lucky’ spirit is appreciated by everyone, his presence with the kids is almost magical, as he has can make almost anyone smile! With leaders like Bud and Jim, it's no surprise the kids in the club look forward to practice each week.

Ask any club member—Bud and Jim are two of the most dedicated and hard-working volunteers you’ll meet. Now that the club is thriving, there is never a lull in the action. The club meets twice a week and hosts 10 to 12 matches each year, including the State Games and the Wounded Warrior Games. Every two weeks, new youngsters participate in the introductory class, providing new kids and their parents the opportunity to learn about the sport. Bud and Jim expose the kids to both rifle and pistol, alternating each session until they decide what they like best. This club, located in the Olympic Shooting Center, has become one of the premier clubs in the country because of the devotion and enthusiasm that two men have given to the sport. Through the thick and thin, Bud and Jim keep grinding away. USA Shooting is incredibly fortunate and appreciative of the efforts of volunteers with such passion for furthering the development of shooting sports. Thank you Bud and Jim!

If you have a story or know of an outstanding volunteer at your club, we want to hear! Please email Lindsay Brooke at lindsay.brooke@usashooting.org or call 719-866-4885. • Lindsay Brooke
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Sarah Scherer (Fort Worth, Texas) is making her mark on the shooting community and doing it in a big way. Fresh off a stellar 2010, Scherer started 2011 with a first and fourth place finish at the two-day Bavarian Airgun Tournament in Germany. In the first day of competition, Scherer entered the final in the lower-half of the field, tied with six other shooters at 396 points. Staying on target, she fired deep-tens for an outstanding 104.4 points in the final and 500.4 total points. In a sport of tenths, Scherer recovered from a two-point deficit on the leader and dominated the final. Winning by just one-tenth of a point, she also marked the highest number of center-tens at 34 shots. National Rifle Coach Major Dave Johnson said, “Sarah had a strong performance in Germany. She made up two points on the leader and dominated the final. I expect her to continue to learn this spring and emerge as one of the contenders for London.” As a 2010 addition to the National Rifle Team, Scherer has qualified to compete in three World Cups this year in Women’s 10m Air Rifle. In the meantime, however, Scherer will continue to train and compete as part of the Texas Christian University’s National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) reigning Champion Rifle Team. The Frogs and Scherer will compete in both individual and team events at the NCAA Championship in March. USA Shooting would like to congratulate Sarah Scherer for her nod as the ELEY Athlete of the Month.

Take notice of Mike Dickey (Trafford, Ala.), a 2008 Paralympian and 2012 Paralympic hopeful well on his way to improving scores and tallying a higher average of center-shots. At the Winter Airgun Championship, Dickey won the High Disabled shooter award all three competition days. Not only did he claim top honors, but Dickey bested the competition by several points each day. Dickey competes in the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) event R3, Mixed 10m Air Rifle Prone. In the first day of competition, Dickey posted 598 out of 600 points in qualification with 53 out of 60 center-shots. His second day total was 595 out of 600 points, and he once again shot for 598 out of 600 points at the final day of competition. Moreover, in his last showing of the event, he marked 56 out of 60 center-shots—a statistic that makes him very competitive on the world-wide Paralympic shooting scene. National Paralympic Coach Bob Forth said, “Michael’s 598 was a terrific score and showed marked improvement. He was focused and deliberate in his execution and fired an outstanding 56 out of 60 centers. This score puts him on track to compete for medals at IPC World Cups in 2011.” USA Shooting would like to congratulate Mike Dickey on a terrific match and wish him luck for the IPC World Cup season.

January: Mike Dickey

February: Sarah Scherer
Progressive Position Pistol (PPP) appears to be a well-kept secret or a misunderstood opportunity for coaches to prepare junior athletes for Olympic pistol sports. Sergey Luzov, the National Pistol Coach, is searching for junior pistol shooters who aspire to make the National Pistol Team and compete in the Olympic Games and other world-level competitions. The pipeline of high-potential Olympic pistol athletes (especially female) is down to a trickle, which jeopardizes our ability to dominate the Olympic pistol events and win medals for the U.S. in the future.

