

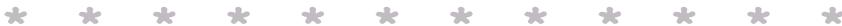
The A-Z of shooting

We leave the domestic disciplines this month and venture into the world of international sporting clays.

FITASC Sporting

FITASC Sporting takes its name from the governing body, the Federation Internationale de Tirs aux Armes Sportives de Chasse, based in Paris. With that mouthful of a name it is easy to see why most people stick to the abbreviation! FITASC Sporting is the only truly international form of sporting clays, with a following on all five continents. Its popularity has grown enormously over the past 25 years and it is seen by its devotees as the ultimate challenge in clay target shooting. For many shooters in this country the goal is a place in the Great Britain team for the World and European Championships held each year.

THE STARS



George Digweed

In terms of major championships won, George is the most successful FITASC shooter of all time. He has won the World Championships an unprecedented six times and the European Championship five. No other shooter comes close to that remarkable tally — and he is by no means finished yet!



Ben Hushwaite

Representing the next generation looking to maintain British dominance on the international stage, Leicestershire's Ben Hushwaite made his big breakthrough in 2002 winning the European Championship in Portugal. The tougher the targets the better this Krieghoff shooter likes them and he surely has many more big wins in him yet.



THE FORMAT

There are two variations in the way FITASC Sporting is shot, usually referred to as 'old' and 'new' system. Each round, or 'parcours', normally consists of 25 targets and in the old system the layout would consist of five traps, with three different shooting positions, the position being marked by a one metre hoop laid on the ground. The squad of usually six shooters would shoot a sequence of targets from Peg one before moving on to numbers two and three. Although loved by the purists, the problem with this is that only one squad of shooters is in action on each layout at any one time. This severely limits the numbers of shooters that can take part during the day.

New system takes a slightly different approach. There will still be three (or possibly four) shooting positions per

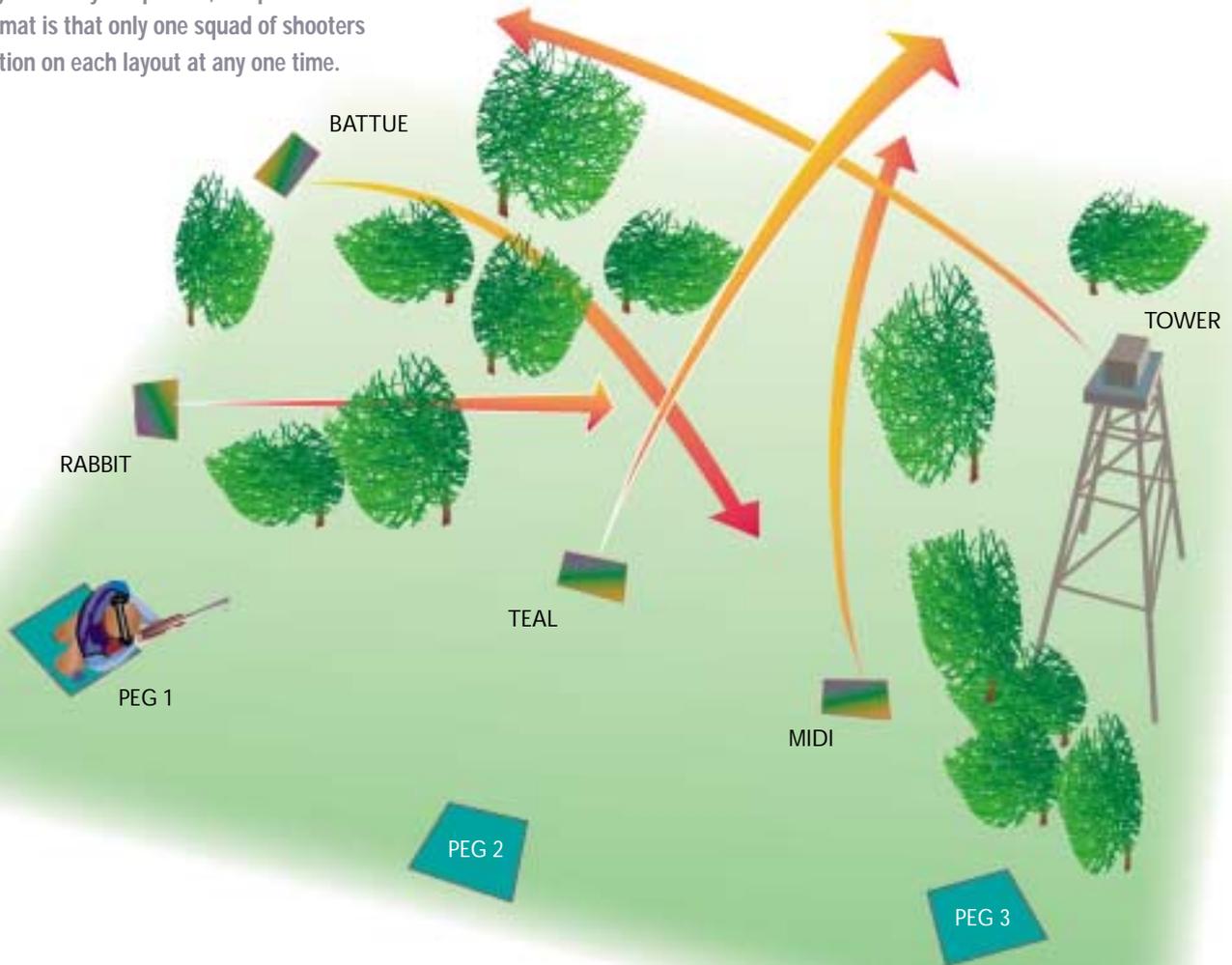
layout, but each will be self contained with its own set of traps. As a result there can be a squad shooting on each peg simultaneously, greatly increasing the number that can be accommodated. The downside of course is that new system requires significantly more traps.

