



Amateur Trapshooting Association
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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Thank you for your efforts over the past year to promote our Association. We look forward to another great year for our sport, the ATA and to your continued support and dedication.

We'd like to share some information with you that the Executive Committee analyzed in order to make some decisions at our meeting in early December.

Prior to this meeting we had become increasingly concerned about the continuing trend toward contraction of our sport. It's very worrisome that our numbers continue to slip not just year to year, but even month to month. Since 2002 ATA registered shooting has fallen by 26 million targets, or 30%. While the economy may be to blame, without analysis of the facts that would only be at best a guess to any potential reasons for decline. We felt a responsibility to go further, to try to get a handle on any causes that we could possibly remedy to boost national registered participation as quickly as possible. As you will see from the information below, it became apparent to us that time was of the essence. We felt compelled to implement whatever we could as soon as possible.

First of all, to dispel an old myth, we found that our market share of new members joining us in registered shooting is not decreasing. When comparing new membership sales in all three clay target Associations (ATA, NSSA, NSCA) over the past 10 years ATA members have consistently represented an average of well over half of all new members signing up. The ten year average shows that 56% of those signing up in the three Associations have joined the ATA. In 2011 the percentage was the same as the 10 year average – 56%. So, of all the people signing up in the clay target Associations, ATA members remain as the clear majority.

While our share of the new member market has remained strong, we went further to try to determine how long these new members continued in their ATA registered shooting efforts. Over the same ten year period, we discovered that after the first year 58% of new members renewed for a second year. At the end of their second year, we found that those signing up for their third consecutive year of membership slipped to 42%. After three years our records indicate that only 32% of the members stayed on for a fourth consecutive year. What this means is that if three new members joined today, after three years only one of the three would still be an ATA member. Obviously, if we could offer something that would induce a greater and longer interest in shooting registered targets to these members the results could be extremely positive.

Further on membership study, we found that the number of paid members in the ATA has remained nearly the same each of the past ten years. However, of those paid members, the number of active members actually shooting registered targets had fallen significantly. Ten years ago, 62% of the paid members were actively shooting registered targets. Last year that percentage had dropped to 51%, or just over half. While it could not be determined exactly what was causing the greater lack of shooting activity on the part of the membership, it was becoming clear to us that we wanted to find a way to address the interest level of our membership.

We continued to break down the information available to us. At this point, we had determined that we were not retaining members and that more and more of our members were not active in the Association. Our goal became to try to develop ideas and implement programs that would retain the interest and shooting activity of ATA members and reverse, or at least slow down the current trends. To try to get a better understanding of the problems, we looked at the ages of our members. During 2011, Junior and Sub Juniors represented 50% of all new members in the Association. Sub Juniors represented 12% of the total membership, Juniors represented 10%. The college or graduate age members (aged 19-23) represented a dismal 3% of our membership. Everyone has always assumed that once out of school, the younger shooters interests turned to different endeavors and trap shooting was further down the priority list. But we felt that we could do better than retaining one in four. If more members in this age group were retained by giving additional awards and adding an All American team we felt the effort would be worth the result. In addition, we may possibly retain a second family member also. This was the reasoning behind the new Junior Gold category.

Additional age analysis revealed that the members age 55-64 represented 21% of total membership. The Veteran and Senior Veteran age groups (65 and over) combined also represent 21% of the membership. As you are aware, there are All American teams for the Veterans and Sr Veterans. Our hope in creating the Junior Veteran category is increased participation by those in that age group that in the past may have been reducing their participation as they found it more difficult to compete for the Men's All American team. Also, as our society has aged, it's common knowledge that this age demographic has more disposable income than any other, and with each passing year more time to pursue personal interests. They are still in the work force and have yet to become overly concerned about retirement funding sources, so we saw this as an age group worth offering more recognition and awards. This was the stimulus for the creation of the Junior Veteran category.

Just as the late baby boomer/empty nester, 55-64 age group have found it more difficult to compete for the Men's team, we find the same true of the lady shooters. The 55 and over ladies have indicated that they find it more and more difficult to compete with the younger lady shooters. The result is that they shoot fewer registered targets, and usually eventually drop out of the sport much sooner than their male counterparts. This opportunity for more recognition was the reason for the creation of the Lady II category.

All of the new categories will be reevaluated after three years. One or two years is not a long enough time period to make an accurate assessment of the need and result of the categories. If after three years the impact has not been positive, these categories may cease to exist.

The categories are certainly not mandatory for all registered shoots or events. Just as many registered events do not include trophies for all categories, the same would hold for the new categories. We felt that if additional trophies and All American Team status could be extended to a larger portion of our membership it would stimulate more interest in shooting. Members are accustomed to more trophies being offered in the larger events as this has been the case throughout the history of the sport. Events with All American points would be the most likely to include trophies for the new categories, and these would naturally be the most highly attended events at any tournament. If a shoot promoter uses the same trophy budget per event and divides it by the number of trophies including the new categories, the value per trophy will diminish somewhat, but only marginally and the new category trophies can be included. Or, if a shoot promoter wishes to give the point pins instead of incurring additional cost for the new categories, that would certainly be acceptable, and the pins would be furnished by the ATA office. No matter what the trophy is, the shooter will receive the All American points.

