

## February 2006 – Previewing the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games

In 2002 The Australian Commonwealth Shooting Team won an astonishing 30 medals. Even more amazing was that this only placed them second on the medal table. The mighty Indian Team won the honors by winning more Gold Medals, fourteen to our eleven. Twenty nine shooters have won the right to represent Australia in Melbourne next March. Let's have a closer look at our chances of going one better in 2006.

This team is quite possibly the most experienced team ever to represent Australia at any Commonwealth Games. Estimates in medals have been from Thirty-two to forty medals in total.

The Clay Target Team has nine Olympians of its eleven participants, five of them medallists. Both the Men's and Women's Trap teams are made up entirely of Olympic Medallists so both these teams will start as outstanding favourites. Michael Diamond and Adam Vella would be a hard duo to beat in any event on earth and to be honest they are in a class of their own in the Commonwealth. Pencil in one gold medal for Men's Trap Pairs. Individually Diamond is trying for a third straight Gold Medal. The only person who can stop that happening is Adam Vella. Vella qualified for the team in first position, marginally ahead of Diamond. If you got get a bet anywhere on a Quinella finish then this combination would be the only consideration. Don't expect a large return on your wager though. Suzie Balogh and Deserie Baynes form the Women's team in this event and should prove too strong for anyone I can see arriving in Melbourne to compete against them. Balogh, the 2004 Olympic Gold Medallist, has not had a great year and at one stage even looked in danger of missing the team, however at the second Team Elimination she was back to her best and showed the other girls just who the "boss" really is. Suzy is back and is focused. Pencil in another Gold Medal here also.

I was lucky enough to make the Double Trap team, but need some improvement to figure in the medals in March. My team mate will be the Clay Target Team's only newcomer in Craig Trembath. I have been training with Craig for some time now and have watched him develop into a very capable shot. He won two of the four events during the elimination process and will only improve in the lead up to the Games. He will be an unknown quantity and a name to watch in the future. Susie Trindall will partner Suzie Balogh in the Women's event. Susie had a creditable 7<sup>th</sup> in Athens and she will be hard to toss here. It would be a fitting way to finish her Double Trap career as this is the last time females will be shooting this event. ***(The ISSF are not the most politically correct sporting body in the world when it comes to sexual equality)***

Skeet could be our hardest event to medal in as the toughest competition lays here. Both the English Men's and Women's Teams boast formidable world class competitors. In the Women's section England's Elana Little is the current World Record Holder so she will cause some concern for Lauryn Mark and Natalia Rahman. Our girls won the pairs event last time and again will do well here. Lauryn is the defending Individual Gold Medallist also. Now a mother as well, she had a slow start in the Team Eliminations, but came home very strong to win the last three events. The home ground advantage will certainly help both Lauryn and Natalia to finish in the

medals. The Barton Brothers from Tamworth finally get to shoot together as a team and on their day at the Lilydale Range will be a more than competitive duet. They will need to be both on to win this one.

The Pistol Team is headed by 2000 Olympic Medallist, Lalita Yauleuskaya, I will go out on a limb and predict Lalita will be the shooter of the Games and win 4 gold medals. David Moore will be the busiest shooter of the Games competing for 8 Gold Medals. Even Ian Thorpe can't match that! A couple of David's partners along the way will be Daniel Repacholi in the 50 metre Free and 10 metre Air. Daniel is the most promising up and coming Pistol Shooter we have had in a long time and he will figure in the medals somewhere along the way. The ever green Bruce Quick makes his umpteenth Commonwealth appearance in the 25 metre Standard Pistol and will add to his medal collection here. The Teams oldest competitor is Bob Dowling at 59 years young in the 25 metre Centre Fire Match. The Indian Team will be at its strongest here.

The Rifle Team will sadly miss its star of the last Commonwealth Games in Tim Lowndes. Tim is now actively serving in the army. The positive side is that we have two young men in Benjamin Burge ( 25 ) and Mathew Inabinet ( 21 ) to replace him. The 50 metre Prone event sees Warren Potent returning again and he will be partnered by David Clifton. Warren has a World Championship Team Gold Medal to his name from 20 years ago so experience should not be a problem.

