

# That's Entertainment!

*THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH SHOOTING SPORTS HAVE DRAMATICALLY INCREASED IN A RELATIVELY SHORT SPACE OF TIME. IS IT RIGHT TO ASSUME THAT THE NUMBERS PARTICIPATING IN THE SPORT WILL INEVITABLY DECLINE? I THINK NOT.*

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Nobody disputes the rising costs of fuel, air travel, hotels, ammunition, competition entry fees and associated shooting clothing and accessories. Inevitably, this increases the 'cost of participating' in our sport – but the same is true of all sports and most hobbies. As a result, few of us are exempt from having to carefully evaluate how our disposable income is spent. We all seek value for money.

However, it is too easy to suggest that escalating costs will inevitably mean that the numbers currently enjoying the sport will decline. The reality is that rising costs are unlikely to have any negative effect on participating numbers, BUT shotgunners are sure to become more selective about where, when and what they shoot. Entry levels for some Big Blasts may not hold up. The demand for side-events at Big Blasts may decline. Rather than spend so much on travel, shooters

may opt to support more local club events and their State shoots.

The one thing that we can be certain of is that though the numbers of those enjoying our sport are unlikely to decline, rising costs will be the catalyst for change. If the sport is to maintain its growth it must deliver value for money. If costs rise and nothing about the sport changes, then numbers WILL decline.

Ever played golf? That too is expensive – with ever higher membership fees, green fees and associated costs. But competitors at all levels of proficiency enjoy well appointed courses, fine club restaurants, exclusive amenities, locker rooms and clean rest rooms, a Pro shop, GPS linked golf carts, driving ranges and practice facilities, club dinners, red carpet services and easy car parking or valet services. It's all part of entertaining the customer and their family, providing value for money in a sporting environment.

It's time for our sport to step up to the plate. From the smallest Club through to NSCA HQ, every facility in the country should be re-evaluating the quality of the service and the value proposition that they offer the shooter. Sporting clays is no longer just about targets – we are in the entertainment business, competing for everyone's disposable dollars. As it stands right now, clay target shooting is starting to look expensive for what it is. The time for change and a better understanding and slicker marketing of 'value for money' is upon us all if the sport is to remain attractive to current and future generations.



## BIG INVESTMENT

I know Ed Arrighi well – and I bet those same thoughts were uppermost in his mind when the private investment group that he leads purchased American Shooting Centers earlier this year.

ASC was established 18 years ago by Ralph S. O'Connor and a group of associates. It's now one of the largest recreational shooting facilities in Texas and is located on 544 acres leased from Harris County in George Bush Park.

The facility, which now consists of 10 buildings and 71 full and part-time employees, features sporting clays, skeet, trap, rifle and pistol ranges. It plays host to more than 140 events annually, including business functions and charity events, as well as events for thousands of individual recreational shooters.

"For a number of years I have participated in events at American Shooting Centers and have seen firsthand the enjoyment it has brought to so many participants,"

says Arrighi. "Our investors saw the continued growth potential for the Center stemming from increasing interest among women, families and others in this sport, which made it an appealing opportunity".

Congratulations Ed – we wish you well.

## GOOD SHOOTING

As we go to press with this issue, the 2008 Shot Show has been and gone – reporting record attendance – and the season has kicked off down south with the Rhino Rally, Seminole Cup and the Browning Briley Mardi Gras Open. For those shooters further north, the season has yet to start – but there's plenty of instruction, technical articles, ballistic reports, a gun test on the new Benelli Legacy, a preview of this year's World Sporting Championship, changes to FITASC rules, news and views and our popular Questions and Answers column in this issue to whet your appetite. Enjoy yet another bumper issue. ■