



A-Z OF SHOOTING

The A-Z

English (or National) Skeet is this month's discipline in the spotlight. Rated by many as the perfect 'starter' discipline for newcomers to the sport, Skeet has declined in popularity in recent times but still retains a loyal following. It is a discipline that has launched many stars on to greater things in the shooting world.

Invented in America in the 1920s, Skeet has evolved into three similar but separate disciplines. The American National Skeet Shooting Association (NSSA) retains control of the original format, while Olympic Skeet is run by the ISSF, which stages international competitions and the Olympic Games events. English/National Skeet is similar to the NSSA version but has evolved with some significant differences. Shooters taking part in registered competitions have the ultimate goal of a place in their national team for the annual Home International match. There are however no international competitions involving teams from outside the British Isles.

English Skeet

THE LAYOUT

All the skeet variants share the same basic semi-circular layout. The base chord of the semi-circle is 36.8 metres with two traps, set one at either end. To the left is the 'high house' throwing targets from a height of 3.05m; to the right is the 'low house' with the trap set so that the targets emerge at a height of 1.07m. The targets are set so that both pass within 45cm of a mark called the Target Crossing Point (see plan) and in calm conditions they should fly 50-52 metres. Boundary posts set 40.2m in front of each trap house mark the limits within which targets must be shot to count as fair kills.

Around the semi-circle, spaced 8.13m apart, are seven shooting stations, 91x91cm square, number one being closest to the high house.

THE STARS



Steve Taylor

Top of the national averages for 2002, skeet's 'Mr Consistent' returned an average of 99.1% from 2000 competition targets. From Essex - the hot bed of English skeet shooting — Taylor is the man to beat whenever he enters a competition, although the big prizes eluded him last year after finishing runner-up to Dave Billington at the British Open.

Gill Billington

Another Essex star and part of one of the most successful husband and wife combinations in the sport, Gill Billington did the English and British Open double in 2002, having previously won the British titles for skeet and sporting in the same year (1995). Both wins required shoot off nerves of steel, to hold off arch Essex rival Donna Merry at the English Open and Jenny Del Rosso at the British. With husband Dave the reigning British Champion and the English Skeet Double title also in the bag, 2002 was a great year for the Billingtons.



Johnny Walker

One of the great characters of the sport — and a fine shooter too — Johnny is the driving force behind the English Skeet Club which is attempting to put some fizz back into the discipline. Another very consistent season in 2002 saw him tied for second place in the national rankings alongside Alistair Ford with 98.7% from 2800 registered targets. Skeet will never be dull while Mr. Walker is around.



of shooting

PROCEDURE

Skeet is shot in squads of a maximum of six shooters. Each round consists of 25 standard targets shot in the following sequence:

STATION 1	TWO SINGLES AND A DOUBLE
STATION 2	TWO SINGLES AND A DOUBLE
STATION 3	TWO SINGLES
STATION 4	TWO SINGLES AND A DOUBLE
STATION 5	TWO SINGLES
STATION 6	TWO SINGLES AND A DOUBLE
STATION 7	TWO SINGLES AND A DOUBLE

This totals 24 targets. The 25th is called the 'option' and is either a mandatory repeat of the

first one of the sequence to be missed or, if the shooter has shot all seven stations straight, an optional repeat of either the Station 7 high or low house.

Two cartridges must be loaded for the singles which are shot without reloading. The high house single target is shot first except on Station 7, where the low is taken first for safety reasons. The target should appear instantly on the shooter's call.

When shooting doubles only one shot is allowed at each target and the nearest is shot first – ie high first on Stations 1 and 2, low first on Stations 6 and 7. On the centre Station 4 the shooter must nominate which target will be shot first.

