

Greetings from Ontario, Canada

By the time this issue of Trap & Field is published (in June) we will be slightly more than one month from our Ontario Provincial Championships which will be held this year in St. Thomas commencing July 30th and running also on July 31st and August 1st (which is our Civic Holiday). An ATA event will be held the day before the Provincials (i.e. on Friday, July 29th). For Ontario shooters - this is the biggest event in our Province. For those outside Ontario – come and join us. The St. Thomas Club always put on a good competition and is very accommodating.

Every State or Province encourages clubs that have trap ranges to affiliate with the State or Provincial organizations (and ATA) and start throwing registered targets. All it takes is one range, built to proper ATA specs with targets thrown in accordance with ATA criteria, to host registered competitions. Sometimes these enquiries come to us from the clubs themselves but often, ATA officials or delegates need to do some outreach.

Late last fall I received a telephone call from a church congregation located about ¾ of an hour from my hometown Collingwood. This group wanted me to talk to their congregation at their annual meeting which they had scheduled for Saturday, April 16, 2016. It was a Wesleyan Church that I had never heard of before. They wanted me to talk about “trapshooting”, the Olympics, Pan Am Games, etc. I told them I would be pleased to do so but asked them if I could also talk about “American style” trap (ATA) to which they immediately agreed. Apparently a lot of the congregation had shotguns and others had an interest in shooting. Their congregation was very diverse with a healthy mixture of male, female, old and young. I asked what they thought about me assisting them in running an introductory trapshooting clinic for any interested members of their group, if there was a gun club nearby that had at least one ATA trap field. They jumped at the idea and the Sydenham Sportsmen’s Club agreed to make their two trap fields available. We could accommodate 10 shooters on the line at any time and had a dozen or more “handlers” with Possession and Acquisition Licenses (PALS) who were able to provide to each participant “direct and immediate” supervision. Thirty-two people – mostly young and about half female participated and most had never fired a shotgun before. The group loved it and I think Sydenham Sportsmen’s Association will get some new members which it greatly needs to replenish its aging membership. In due course Sydenham may even throw registered targets. Initiatives like this are a win for firearm owners, for gun clubs, for individuals and our sport.

I never charge for the clinic work I do. I don’t want to be in this business. There are lots of people that do this for a living. I just do a few here and there to help promote the sport. When I do a clinic however I always try to do the following things:

- Ensure that nobody touches a firearm or ammunition unless they have a valid PAL or are in direct and immediate supervision by a PAL holder. Safety is paramount and compliance with the law is important.
- Participants need to have their eyes checked for dominant eye, gun fit is critical and make certain that eye and ear protection is available and used.
- Keep the initial introductory comments and instruction focused and brief. Participants want to get out and try their hand “shooting” asap.
- I like to set the machines for straightaways and have everyone shoot at two targets from each post. This keeps the targets consistent.

- At the conclusion of this 10 target “introduction” I like to have a chat with everyone and talk about their experience and tips on how to improve their performance (such as keeping their eyes on the target, head on stock, follow-through and not stopping their swing etc). The participants by this time have had the “fear” of shooting and recoil contained and can better understand at this phase the issues being discussed.
- Get them back onto the line quickly and challenge them with a small “competition”. I like to have everyone shoot two rounds of ten targets each and determine their cumulative score out of 20. I take the top 5 scores for one shoot-off and use a modified “Lewis” system to select one or possibly more additional shoot-offs depending on the number of participants. Even a trinket is meaningful as a prize.
- Keep the overall experience “fun” for all.
- Don’t forget to thank all the volunteers.
- Make sure all these “new shooters” know how they can pursue “trapshooting” and (with their permission) give the host club their names and contact information to reach out to them in the future with club activity schedules etc.

I suspect that all of you who host clinics for new shooters have your own approach and it is likely to vary in some respects from mine. Whatever your approach – just do it. Share the sport.

Paul Shaw

Ontario Delegate