The ATA central database was modified to include the new categories just a few days after the decision was made. All known tournament software providers were notified on December 9 by the ATA office of the new categories. Most have already made modifications to their software to accommodate the new categories. The first tournament affected by the new categories is scheduled for January 23-29, six weeks after the categories were announced.

Over the years there have been many suggestions offered to stimulate handicap event participation. After discussing these suggestions we decided that the best, most timely and least complicated possibility would be a one-time two yard reduction option. We felt that rather than reinvent the handicap system, this simple one time modification would generate more participation and renewed interest. One of the reasons that this choice was determined over others was because the onus was primarily internal to the Association to set the decision in motion. We have all heard members comment that one yard is not enough difference to make them more competitive, or that they don't want to take a reduction for fear of losing their place on their handicap squad – this option answers both of these comments. It should be emphasized that the two yard reduction is optional, a member may take the two yards, one yard or refuse entirely.

In closing, we appreciate your time and patience in reviewing the above and hope that this account of our reasoning helps in bringing more understanding to our decisions. If you have any ideas that you feel could help to increase membership or participation, please let us know. Our effort was motivated by the hope that participation would immediately increase as a result of these new categories and yardage reductions.

As always, thank you for your continued support and dedication to the sport.

Respectfully,

ATA Executive Committee

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As a result of some recent rule changes I am going to give Hapless Harry and his crew a rest this month and review the changes. The changes were instituted during the winter meeting of the Executive Committee (EC) and were effective January 1, 2012.

The first change for review is self explanatory and establishes some new special categories.

What is the rule?

Section IV., 3., J., will now read:

J. SPECIAL CATEGORIES

All Ladies, Sub-juniors, Junior, Junior Gold, Veterans, and Senior-Vets must declare their special category at the time of classification in any registered tournament if they wish to compete as a category shooter. Without such declaration, the contestant will not be allowed to compete for the applicable category trophy. No contestant will be allowed to declare or change a special declaration after firing his/her first shot. The only exception to this rule will be to correct an ATA classification error. The following rules apply to shooters who have declared a special category. At all tournaments where All American points will be awarded in any event, shooters may declare only one (1) category (i.e. Lady I, Lady II, Sub-Junior, Junior, Junior Gold, Sub Veteran, Veteran, or Senior Veteran) Note: Chair shooters are exempt from this rule.

1. A female shooter, who has not reached her 55th Birthday, may declare Lady I.
2. A female shooter, who has reached her 55th Birthday, may declare Lady II.
3. A shooter who has not reached his/her 15th birthday may declare Sub-Junior.
4. A shooter who is 15 but has not reached his/her 18th birthday may declare as Junior.
5. A shooter who is 18 but has not reached his/her 23rd birthday may declare as Junior Gold.
6. A shooter who is 55 but not reached his/her 65th birthday may declare as a Sub Veteran.
7. A shooter who is 65 but not reached his/her 70th birthday may declare as a Veteran.
8. A shooter who is 70 years of age and older may declare as a Senior Veteran.

This rule does not supersede paragraph 10.

9. Age based categories are established on the birthday of the shooter. For purposes of determining age category for HOA and HAA awards the category declared by the participant on the first day he/she shoots shall be used.
10. Shooters who become eligible for new age based categories during the target year may elect to continue to compete in the previous category for the remainder of that target year. (For example a shooter reaching age 70 may elect to continue to shoot as a Veteran for the remainder of the current target year.) However, once a shooter has elected to move to the new category that decision is irrevocable and he/she may not again declare eligibility for the previous category. Junior shooters reaching the age of 18 may continue to declare Junior category for the remainder of the current target year.

Note: Age based special category shooters that are in contention for or desire to achieve All-American Team recognition should review the All-American Team policy on page 57 prior to declaring a new special category.

When there is no Sub-Junior trophy Sub-Juniors will be included in the Junior category. Senior veterans will be included in the Veteran category when there is no Senior Veteran trophy. When there is no Junior Gold or Sub Veteran Trophy, these shooters will be included in the Open Class. Where there is no Lady II trophy, these shooters will be included in the Lady I category.

What all this means is simply that at shoots where All American points are awarded (think State, Zone, Satellite Grands, Grand American and similar size shoots) the new categories (Lady I,

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Lady II, Junior Gold, Sub Veteran) will be available. Locally run shoots not involving All American points may use some or all of the new categories or choose not to use them at all.

Declaration of a Special Category is always voluntary; no shooter is ever required to declare a category. Given this a shooter who wishes to declare a category must do so at the time of entry. No shooter is allowed to declare a category after having shot the first shot in the first event in which they are entered. Shooters may still only declare one category except for Chair Shooters.