EQUIPMENT

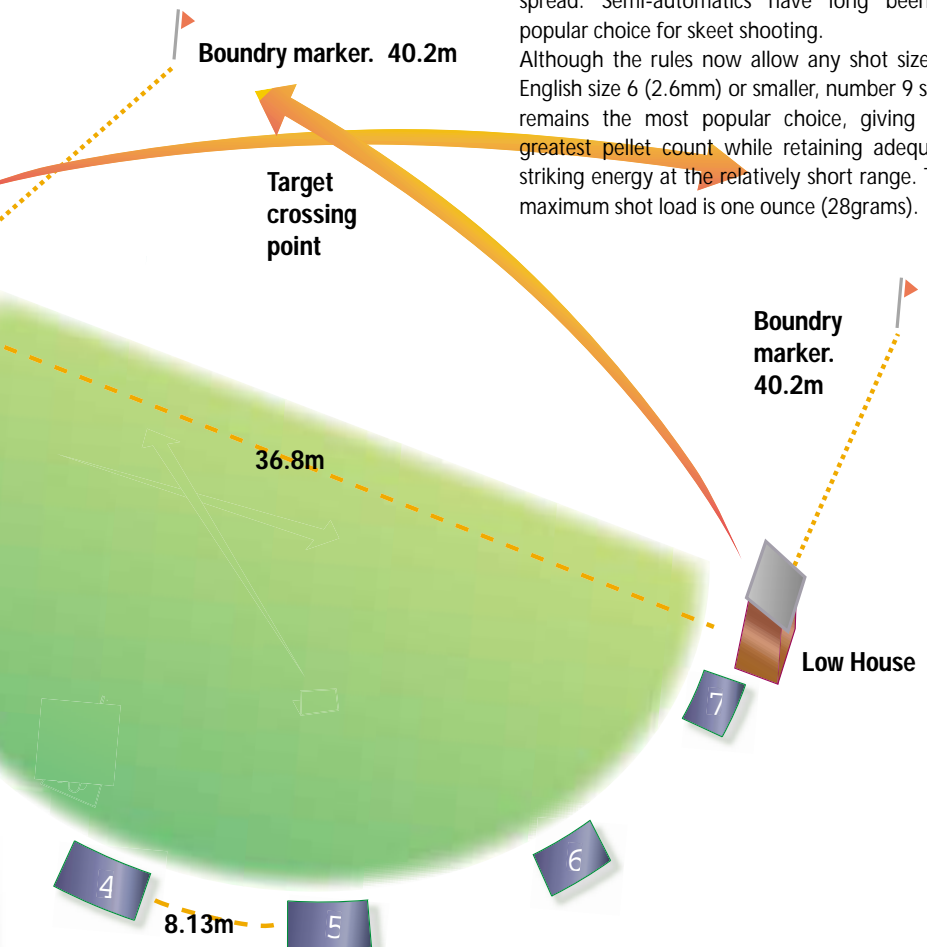
Changing fashions and the emergence of multi-choked 'sporter' guns have resulted in much reduced demand for specialist skeet guns. Where once short barrels (26") were favoured, most now use 28-30" barrels. Because most skeet targets are shot within 20-25 metres, open chokes are preferred for maximum pattern spread. Semi-automatics have long been a popular choice for skeet shooting. Although the rules now allow any shot size of English size 6 (2.6mm) or smaller, number 9 shot remains the most popular choice, giving the greatest pellet count while retaining adequate striking energy at the relatively short range. The maximum shot load is one ounce (28grams).

Josh Beasley

Scotland's top junior has a wonderful record in major competitions over the past three years, since bursting on the scene as a 12-year old in 1999. When he secured the British Open Junior title at Doveridge in August he completed the double of British and Scottish Open Championships for the third year running and there have been



many other fine performances along the way. With plenty more time left for him as a junior, many more titles must surely come his way for this is a young man who already shoots with the aplomb of a seasoned veteran.



Alistair Ford

When consistent performances of the highest level are called for, few can match the record of Alistair Ford. Yet another from Essex, Ford has been at the very top of the national rankings for a decade or more, winning all the major titles along the way. A partner with his brother Richard in the popular Parkford Shooting Centre at St. Osyth, Alistair has been one of the main factors in the remarkable pre-eminence of his county, helping to nurture many young shooters along the way.