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My local club has recently switched to the new higher dome American Clay Target and my scores in the DTL events have certainly increased as a result. I have gone quickly from a 'B' Class competitor to 'AA' Class, but I have not won anything at all. Is the percentage of 98% too low to be in this grade?

Peter North, Brisbane, Qld

98% sounds great, but the reality is that now days it will not be competitive in AA Class. In Australia we are throwing an American distance target of 46 metres with only 22 degrees of angle either side of center and to top it off we are now using a clay target that is 3mm taller and much softer in composition than we have ever used before. Remember thirty years ago DTL in Australia was 45 degrees each side of center with a distance of 55 metres and we largely used a target that was quite hard because it was generally made to throw the 80 metres that the international events required. In Australia we are graded on our Double Barrel results. The difference in America is that all events are Single Barrel. To demonstrate how easy these targets have become in the United States the record long break is well in excess of 3,000 in a row!! Rarely in Australia these days is a major Double Barrel event won without a score of 300 straight or more. Your scenario Peter is typical of many right across the country and if you closely look at the scoreboards of any of the larger DTL competitions you will see virtually no C or B class shooters competing as they are quickly promoted up one or two grades due to the easier targets. I think this a problem that we need to live with in this country as the powers to be seem reluctant to change the rules back to what they once were, however it is quite probable that Double Barrel events as we once knew them will disappear simply because of the cost to the club in throwing shoot off targets and the cost to the shooter in ammunition. In my opinion this has been the major reason for the decline in participation at monthly club competitions in DTL and the reason why there has been a major change in clubs making a large portion of their income from practice shooting as opposed to competition. Shooters still want to shoot they just don't want to fire off a case of shells to win their local monthly Double Barrel Championship.

Questions: russell@russellmark.com.au