



CHAIRMANS REPORT – ESSU AGM 2007

This has been yet another challenging and demanding year for the ESSU. Obviously matters have been focused around the aftermath of the Commonwealth Games and I am happy to report that the Teams performance was a great success. In total 19 medals were won by the England shooting team as a whole, 10 of which were contributed by the cartridge and air disciplines. In addition work continues to establish and integrate the Team England National Squad (TENS) into the national performance level structures. Furthermore and to this end, I am happy to report that we have now firmly established a TENS Development squad for both rifle and pistol. Membership continues to be of interest and we face challenges to ensure our numbers remain healthy. As ever, much of our time has been taken up with the ongoing battles to secure funding for our performance level shooters and investing in talent for the future.

1. **Commonwealth Games.** Although mentioned last year, officially comment on the Games falls into this reporting year. Thus there were many fine performances at the Melbourne Games in 2006 and it is not easy or perhaps fair to pick out individual achievements. However, the winning of team gold in the men's prone and ladies 3P events is particularly worthy of note, as is the continued fine form of Mick Gault in winning individual gold in Standard Pistol. As many will have seen, Mick reached a total of 15 Commonwealth medals in Melbourne (where he won 4) and became the most successful English athlete in the history of the Games. A fantastic record and we pass our heartfelt congratulations to him for all his efforts on our behalf and that of his Country. Much of our success was due to the lottery funding of £300,000 we received from Sport England, which allowed us to instigate a truly professional regime of preparation. Our success was due to a professional approach afforded by this funding, especially in the following areas:

- a. A robust and objective selection policy, which ensured that only the best individuals in current good form, were selected. We will carry this criteria and ethos into the future.
- b. Properly contracted and qualified coaches following a well thought through training programme. We have now enhanced this structure still further this year with some new Development coaches.
- c. Truly effective warm weather training camps in Israel and South Africa which gave all athletes the best opportunities to maximise their potential. More are planned for the next Games cycle.

Following the Melbourne Games, a post event survey commissioned by the Commonwealth Games Federation has suggested fundamental changes to the way in which the Games are structured and organised. In essence they are concerned to ensure that future Games do not become so large that cities and countries cannot be found to host them. Recommendations have been made to limit the size of teams, reduce the number of events and align the Games more closely with the Olympics. Much work has gone into ensuring that the views of the ESSU and that of England shooting have been passed to the Commonwealth Shooting Federation to safeguard the future of our sport in the Games.

3. **Intershoot.** Some 40 of our members enjoyed an excellent deployment to Intershoot in The Hague in February. We won a total of 8 medals, not one of our better performances but creditable in mind of the development nature of the team and event. In light of the problems surrounding the British Airways strike at the time of our deployment, I would like to thank Norah Hunter and Frank Balcombe for their efforts in ensuring all went well. Not an easy job and the fact that everyone arrived on time and in pocket is testimony to their industry and endeavour. The competition remains of a high standard, but is not so high that it discourages the relative novice. Therefore we shall continue to support this event, allowing a broad spectrum of eligible members to attend. It is an excellent vehicle for all standards and

a proving ground for juniors, relative novices and seasoned shooters alike. I thank Norah for her continued efforts in organising this deployment.

3. **TENS.** The Team England National Squad has been firmly established and 5 training weekends have been conducted since the Commonwealth Games. They are instrumental in our success and I thank Martyn White for all his hard work and efforts on this front as the TENS Co-ordinator. Also we welcome Ken Parr as the new TENS rifle coach and Paul Taylor as the new assistant pistol coach under Tom Redhead. There is no doubt that the advent of TENS has been reflected with enhanced results on the international stage. We are now seeking ways of continuing TENS activities beyond the scope of preparations for the Commonwealth Games and enhancing GB activities still further.

4. **Development.** I am glad to be able to report that we have been able to properly establish Development Squads, both in rifle and pistol, to underpin the main TENS initiative. SE funding has allowed us to employ 3 coaches to run the rifle squad; Steve Downs, Bob Sanderson and Bob Dickie. Successful assessment weekends have now taken place and squads formed of some 6 youngsters in each of the disciplines. Since then some 3 training weekends have been run. Individuals are subjected to constant review and goal setting in order to maintain performance and continuance in the squad. The TENS Development squad now forms part of a national athlete pathway, newly created following the latest award of exchequer funding from UK Sport to British Shooting. Not only is this important for our own welfare and future protection, but reflects the changing emphasis placed upon Home Countries. We will be providing the basis from which talented youngsters are projected into the senior national squads.

5. **Funding.** We continue our hard work to lobby SE for funding and a Performance Plan reflecting our needs in preparation for the next Games in New Delhi presently rests with SE. I anticipate an announcement on funding from SE sometime in June of this year. Without this support we can do little to resource the TENS programme. One further piece of good news is the advent of the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) and SportAid. Both of these Sport England initiatives are now open to England shooters. They are aimed at youngsters aged between 13 and 18 (SportsAid) and 18 to 25 (TASS), who can gain financial assistance and services in support of their international shooting aspirations. Work is in hand to agree the service level agreements, which will secure this funding.

6. **Home country Responsibilities.** Under new funding arrangements imposed by UK Sport and adopted by GBTSF, the Home Countries are required to take on a more leading role in providing the stepping stone between aspiring individuals and the GB national squads and those on the new athlete performance pathway. Negotiations are under way to put in place the resources and infrastructure to support this policy change. This increase in responsibility will require further change and an even more professional approach by shooters and administrators alike. From some a no compromise approach will be called for. In light of an uncertain future it would seem prudent to ensure that we remain proactive and positive in our approach.

Summary. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of the Committee members for their invaluable time and support over the past year on your behalves. In particular I would like to express gratitude to Frank Balcombe, Norah Hunter and Martyn White for all their continued efforts. We have enjoyed the most successful Commonwealth Games ever in shooting performance terms. In light of this achievement, I remain optimistic about our chances of securing SE funding for the future and in developing English aspirations still further.

PFC Underhill
Chairman

5th May 2007