Shooters who have not previously been eligible for a category, and for that matter all potential category shooters should familiarize themselves with the provisions of the following Rule.

Section X., D., says:

D. ATA TROPHIES

1. Only one (1) ATA trophy shall be awarded to any one (1) person in any separate event. This means a contestant may not win both an ATA special category trophy and an ATA champion, runner-up/place, class, or yardage trophy Trophies not provided by the ATA to States/Provinces or Zone are exempt from this rule. Please see Paragraphs E. and H. of this section.
2. A chair shooter whose score qualifies them for more than one (1) ATA trophy must notify shoot management as to which trophy he/she desires to accept or shoot for. The shooter must make his/her declaration after the scores for each EVENT are posted and before entering in to any shoot-off/carry-over. The maximum time allowed for such declaration shall be made by shoot management, within a range of 15 to 45 minutes, and published in the shoot program. If not published in the program, the time shall be 15 minutes. This declaration should be made at a place specified by shoot management. If the shooter fails to make a declaration within the specified time, shoot management shall assign "Chair" as the choice.
3. Any shooter who is tied for event Champion may shoot-off/carry-over for the Championship trophy. If a shooter fails in the championship trophy shoot-off/carry-over and has declared a special category at the time of classification, the shooter will fall back to the declared special category.
4. Any shooter who has declared a special category at the time of classification and whose score qualifies for any trophy in his/her declared category, will compete for the category trophy and not for place, class or yardage group.
5. Any special category shooter whose score does not qualify for a trophy in his/her category may compete for place, class or yardage group trophies.

Once any declarations have been made either by a shooter or shoot management, the declaration is final and cannot be changed. There shall be no exception to this rule.

The means, for example if you really want that C Class Singles Buckle your best bet is to decline to declare your category. Competing for the Category trophy includes shooting off even if you are high for Class or Yardage Group. Even under the previous rules many shooters were electing to shoot for open trophies only and not declare. While these rules are specific to ATA provided trophies and may not be applied to local shoots it would be well to understand what rules are being followed. The ATA considers Category trophies superior to Runner Up, Place, Class and Yardage Group trophies.

The next rule change has to do with "Failure to Fire" as it relates to doubles only.

What is the new rule?

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Rule VII., D., 2 will now read:

2. A contestant shall be allowed 2 failures to fire, for any reason other than stated in Paragraph C., 2., above, during each Doubles sub-event if the Failure to Fire occurs when the contestant attempts to shoot the first target of a Doubles pair, or when the contestant attempts to shoot the second target of a Doubles pair after the first target has been fired at and broken and would have been scored "DEAD". When the first target of a Doubles pair is fired at and missed and that target would be scored "LOST", and an allowable "Failure to Fire" occurs on the second target the shooter may shoot another pair. In such a circumstance the shooter must shoot at both targets of the repeat pair but the first target shall be scored "Lost" regardless of the result of the actual shot, the second target shall be scored as shot. (See exception in VII., E., 11., f.) When a pair is ruled lost there shall be no "Failure to Fire" charged. When the first or second allowable Failure to Fire occurs in any Doubles sub-event, the contestant shall be allowed to call for and fire at another pair of targets and the result of the shots at the new pair will be scored in accordance with these Official Rules.

As one of Harry's buddies might say, "What do it mean?" Under the old rule a shooter who had what would be a legitimate "Failure to Fire" (FTF) on the second target of a pair after missing the first target, was scored "Lost Pair" and no FTF was charged. Under the new rule a shooter who misses the first target of a pair and has an FTF will be allowed another "repeat" pair. The shooter will be required to shoot at both targets but the first target will be scored "Lost" and the second target will be scored as shot. The shooter will be charged with a FTF under such circumstances.

For example let us assume that Jimmy Jammer shooting his favorite autoloader calls for a pair misses the first target and has a failure to feed on the second target denying him the opportunity to shoot at that target. The referee/scorer would allow another pair. If Jimmy breaks both targets of the repeat pair the proper score would be "Lost and Dead." If Jimmy breaks the first target and misses the second the proper score would be "Lost Pair."

The new rule change does not make any other changes to the FTF rules. You still are allowed only 2 FTFs per sub-event and they do not accumulate; if you have only one FTF on the first sub-event you still are allowed only 2 on the next sub-event.

Finally the EC also provided that on a one time basis all shooter whose purified Handicap average below the "trigger point" for each Zone (Eastern, Western, Southwestern Zone are currently 90.0% Central Zone is 91% Southern Zone is 89%) will be offered a 2 yard reduction subsequent to review by the Zone CHC member and the Delegate. For this one time offer all computer codes excepting "L" codes will be removed.

Purified Average -Handicap average with up to 2 scores 10% below the shooters average tossed out

Trigger Point - the average that triggers an offer of a reduction on the normal 1,000 target review if the shooters purified average fall below that number

Shooters may 1) accept the 2 yard reduction, 2) accept a 1 yard reduction, or 3) refuse the reduction entirely

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Questions or suggestions for articles?

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