The PPP program introduces young pistol shooters to competitive pistol shooting and gives them a sensible progression into the Junior Olympic pistol competitions sponsored by USA Shooting (USAS) and the conventional pistol competitions sponsored by the National Rifle Association (NRA).

USA Shooting recognizes the need to get youth involved in competitive shooting at a younger age. Since most air guns are too heavy for young shooters, PPP allows the participants to begin with two hands on the pistol over a rest, as well as standing with a support device for the shooting hand. The program "progressively" develops junior pistol athletes from supported positions to the Olympic one-handed, unsupported shooting position. The junior athlete has the opportunity to focus and learn the fundamental pistol skills with the opportunity to participate in competitions. This develops confidence, skills and knowledge at an early age.

There is no minimum age limit in PPP. How early a youth starts shooting a pistol depends on the youth's ability to hold and shoot an air pistol safely as determined by an experienced pistol coach. Also, any person may compete in PPP until Dec. 31, of the year of his or her twentieth birthday.

The PPP match competition is a precision pistol event. The pistols must be .177 caliber (4.5 mm) and use compressed air or compressed, non-flammable gas (such as CO2) for propellant. Multi-shot pistols may be used, but only a single pellet may be loaded for each shot.

The PPP program allows juniors to participate with minimal equipment and ammunition expense. In addition, ranges can be set up in any large area that has a minimum of 43 feet in length (33 feet from firing point to target and approximately 10 feet behind the firing point for shooters and range officers/coaches). For example, gymnasiums, student activity centers, climate controlled warehouses, etc., make excellent starting ranges.

There are three categories of competitors in the PPP program. They are defined by the shooting position used by the competitor. They are basic supported, standing supported and international standing (one-handed).

Basic Supported

Minimum age: None (depends on the youth's ability to hold and shoot an air pistol safely as determined by an experienced pistol coach). Maximum age: 13 years old

The rules of the Basic Supported are written very broadly, so coaches can progress athletes incrementally within the position without being forced to go to the next position before they are ready.
The athlete may be seated or standing, one or two hands on the grip.

Firm supports can include sandbags, kneeling rolls, as well as any rest made of wood, plastic, etc., that can firmly support the butt of the pistol and the shooter’s hands safely. Firm supports should be adjusted for height to ensure an upright posture and level head position of the shooter. Coaches should encourage athletes to progress to a one-handed position as soon as they can safely do so.

**Standing Supported**

Minimum age: None (depends on the youth’s ability to hold and shoot an air pistol safely as determined by an experienced pistol coach).

Maximum age: 15 years old

Athlete must stand, using one hand on the pistol grip. The T-Stand provides counterbalance support between elbow and muzzle. The competitor’s shooting arm must be fully extended, with the sights at eye level. The T-Stand provides a variable amount of support and balance without totally dampening the shooter’s movement. By design, it also provides a large range of adjustable vertical height so that the shooter can maintain proper body, head, arm and wrist position. The link below contains plans for building a simple, affordable version of the T-Stand.


**International Standing**

Suggested Minimum Age: 13 years old, yet if a parent, coach and physician agree a younger athlete is capable of safely shooting in this position, this age limit may be waived.

International air pistol rules apply for this position, which is unsupported standing with one hand on the pistol grip. Coaches should encourage their athletes to progress to standing supported and then to one-handed unsupported standing as they become proficient with basic skills and their hands are large and strong enough to do so safely.

Coaches should attempt to help athletes obtain pistols that are appropriately sized and weighted for juniors. USAS currently sells the Air Arms Alpha Proj at a special discount for members and affiliated clubs ($525). USAS also provides a special discount for the purchase of the Pardini K10 “Kids” target air pistol ($895). Affiliated clubs can purchase these air pistols through a delayed payment plan. Both air pistols are featured in the USA Shooting Store. Specific details of each pistol can be found on the USAS website at: http://www.usashooting.org/youthPistol.php

Coaches are encouraged to take advantage of the many opportunities to learn and develop their skills and learn effective techniques for working with young people. Coach certification and training is available through the NRA/USA Shooting/CMP Coach Education Program. Detailed information is available at: http://www.nrahq.org/education/training/coaching/index.asp

USAS will subsidize pistol coach certification courses with a minimum of six adults or participants that will start up and/or maintain a PPP program. For more information about USAS junior shooting programs visit: http://www.usashooting.org/youth.php for the Youth Programs Overview.

http://www.usashooting.org/youthPistol.php for pistol which includes PPP rules, T-Stand construction plans and competition information.

