

WORKING TOGETHER ACHIEVES MORE

By 2008 Olympic Medalist, Corey Cogdell

Success in sports can be the driving factor that influences many people to participate. The feeling of having won a big game, whether just for fun or for a championship, is an exhilarating emotion. In sports such as soccer and football, players must work together as a team to play their best. These teams may play with different rules or strategies, but teamwork is a staple among successful organizations. The USA Shooting Team is comprised of highly motivated individuals competing in an individual sport where success or failure sits firmly on your shoulders alone. Yet to be a successful competitor, we must foster a team spirit in an individual sport; regardless of whether teammates are fighting for the same spots on the National Team, World Team or U.S. Olympic Team.

In its basic understanding, teamwork is the ability of a group of individuals to cooperate to reach a specific goal. In sports, this goal can mean a variety of things such as winning a championship, qualifying for playoffs or simply ending the season with a winning record. For the USA Shooting Team, I believe this means coming together as individuals to win Olympic medals for the United States of America. At this point we are no longer working as individuals to reach a goal; we are working as a team to reach a goal, and I believe this teamwork starts to build well before the Olympic Games.

I witnessed this kind of teamwork in 2008 both working

towards and during the Olympic Games. As one of the youngest members of the 2008 U.S. Olympic Shooting Team and undoubtedly one of the most inexperienced on the American team, my team was an integral part of my success at the Games. Multiple teammates came to my aid in times of difficulty leading up to the Games with advice, support and words of encouragement. Moreover, I witnessed the USA Shooting Team come together during times of victory and disappointment at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Some of my most vivid memories from the Games involve my teammates and my coaches.

After a disappointing first day at the Olympic Games for teammate Bret Erickson (at the time my personal coach and now National Shotgun Coach) he could have easily gone back to the Olympic village and hung his head knowing that his dream of an Olympic medal was now out of reach (as he was retiring after 2008). He noticed that the pressure of the Olympic Games was crushing me, so he stayed behind while it rained to watch me train and coach me. He reassured me that I had what it took and he believed in me; not only as my coach, but as my teammate. I also witnessed other events that will forever stick in my mind, one of which was with Jason Turner a pistol shooter on Team USA. After shooting a great match, he finished just short of the podium in fourth place. I remember seeing him that afternoon and the disappointment on his face was unmistakable, coming

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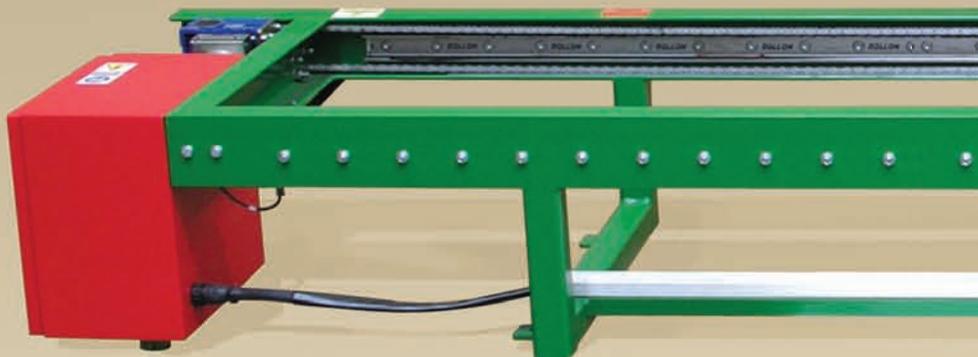
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so close to his dream yet only able to watch as the medals were awarded to shooters from other federations. Surprisingly, one of the medalists tested positive for a ban-substance, thus awarding Jason the bronze medal.

