

# Managing Expectations

**MID-SEASON EACH YEAR THE DEBATE SURROUNDING TARGET DIFFICULTY AT BIG BLASTS BECOMES A HOT TOPIC OF DISCUSSION. IS THERE AN ANSWER – OR IS IT A CASE OF COMPETITORS NEEDING TO BETTER MANAGE THEIR EXPECTATIONS?**

**MICHAEL BRUNTON  
PUBLISHER**

In the red corner we have those competitors who enjoy a tough challenge – certainly those in the top half of Master class and probably the more proficient shooters in AA and A class. When the going gets tough, the tough get going they claim – particularly in FITASC. Soft targets leave no room for error – tough targets provide the opportunity for a winner to come from behind.

In the blue corner we have the majority. They would all like to win their class but in reality, for them, shooting is an entertaining and enjoyable pastime – and there's nothing wrong with that. Tough targets are on the edge or beyond their level of proficiency. Low scores dent their confidence and any hope of enjoying the event quickly disappears. Why do targets need to be tough they ask. What difference does it make if the winning score is 96 or 98 rather than 90? In the case of a 96 it's likely that the lower classes found the course more entertaining and scored within their comfort zone. If the shoot is won on 88 or 90 then there's every chance the lower classes struggled.

Can such a debate ever be won? No – and here's why. Ours is a unique sport that allows anyone, including an E class shooter, to enter a Big Blast without qualifying. That same shooter could be on the same squad as Kruger, Digweed, Fowler or Cherry – it's the charm of our sport but does not happen in other sports at championship level. No other sport expects its major event organizers to put on an entertaining championship that meets the comfort zone of E, D and C class shooters while also



providing a challenge to the nation's top competitors. Most of the time the target setters do a great job. Just occasionally they get caught out – and that's when the lower classes become most vocal.

Most likely nothing will change and the debate will continue year after year – but here's a bone to chew on. Before attending a Club registered shoot, State shoot, Zone shoot, Big Blast, the US Open or the Nationals, each competitor, regardless of class, should manage their expectations against their known ability. If you are a C or B class competitor that regularly shoots Club registered events and your State shoot, you may be encouraged and want to shoot the US Open or a local Big Blast, but 'expect' it to be a tougher challenge.

Too many of us never bother to manage our expectations – believing that we are a better shot than we are. Regardless of whether you agree with the punch system

that may have resulted in your being inappropriately classified (up or down), the first and most important factor in enjoying the sport is to know, in your heart of hearts, how good you really are. With the truth accepted, managing expectations at any future shoot will ensure you enjoy your day – regardless of the HOA score or whether the targets were on the soft side or downright tough.

Elsewhere in this issue there's plenty to help you 'manage' those expectations – Roger Hill, a new contributor, starts a series of instructional articles for mid-class shooters; Lanny Bassham's column (Part 2) highlights how to deal with distractions; our ballistics experts provide plenty to think about when selecting your choice of shell and Tom Ceretto puts the Beretta 687EELL Diamond Pigeon through its paces. Together with a host of Big Blast reports from across the country, our regular columns and news, it's another great issue. Enjoy. ■