For more information contact Michael Theimer at michael.theimer@usashooting.org

Michael Theimer
USA Shooting was pleased to accept a check from Kimber Manufacturing on Jan. 18, at the SHOT Show in Las Vegas. The check, which equals the lifetime of Kimber contributions, brings the current total to $840,000 to help support the USA Shooting Team. USA Shooting Team members Caitlin Connor, Jaiden Grinnell, John Mullins, Collin Wietfeldt, Amy Sowash, Corey Cogdell, Cortney Anthony and Haley Dunn were on hand to accept the check from Kimber Manufacturing President, Leslie Edelman. Since 2003, Kimber has supported the USA Shooting Team with contributions based on sales of the Kimber Team Match II 1911 Pistol. In addition to more than 8,000 Team Match II’s sold to date generating funding for the team, Kimber provided a special Centennial Edition 1911 .45ACP that recently auctioned for over $10,000 at the Dallas Safari Club convention.

USA Shooting would like to thank Mr. Bill Roy for helping to promote the Olympic shooting sports. As the Director of Operations, he was responsible for continued success of the High Performance Plan. Moreover, as the Chief of the World Cup Organizing Committee, he helped organize the most successful USA World Cup to date. USA Shooting wishes Mr. Roy the very best in his future endeavors.

USA Shooting is proud to announce the members of the 2011 Junior Olympic Shotgun Team. The trap team includes: Michael Flores, Hunter Gallantm, Austin Odom, Dakotah Richardson, Wesley Wilcox, Jered Harris, Josh Hall, Peter Fritz, Erin Danhausen (W) and Haley Colbert (W). The skeet team includes: Tanner Brooks, Trey Buretz, Michael Cates, Granger Dewitt, Colin King, Nash Porter, Coulter Dewitt, Zachary Womack, William Brazell, Emily Cates (W) and Gayla Gregory (W).

USA Shooting announces the release of the 2011 USA Shooting Rules and Regulations. These rules will take place beginning February 1, 2011. A few of the major changes include the procedures for finals, age categories for seniors and the approval of the Orion scoring system for smallbore rifle. Major rule changes are noted with “new” below the rule number for easy identification. The USA Shooting Rules are available online only and are listed by section for easy downloading.

USA Shooting is having a ‘close out sale’ of the Air Arms Alpha Proj air pistols at $525 each. This is a very good precision starter air pistol that has been purchased by many junior clubs. It has an ambidextrous grip, adjustable sights and light weight for juniors. Future sales of the Air Arms Alpha Proj will be handled by Pyramid Air at a special discount for USAS members. Contact Nichole at 719-866-4743 for ordering and shipping. We only have a few left.”

USA Shooting is on Facebook! Get the latest competition news, athlete profiles, advice from national coaches and more. From your Facebook account, search “USA Shooting, National Governing Body” and “like” our page to subscribe to updates. Also, be sure to check out posted events and the picture gallery. Please feel free to “tag” pictures of friends, teammates and more.
Think of your bequest to USA Shooting as an investment. Here are some of the dividends...

As one of the most historic Olympic competitions, shooting has been a part of the Olympic program since 1896. Members of the USA Shooting Team have claimed over 100 medals. In fact, several shooters are recognized as some of the most decorated Olympians in U.S. history. Please support USA Shooting to prepare athletes to win Olympic medals, promote the shooting sports and govern the conduct of international shooting in the USA by including a bequest in your will, or by naming USA Shooting as a beneficiary of your retirement plans.