Competitions are normally shot as multiples of 25 targets. A standard registered shoot would be 100 targets, with 150 for selection shoots. Major international championships are 200 target events, shot over four days.

COMPETITIONS ARE NORMALLY SHOT AS MULTIPLES OF 25 TARGETS. A STANDARD REGISTERED SHOOT WOULD BE 100 TARGETS, WITH 150 FOR SELECTION SHOTS.

The old system...

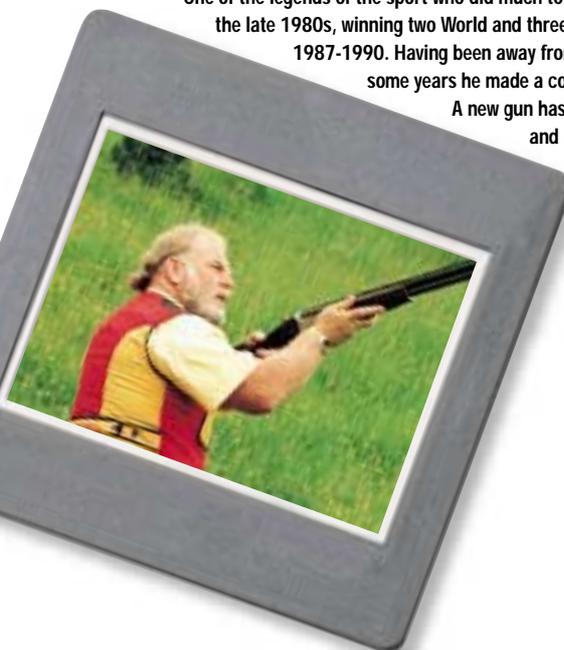
Although loved by the purists, the problem with this format is that only one squad of shooters is in action on each layout at any one time.



A.J. Smith

One of the legends of the sport who did much to put Great Britain at the top in the late 1980s, winning two World and three European titles in the period 1987-1990. Having been away from the competition scene for some years he made a comeback last year as a veteran.

A new gun has given him a new lease of life and on current form few would bet against him adding to that medal haul in this year's big competitions.

