

Greetings from Ontario, Canada.

The Grand is over – in fact the shooting year is days away from completion, as I write this article.

For me, the summer was a blur – work, ATA, international shooting, administration etc., etc. Shooting results suffer but that is the price paid for trying to do too many things at a time. I like to describe all of this as “multi-tasking”. My wife, Bev, is not as charitable and characterizes this as more like “clusterxxxing”! The fall for me doesn’t get much better. Many of you go through a similar hectic schedule so you know what I am talking about. Although I have had some very good shooting results here and there throughout the year, others are “forgettable” and remind me what a former Canadian coach once told our trapshooting team when we shot poorly – “You guys sure made a lot of friends today”.

Perhaps I am getting mellow in my chronological advancement but I am finding more and more that I get great satisfaction not from my own shooting accomplishments but rather by accomplishments of others from our province such as:

- our Ontario Veteran All American Keith Saunders and expert marksman Frank Bonaiuto smashed all 200 targets in our Championship Singles with Frank prevailing in a shoot-off;
- Matthew Van Haaren captured the Sub Junior Singles after recently trouncing the complete field at the Canadian ATA Championship (in Singles) in Quebec with a lone 199;
- 16 year old Kabir Dhillon, a Canadian citizen who now lives in India and goes to high school there and who practices double trap with the Indian double trap team in Delhi, recently won the Canadian International Double Trap Championship. He has a promising future for Canada on the international (double trap) stage;
- Peter Tsementzis could be All American 1st team if he shot enough. With work and family, he picked up his K-80 for the first time in about a year, attended our Eastern Zone and captured the doubles championship after a shoot-off;
- My own son, Drew, won the Canadian International Trap Championships hosted at the Toronto International Trap & Skeet in Ontario;
- Or the many juniors that are competing in ATA and International Trap urged on by enthusiastic parents and personal coaches. Trophy or not, each young person is having a great time on the shooting line trying to master a sport that they can pursue for a lifetime.

Juniors are the future of our sport. ATA junior programs are great. One of our OPTA directors Emily Brown has been making great inroads in Ontario with ATA juniors. Florin Marinache is making great strides with young international trap juniors. Well done.

I do have some practical advice to young people and their parents, grandparents, coaches and mentors. The young person needs to get his or her priorities straight including:

- Get a good education;
- Work hard to obtain a profession, trade or job that will pay the bills and secure a financial future;
- Don't neglect obligations to family.

Trapshooting is a great sport but few can make a decent living at it – no matter how talented. Canada is not India that is reported to have a 20 million dollar per year budget for its shooting program and compensates its top shooters generously. Shooting sports in Canada will always be a truly “amateur” pursuit. No matter how much raw talent a young Canadian shooter may have it will, for the foreseeable future, be virtually impossible to compete on a level playing field with equally talented, fully funded, full-timers. It is a tragedy when young people wake up one day after chasing a “dream” to find their shooting career has not panned out for them and they are in debt, no education, no job and often with a young family and all the responsibilities that go with it. Dream – yes. Dream big – yes. But have a plan A to support the dream.

While in Scotland in July at the Commonwealth Games I had an opportunity to watch our full bore rifle shooters in action. This is an unusual opportunity because seldom is there enough range distance to have full bore at the same location that trap is shot. The Shooting Federation of Canada (Canada's “National Sport Organization” (our NSO) includes two full bore athletes in the Canadian team once every quadrennial at the Commonwealth Games. They shoot targets with .308 rifles (open sight) at up to 1,000 yards. That is a distance of almost a kilometer or by conversion over half a mile. What separates the men from the boys in that sport is how well competitors can “read the wind” as the bullet will drift sometimes many feet on its journey to the target. A shooter needs to consider wind speed, direction, angle, whether the wind is gusting or constant. It is amazing watching them do their assessment and calculations. One of our Canadian shooters won a silver medal. Good ATA shooters know that wind can affect the target flight and unless a target is taken quickly so that wind impact is nominal, one must place the shot stream where it will intersect the target. Rod Boll who shot international double trap for Canada was a master at this. He took his time on that second target and seemed to be able to read the wind effect with absolute precision whereas others shot where the target seemed to be headed only to find the wind moved it just enough to evade the shot stream.

I thought you might be interested in one observation I made while at the Scotland shooting facility near Dundee. The military base where all shooting disciplines took place was separated by a chain link fence from a high end golf course – the Carnoustie Championship Links host to previous British Open tournaments. Donald Trump flew in for a round just prior to the Commonwealth Games. The Scottish shooting team, I was informed, stayed at the lodge on the course. All fine and good, but consider this: I found eight golf balls in the long grass on the shooting range side of the fence. Whether these balls found their way over the fence deliberately or by error, I have the evidence. No big deal? But what would happen on the flip side should someone on the golf course find evidence of a rifle or shotgun projectile? We in shooting go to great lengths to contain our projectiles for fear of our ranges being closed down. This enables golfers on the “other side of the fence” to pursue their sport without fear of injury from lead shot or rifle bullets. But when we are shooting be prepared to duck, especially if you can hear through your ear muffs a faint “fore”. Which sport is safer?

Finally, I want to share with readers a conversation I had with double trap shooters from Singapore that I shot with in Beijing in July. There is a lot of red tape taking firearms in and out of Singapore to ranges in nearby countries where they regularly travel to practice. Guess how they avoid the red tape and hassles?

They remove their barrels, forends and stock from their receivers and attach them to a receiver waiting for them in the host country that is owned by the owners of the host range. In most jurisdictions it is the receiver that constitutes the "firearm" and barrels, forends and stocks are just parts that can be taken across borders without much if any red tape. Interesting concept that may work perfectly legally in most jurisdictions.

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