

TIBOR GONCZOL discusses

PREPARATION OF SHOOTERS FOR THE COMPETITION SEASON

This is the second article the author has written in an endeavour to help Australian shooters break new records in the coming season. Last issue he dealt with many aspects of body preparation. Now he deals with

POSITIVE THINKING — MENTAL ATTITUDE

In every sport and in pistol-shooting in particular, the successful shooter must have the right kind of mental attitude to competition. The coach must help to develop this special competition spirit, positive thinking or will-power — call it what you like — without which the shooter will not be able to produce match scores similar to his practice scores. A coach is doing a good job only if he is teaching the necessary up-to-date shooting techniques, if he develops the necessary physical ability of the shooter so he can execute in practice what he had learned and in the same time gradually develops the mental attitude and necessary psychological characteristics in him so that he will be able to utilise all these in competition. It can be developed to a certain degree in everyone (but not to the same degree). Competition style practice sessions with various methods to put "pressure" on the shooter will help and will serve a double purpose:

- (a) Helps the shooter to overcome "competition nerves" or to learn to "live with it."
- (b) The coach will get an idea of the shooter's ability (the degree of ability) to apply in competition what he learned and can apply in practice. This will help the coach later in selecting a team and also in

working out individual training methods for the shooter.

If possible, some of these sessions should be conducted away from the home range and this will help to overcome the effect of unfamiliar surroundings and equipment on the competitor during a match. It will also give information to the coach of the effect these things have on his shooters.

In my opinion there is a close relationship existing between one's "match nerves" and his physical fitness and preparedness. The better one prepares himself for the competition season by physical exercises, dry-firing, shooting and other regular sport activities, the less is the likelihood of "blowing-up" in a competition. The reason being both physical and psychological.

During this part of the training programme the coach can — from the behaviour of the shooter as well as from his scores in the different events — determine the mental and physical characteristics of the shooter that will classify him as a certain "type" and will ultimately decide what event will the shooter favour, which will be his main and most successful event; in other words to what type of shooting he is most suited.

Basically there are four categories :

- (1) Phlegmatic (for slow-fire events)
- (2) Sanguineous (rapid fire)
- (3) — (nervous, competition nerves etc.)
- (4) melancholic (could not care less, comp. apathy).

The first two types are the most suitable to develop into good competition shooters. With them the competition spirit and ability can be developed relatively easily, particularly if the coach recognises the natural abilities of these shooters and direct them to the type of shooting they are most adaptable, or suitable. There are of course, people who don't fit into any category and will be able to do well in whatever they do. The Finn, Olympic Champion Bentti Linnosvuo is a good example for this, winning a Gold Medal in both Free-Pistol and Rapid Fire.

Besides physical and mental preparation, the coach should help to develop certain habits of the shooter that — in the long run — will help his shooting to a large degree. For example, the shooter should not spot-scope his shot before he mentally analyses it. This way the shooter constantly supervising himself, learns to think for himself, will be able to recognise the mistakes he makes and can apply corrective measures quickly before he spoils his score completely. A shooter with this "habit" or ability will be less erratic in his scores, will be a better and more reliable team member. These competition type training sessions will also prepare the shooter for the actual matches and will help to make the first competition a success rather than a disappointment for the shooter, giving him confidence for further and bigger, more important matches. Entering a beginner to competitions should be gradual. Less important matches first to more and more important ones. I have seen too many promising shooting careers finish before they really started, because the first match entered was an important one, the shooter was put into the team, because of his

good practice scores, and because the responsibility was too great, the result was disappointment, to the degree that the shooter gave up shooting eventually.

Lung Capacity

As we know; from aiming to let off the pistol should be held as steady as possible in order to get as small groups as the weapon and the ammunition are capable of. The lung capacity of the shooter, the ability to store oxygen has a direct effect on the ability of the shooter's steady holding and on the length of time he can hold steady. This can be a very important factor, particularly in the slow-fire events. The shooter must develop his breathing technique and rhythm dependent on his lung capacity. Generally speaking a period of 6-8 seconds of steady hold is enough to fire a shot. This should not be difficult even for shooters of relatively small lung-capacity, yet it is important that the capacity should be developed as much as possible for it not only extends the steady-holding-period, but it has a good effect on the circulation, and on the pulse-rate and concentration. Running, swimming are good exercises for this purpose. So another job for the coach is to improve the lung-capacity of the shooter and to help to develop his breathing technique.

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