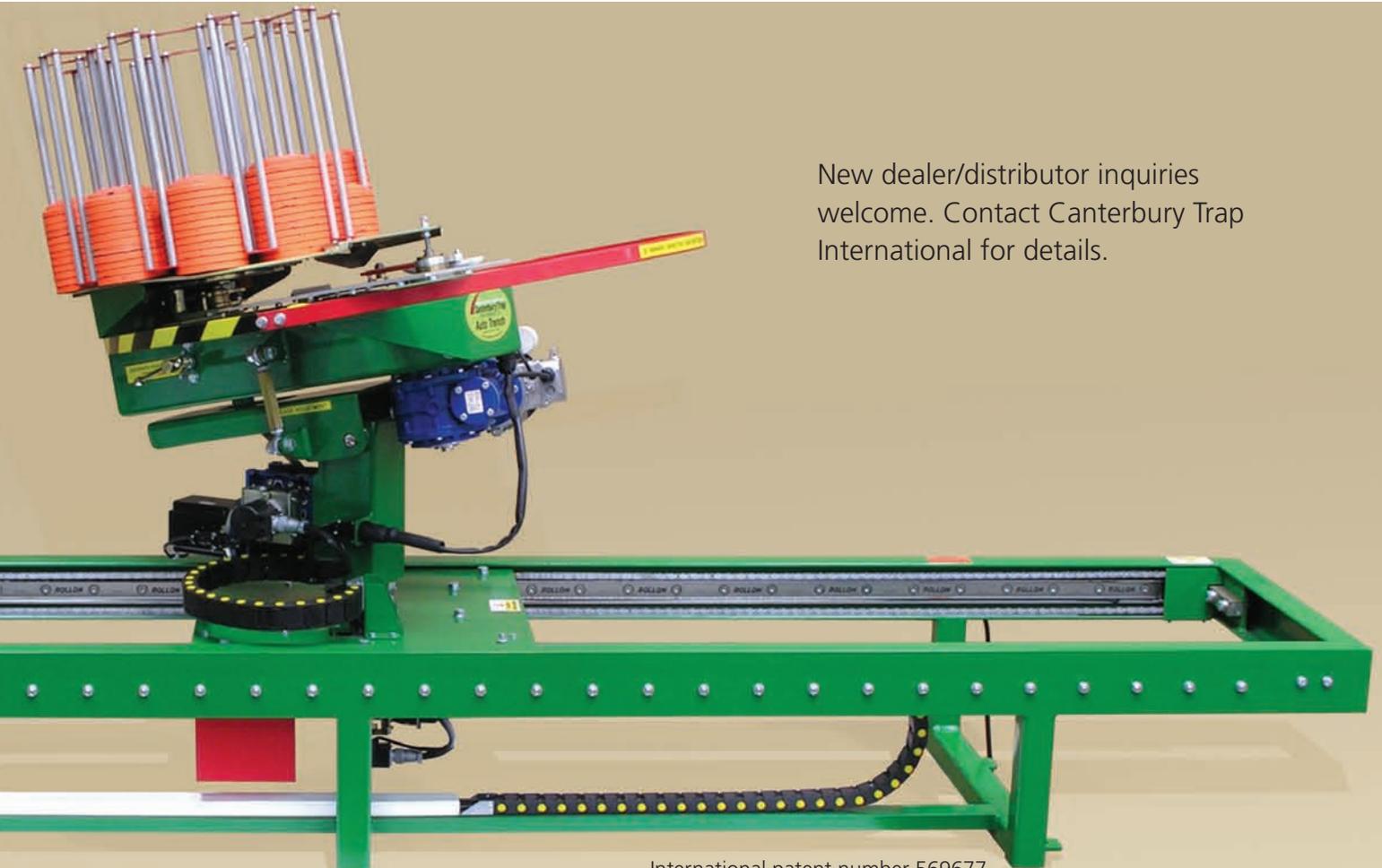
Now as exciting as that moment must have been for Jason, I can tell you as someone that has stood on the podium at the Olympic Games that is a moment I will never forget and a moment that Jason did not get to experience. I witnessed the USA Shooting Team come together and present Jason with his Olympic medal in a way that only a true team could have. With a roar of applause, I saw Jason's medal placed around his neck as did the rest of the U.S. contingent, and although you can never replace standing on the podium, I witnessed a close second. These are just a few examples of the positive teamwork in Beijing.

Teamwork benefits a group and creates a support group for individuals. For example, if you shoot a bad round or a bad shot,



members will be there to boost your morale. Groups that use teamwork can also increase their skill set by tapping into the abilities of all the members. These benefits and others can help determine the success of the entire team. Fostering an atmosphere centered on teamwork can be met with challenges, especially in an

individual sport like shooting where we now use a points system to select the Olympic Team in addition to U.S. Olympic Trials. This is one of the primary reasons why support from coaches, family, friends and all the athletes will be vital to the USA coming together as a team once again to win more medals than ever before at the Olympic Games in 2012. I have seen it before and as we come closer and closer to the Olympic Games, I am excited to see us not only become a more unified USA Shooting Team but a stronger Team USA as well.



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