

Greetings from Ontario, Canada

At our Provincial Championships in Hamilton, the OPTA Board (with my input) decided to offer awards in the three new categories (Junior Gold, Subveteran & Lady II). All American Team pins were obtained for trophies - the only exception being the Championship Singles event where a full compliment of trophies were provided for all 8 categories including the three new ones.

We were aware that some States such as Ohio, refused to recognize any of the three new categories - for 2012 at least. I was aware that a number of shooters who had chosen to participate in one of the three new categories felt there was little to compete for at competitions that failed to recognize these categories and therefore did not attend. I felt that for our Ontario Provincials we should recognize the eight categories in an effort to enhance our competition. I think it fair to say that we experienced a mixed review.

Like many of the smaller States, we had nominal Jr. Gold entrants (I think one). Unless enrollment increases, this category for small competitions may provide nothing more than "participation" trophies.

While the experience south of the Border is that "subveteran" is often the largest category, our events had few entrants. And as for Lady II, we had as it turns out only three ladies eligible for this category. During event classification I was approached by several ladies who wanted to shoot in the Lady I category even though by virtue of their age they were Lady II's. I took the position that if they chose to compete in Lady I, which is usually considered a tougher category, they should be able to do so. When questions were raised at the AGM about whether this would withstand a protest/challenge I said I would look into it further and see how this was interpreted by the Executive Committee. My initial interpretation was wrong. Since two lady categories were made available, a lady over 55 had only two choices, not three. She could fail or refuse to declare a category and compete with the men (and other ladies who chose not to declare a category) or she could choose Lady II only. She could not "fall back into, or default to a Lady I category". There were fortunately only 2 ladies that I had to re-classify from Lady I to Lady II.

One lady had chosen Lady II from the outset. This mix-up was not without complications however as Diane Wood had the top singles score of all Ladies in both categories and her trophy had already been awarded to someone else. Sorry for the confusion and mix-up. I should have verified this at the outset. Bottom line - for small shoots, is a separate Lady II category warranted? At least one of the Lady II ladies didn't want this category. It does, however, give our Province an additional opportunity to be represented at the Champion of Champions Race at the Grand and in coming years it will (if provided) give more trophies for more ladies.



I would like to have your views and I expect so would the OPTA Board.

Since this article is focussing primarily on categories, there are a few other areas that need to be addressed. Some of the older Ontario male shooters have questioned why there was no recognition given to a "super veteran" category. As was explained to me, it is often the older shooters that make disproportionately larger contributions in attending shoots and keeping the clubs that throw registered targets viable. The participation demographics accross North America tend to suggest that a "super veteran" category may have been more justifiable than for instance the "junior gold" category.

I personally support any reasonable initiatives that motivate people to participate more and have fun and feel competitive.

Currently, the sub veteran category covers ages 55-65 (10 years) but Veteran covers only 5 years (65-70). Then senior veteran covers age 70 to infinity. It is fair that our older senior vet shooters have to contend, year after year, as they mature through their seventies and well into their 80's with each new crop of 70 year old youngsters? Perhaps Veteran should go from 65 years to (say) 73. Perhaps Senior Veteran should go from 73 to 80. Perhaps Super senior Veteran should go from age 80 and up.

I am not the only delegate who has had complaints. I am not the only delegate that is looking at ways to make category participation more equitable. It may take a while but there is an issue here and in time, I expect it will be addressed.

On a final note, category shooters in smaller competitions may have some perceived advantages for trophy attainment. But life may sometimes appear unfair. During the 2012 Grand, I was on the same squad as Terry Jordan who is in the Veteran category. He wacked a 99 in one of the handicap events - a truly outstanding score and one that would surely land him a trophy. Wrong - there were two 100's and four veterans tied at 99 vying for 3 trophies. Terry had a 21 in the shoot-off round while the other Vets shot 22's each. Had he not been a category shooter, he would have had one of the place trophies for sure. No system is perfect and I have illustrated some challenges that we all face with the current system. No system will please everyone but improvements to our current system may be in order.

Your comments would be appreciated.

Paul Shaw, ATA Delegate for Ontario