

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

MAY WAS A BUSY MONTH WITH THE WORLD ENGLISH SPORTING, TRIPLE CLASSIC AND THE US OPEN THAT ARE FULLY REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE.

Major championships and Big Blasts tend to follow a fixed format. They can become predictable and with so many such events across the country are in danger of losing the entertainment value for many of those in A-E class.

Full marks then to the organisers of the World English, Triple Classic and US Open who introduced something different! The top Gun Shoot-out and Pro Challenge at the World English always has a high entertainment value, but the introduction of a 50 target Super Sporting was particularly welcome. The format is a cross between sporting clays

and FITASC. It's challenging, entertaining and is a great stepping stone in tempting those sporting shooters who have not shot FITASC before to possibly do so.

Next up was the Triple Classic at Rio Brazos. In a departure from the standard stations of a Main Event, the target setters included a 4 target station on each of the three main courses. Each target was different and thrown from a separate trap (just as in FITASC) and competitors had full use of the gun – one target, two shots. Something different that many competitors found entertaining, especially in the lower classes.

Also different at the Triple

Classic was the introduction of Pro-Class with its compulsory entry fee premium of \$100, matched by a \$100 from the shoot organizers, to create a high value purse just for the elite shooters. Some 40 shooters qualified for Pro Class – and there wasn't a single complaint. The added bonus was that by moving the top 40 shooters in the country into Pro Class, it left Masterclass more open to others that rarely find themselves in the running to share in their class purse. It's a concept that works and is ideally suited to major championships.

The US Open at M&M also offered something different – 20 and 28g 50 target FITASC side



events that were in addition to the conventional 100 target FITASC Championship. Interestingly, the American Trap Association (ATA) offered a small gauge trap side event at last year's Grand American. It too was a success.

Entries for US Open small gauge FITASC competitions demonstrates the ongoing support, growth and entertainment value of 'small gun' events. Well done M&M – and I doubt it'll be the last

time we see small gauge FITASC.

There's plenty of time left this season to see other shoot organizers, promoters and clubs offering something different at their upcoming events. With the current economic climate having a significant effect on entries, it's time to become a little more imaginative to attract shooting customers and get them to spend their hard earned dollars. Same old, same old isn't enough. Do something different.

More Research

And talking of 'something different', I'm interested to see that the 'powers that be' at the NSCA are addressing the issue of attracting more recreational shooters into our fold – whether that be by way of an NSCA Associate Membership scheme or the founding of a new National Recreational Shooting Association.

Associate membership schemes have been tried by Associations in numerous other countries with little success. Associate membership fees are less than full membership fees and the scheme offers less (such as no Association magazine). While such a scheme will undoubtedly be attractive to some recreational shooters, the danger is that several thousand full Association members may take the opportunity to switch to the cheaper associate membership resulting in a significant loss of income for the Association.

The alternative option of a new National Recreational Shooting Association would probably have to be all inclusive. Recreational shooters are just that – they enjoy all shooting sports and so any such scheme should be fully supported by the NSCA (sporting and FITASC), NSSA (Skeet) and ATA (Trap). It must be all encompassing.

Both concepts have their merits. However, each scheme is based on what 'registered shooters' think 'recreational shooters' might want or need. The truth is, in the last couple of years, no-one has asked them! And we can't ask them because we don't know who they are!

There are thousands upon thousands of recreational shooters in America. Ask any club up and down the country – many boast memberships of 500 or 1000 – the majority of which are not NSCA members. These clubs are the key to success – their recreational shooters initially need to be encouraged with local fun shoots and 'Learn to Shoot' programs rather than focusing on shooting registered targets.

Such clubs already have a database of name and address of members, but with the current laws of data protection the

compilation of a central database that can be accessed for mailing and marketing purposes is going to be almost impossible.

We need to do something different. Instead of spending valuable funds on promoting a scheme that *we* think will be attractive to recreational shooters, it would be prudent to invest in new market research (perhaps using the recently introduced extra 1 cent target fee) to more clearly establish who and what the 'recreational shooter market' actually is and building a dedicated database that can be used to consult them on what an existing or new Association should or could offer – if anything.

Such extensive and independent market research is expensive – but as is the case in any well run business, such research, and actioning the findings, is essential. Let's not put the chicken before the egg! ■