We encourage you to discuss your wishes with your attorney or financial advisor. If you have questions, please contact David Bren, Executive Director of the USA Shooting Team, USA Shooting, 100 Champion Plaza, Colorado Springs, CO 80906, or call 719-547-9274.

USA Shooting
## Schedule of Events

Presented By:

![Winchester Ammunition](image)

![Eley](image)

Competition events are listed in order by date. For specific information on a particular event, please visit [www.usashooting.org/competitions](http://www.usashooting.org/competitions) and browse our interactive calendar and browse our upcoming events or call the event organizer listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Organizer</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05/14/2011-05/15/2011</td>
<td>May Minus Air Pistol League</td>
<td>Richmond, VA</td>
<td>Air Pistol</td>
<td>Owen Peters</td>
<td></td>
<td>804.920.2795</td>
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<td>05/25/2011-05/27/2011</td>
<td>UPMS May Pistol &amp; Rifle PTO</td>
<td>Salt Lake City, UT</td>
<td>Pistol, Air Rifle</td>
<td>Cory Simon</td>
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<td>801.967.8158</td>
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<td>06/12/2011-06/13/2011</td>
<td>Zone 4 Int'l Trap Championships</td>
<td>Fairfield, PA</td>
<td>Trap</td>
<td>Russ Verkaap</td>
<td></td>
<td>513.738.8020</td>
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<td>06/14/2011-06/15/2011</td>
<td>Zone 5 Skeet &amp; Double Trap Championships</td>
<td>Fort Branching, GA</td>
<td>Shotgun</td>
<td>Dean Clark</td>
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<td>706.545.1152</td>
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<tr>
<td>06/14/2011-06/15/2011</td>
<td>Cavalier International Pistol PTO</td>
<td>Montgomery, VA</td>
<td>Pistol</td>
<td>Peter Schreiber</td>
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<td>804.598.1494</td>
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<td>06/20/2011-06/22/2011</td>
<td>SW Gun Club PTO</td>
<td>McCordsville, MS</td>
<td>Air Pistol, Air Rifle, PPU</td>
<td>Mickey Brescum</td>
<td></td>
<td>504.343.7597</td>
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<td>06/21/2011-06/22/2011</td>
<td>CMP Monthly Match Camp Perry</td>
<td>Port Clinton, OH</td>
<td>Air Rifle &amp; Air Pistol</td>
<td>Katherine Harrington</td>
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<td>256.835.8455</td>
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<td>06/21/2011-06/23/2011</td>
<td>Zone 3 Trap Championships</td>
<td>Fort Branching, GA</td>
<td>Shotgun</td>
<td>Dean Clark</td>
<td></td>
<td>706.545.1152</td>
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<td>06/23/2011-06/25/2011</td>
<td>May Mach 3 Int'l Indoor Air Pistol PTO</td>
<td>Machias, ME</td>
<td>Air Pistol</td>
<td>Margaret Slack</td>
<td></td>
<td>207.255.0701</td>
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</table>
The International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) announces the appointment of Franz Schreiber of Germany as its new Secretary General. The ISSF Administrative Council voted unanimously this week to appoint Franz Schreiber to fill the vacancy created by the death of his father Horst G. Schreiber in December 2010. The new Secretary General takes office immediately.

Franz Schreiber has served as the Federation’s Executive Director for the past two years and has over 25 years of experience in working as a professional ISSF staff member. ISSF President Olegario Vázquez Raña summarized his qualifications by stating, “the ISSF is very fortunate to have someone available who is so well prepared to serve as its Secretary General. Franz is a young man who is hardworking, honest, loyal and absolutely dedicated to the ISSF. For the last two years he has been deeply involved in doing the work of the Secretary General and his work has been outstanding. Our National Federation leaders and our athletes and coaches already know Franz well.”

The ISSF Constitution delegates the authority and responsibility to “appoint a replacement for any Officer...if a vacancy occurs” to the ISSF Administrative Council. The selection process began when President Vázquez Raña recommended that the ISSF Executive Committee propose Franz Schreiber as the next ISSF Secretary General. The Executive Committee unanimously approved this proposal in an 11 to zero vote and forwarded it to the Administrative Council. The vote by the 34-member Administrative Council to appoint Franz Schreiber as Secretary General was also unanimous.