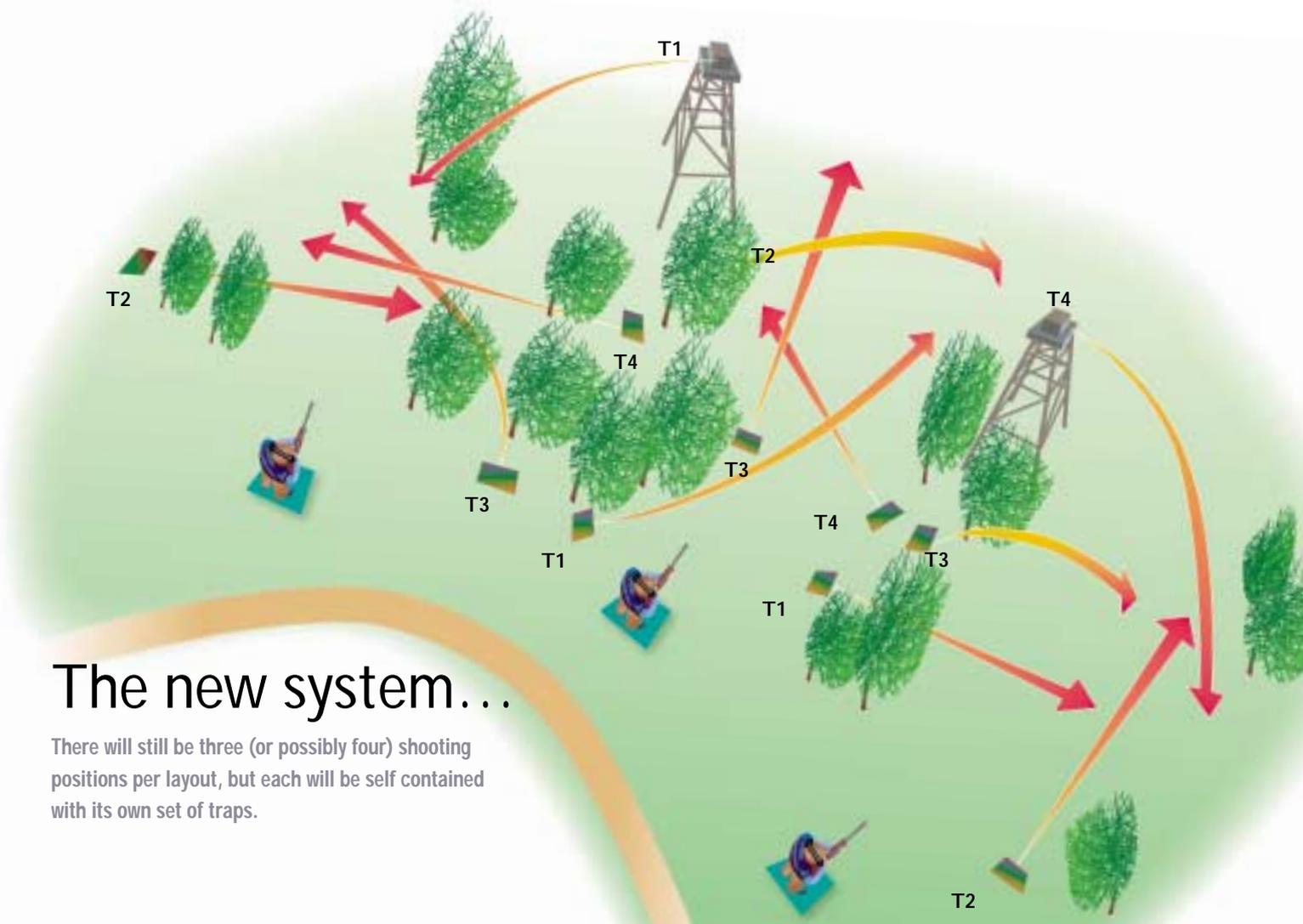


Anthea Hillyer

The most successful British woman shooter of all time, Anthea won the Ladies World Championship no fewer than seven times and set new standards for women in sporting clays shooting. Sadly now retired from top class competition, it is difficult to see her record ever being beaten. Other British Ladies who have also made their mark on the world stage include four times World Champion Denise Eyre, Edith Barnes of Scotland and England's Jo Marsh, the 2002 Champion.



The A-Z of shooting FITASC Sporting



The new system...

There will still be three (or possibly four) shooting positions per layout, but each will be self contained with its own set of traps.

SHOOTING PROCEDURE

Each squad is presented with a menu when they arrive at a new shooting position and will be shown the targets. The menu consists of a list of single targets and doubles. The first shooter shoots all his single targets and the squad rotates until all have completed their singles. The second shooter in the squad then shoots the doubles, number one having dropped to the end of the queue. At the next position number three will lead off the singles and so on, so that a different person shoots first each time. The doubles can be simultaneous, on report or 'raffael' (trailing) at the whim of the course builder.

The gun position at address is strictly controlled in FITASC Sporting and the heel of the gun must be touching the body and below a clearly visible horizontal line drawn 25 cm from the top of the shoulder. The shooter may not move from this ready position until the target is visible and will be warned if he does so. Repeated offending will result in targets being docked.

Full use of the gun (both barrels) is allowed on the single targets, kills to count whether first or second barrel. Similarly, in the doubles the shooter may use both barrels on just one bird with no penalty.

Because there is no shooting cage, the shooter in the hoop has great freedom of movement. This places a premium on safe gun handling and muzzle awareness.

There is no limit on the type of clays thrown and course designers will make liberal use of speciality clays such as battues, rockets, rabbits and minis. FITASC targets tend to be tougher than typical English Sporting presentations and you should expect to see plenty of testing and long range birds.

...THERE IS NO LIMIT ON THE TYPE OF CLAYS THROWN AND COURSE DESIGNERS WILL MAKE LIBERAL USE OF SPECIALITY CLAYS SUCH AS BATTUES, ROCKETS, RABBITS AND MINIS.

EQUIPMENT

Currently cartridges up to 36 grams may be used, in shot size 2.0mm (English size 6) or smaller.

A recent decision will mean that 32 grams will become the maximum load from 2004.

Any gun, not exceeding 12-bore, may be used, with standard multichoked sporters the normal choice. 32" barrels are very much in vogue at the moment. Many opt for fairly tight choking, reflecting the more testing nature of many of the targets.