

March 2008

Some time ago you wrote in "Australian Shooter" that there was no chance that Sporting Clays will ever become an Olympic event. I am now told that you will have to eat your words. Is this true?

Name withheld, NSW

About three years ago when this topic was first raised there were no plans to introduce Sporting Clays or any other event to the Olympic Program. In actual fact the International Olympic Committee was actively culling events as evident with the demise of Running Target and Women's Double Trap from the 2008 Olympic Program. However in 2007 the International Shooting Sports Federation unveiled tentative plans to introduce a new Clay Target event. This event was trialed at the World Cup event in Italy. The event has no actual name as yet, but we would know it as 5 Stand or Compact Sporting. The trial event was shot over an existing Olympic Trap / Skeet Field. It used 3 Trap machines from the underground trench, both Skeet machines and a further four portable Sporting Machines. All targets were shot from 5 cages three metres apart. This event was in June 2007, but 6 months later when I attended the Asian Clay Target Championships in Kuwait there seemed to be some talk that this format would be modified to 8 machines in total, all targets would be standard (no exotic targets such as mini's) and there would be no inequitable targets such as rabbits which means that terrain would not be a problem when setting standardized grounds. The "gun ready" position would be as it is in ISSF Skeet is which is practically on the hip bone. Maximum shot size would be 24 grams of number 7 shot. The crossing points for targets would be between 25 to 35 metres in front of the cages. This is largely due to the fact that television audiences need to be considered when selling any new Olympic event and long 60 metre crossing targets do not lend themselves well to television cameras.

The obvious problem is that not all grounds have super-imposed Olympic Trap and Skeet Fields. I believe this will be re-considered and a total of eight portable machines would be used. The idea was to have as many as 10 pre determined programs that could be set on any suitable range worldwide. This would be very similar to the programs that must be used to set Trap targets around the world. All targets have a predetermined flight path in terms of angle, height and distance.

Having said all of that there is certainly no guarantee that this event will become an Olympic event. Firstly the ISSF would have to trial the event at World Championship level. The earliest this could realistically happen would be 2010. If all goes well and the event proves popular worldwide then the very best it could make an appearance at an Olympic Games under the current country quota system would be 2016. It would no doubt be introduced only if events were taken out of the current Olympic program. This event would be perfect for both men and women so two events would have to be eliminated. I would think that Men's Double Trap would be the first event taken out and it would be anyone's guess which would be the second, but if I was to wager a bet I would imagine that a Pistol event would be in danger. There are still so many grey areas it is not worth speculating too much further.

The next big question would be just who would administer the new sport within each country. Here in Australia I could easily see at least four shooting bodies raising their hands wanting to take control of a new Olympic event that will attract Federal Government dollars to administer the event and to fund its athletes. The competition to administer the event may become as competitive as those wishing to shoot it.

Questions: russell@russellmark.com.au