Franz, who is 49, began his professional career as a legal intern in 1982. He became a full-time employee at ISSF Headquarters two years later. He has worked in the office of the ISSF Secretary General since that date and has extensive experience in all areas of ISSF activity.

Schreiber said, “I am very happy about the great trust that I have been given. I will continue to work for the ISSF and the shooting sport with all my heart and my full energy. I look forward to supporting President Vazquez Raña and the ISSF to further strengthen the shooting sport in my new capacity as Secretary General.”

President Vázquez Raña spoke on behalf of the ISSF Executive Committee and Administrative Council when he said, “we offer our sincere congratulations to Franz Schreiber and extend our best wishes to Franz and his wife Brigitte as he begins his service as the ninth Secretary General of the ISSF.”

Reprinted with permission from the ISSF, Photo (Left-Schreiber, Right- Vázquez Raña) courtesy of the ISSF (c) 2011.
USAS Announces Tom Harris as Chief Development Officer

Tom Harris serves as the Chief Development Officer for the USA Shooting Team Foundation and is focused on Major Gift fundraising and planned gifts in support of the USA Shooting Team.

Harris began shooting at 5 years old and has competed in rifle, shotgun and pistol matches for over 40 years. He holds both a Bachelor of Science in Finance and a Bachelor of Science in Real Estate from the University of Tennessee. His career history includes marketing and executive positions with Merrill Lynch, CB Commercial Real Estate and Royal LePage Commercial Real Estate.

Additionally, Harris has over 13 years of experience in the non-profit field as the Director of Development for Ducks Unlimited and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, as well as pro-bono consulting for non-profits. He has served on several non-profit boards and has improved or supported the major gift and planned gift funding programs for numerous local, national and international non-profits.
They say you’re only as good as the company you keep. For us, it’s a bragging right.

At Cabela’s, developing, testing and evaluating gear is a big part of what we do every day. It’s our job to make sure the products we sell live up to your expectations. For us, that’s business as usual.

As an Olympic Medalist I know the importance of having top quality equipment that you can trust when the shots really count, whether I’m on the range or in the field Cabela’s provides me with equipment I can trust.

Connie Conness, Cabela’s Pro Staff
The Alumni Association continues to grow with the addition of 17 new members since the last issue of USA Shooting. The new Life members have been sent their Life Membership Certificate and lapel pins. The new members are:

Kara Petracek Allen  
Maxey Brantley  
Dan Durben  
Francis Eisenlauer  
Robert Foth  
Ray Guffee  
Wanda Jewell  
Hubert H. Legg Sr  
Laurence Mosely  
Stanley Parmentier  
Connie Petracek  
Sandra Rabenstein  
Kurt Fitz-Randolph  
Donald R. Rupp  
Tes Salb  
Erin Skeuse  
Shawn M. Wells  

We are still missing the addresses of many athletes. From the list of missing athletes listed in the last issue we were able to locate seven with your help. Please continue to help us locate the addresses or e-mails of any of the following athletes and notify me at USA Shooting in Colorado Springs, CO 80909 or at lones.wigger@usashooting.org.

Justin Barberi  
Leah Baugher  
Brian Burrows  
Seldon Benge  
Roxane Conrad Thompson  
Brad Deauman  
Joseph Dickson  
Chavarin Dixon  
Henry Dominick  
Artie Osborn  
Peter Piffath  
Colleen Rumore  
Adam Satthoff  
Grant Saylor  
Patricia Schroeder  
Aaron Shader  
Cindy Shenberger  
Rebecca Snyder  
Tucker Stachitas  
Scott Swinney  
Jan Schuler Thomas  
Michael Thompson  
Connie Tomsovic  
Cecil Wallis  
Mimi Wilfong  
Ray Ycng  
Hollis Boss  
David Breeding  
Frank Coleman  
John Hunt  
Dave Mattice  
Lou Palmisano  
Michael Remington  

Thank you,  
Lones Wigger  
U.S. Shooting Team Alumni Association President
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