The Women's Rifle Team has already tasted considerable success at Commonwealth level. Who could ever forget Sue McCready's great final in Malaysia in 1998 to steal the Gold Medal? She is accompanied by 2002 Silver Medallist, Susan Smith, the school teacher from Sydney. Together these two will be hard to toss in both the 50 metre 3 Position and the 10 metre Air events. In the Prone event Kim Fraser will partner Susan and if all things go right we should see them provide the English with some Gold Medal competition.

In the Full-bore Rifle event in Bendigo, James Corbett will make another Games appearance accompanied by Bruce Scott. Home ground advantage plays a big part in this event and hopefully our boys know enough about the wind on this range to overcome some stiff opposition from their British counterparts, particularly the Northern Irish.

The unfortunate part about this Commonwealth Games for a spectator is that the shooting venues are dispersed right across the State. The Clay Target events being in Lilydale, Pistol and Rifle in Port Melbourne and Full Bore in Bendigo. I am sure the venues will leave a tremendous legacy for each individual sport, but media and spectator wise it will be poor. To be honest I don't think we can expect huge media coverage at these Games largely due to this fact. TV Networks and Newspapers only have a limited amount of resources to cover any event of this magnitude and when the sport starts to geographically split itself up in a 200 km radius then only the major events will get some coverage. There is no easy way to sugar coat this fact even though Shooting will provide the third highest amount of Australian Medals behind Swimming and Athletics.

Ticket Sales for the Clay Target events have been sold out for months. With less than two thousand on sale each day it was always going to be a battle to get into the Lilydale venue. The greater problem for those with tickets will be to actually get a seat in the Grand Stand behind the Finals Range as these hold just over one thousand seats. A similar situation happened at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney where the tickets sold far out weighed seats in the Grand Stand. My advice for any one lucky enough to have tickets for any of the Clay events is to get there early and go straight up to the Finals range on Field 1 and get a seat and DON'T move.

The Range at Port Melbourne has limited seating so the same will apply. At the time of writing tickets were still plentiful for the Full Bore events in Bendigo. At \$25 per ticket these represent the best value of any Commonwealth Games ticket. I am sure James and Bruce will appreciate all the support they can get.

The results from these Games will provide our Athletes an important lead up to the 2006 World Championships and World Cup season. These events provide our team with the chance to gain all important Quota places for entry into the Beijing Olympics of 2008. Nobody could ask for a better preparation than what our team is receiving. The Australian Sports Commission is forever decreasing the overall Shooting Budget in real monetary terms it will soon become apparent that only the shooters that are performing at the highest level will continue to receive full government assistance in their lead up to 2008. Again this is not a pleasant fact to state, but one which has become a reality. If ever there is a time for our sport to concentrate on some long term developmental and junior programs, now is it.

## ***The 2006 Commonwealth Games Shooting Team***

### **Rifle (Melbourne International Shooting Club, Port Melbourne)**

#### **50M Rifle Prone Men**

Warren Potent, 43, NSW  
David Clifton, 44, NSW

#### **10M Air Rifle Men**

Benjamin Burge, 25, VIC  
Matthew Inabinet, 21, ACT

#### **50M Rifle 3 Position Men**

Benjamin Burge  
Michael Brown, 24, NSW

#### **50M Rifle 3 Position Women**

Susan McCready, 24, VIC  
Susannah Smith, 26, NSW

### **10M Air Rifle Women**

Susan McCready  
Susannah Smith

### **50M Rifle Prone Women**

Susannah Smith  
Kim Frazer, 47, VIC

### **Full Bore Rifle Queens Prize (Wellsford Rifle Range - Bendigo)**

James Corbett, 46, VIC  
Bruce Scott, 49, QLD

### **Clay Target (Melbourne Gun Club, Victoria Road, Lilydale)**

### **Double Trap Men**

Russell Mark, 41, VIC  
Craig Trembath, 33, VIC

### **Double Trap Women**

Susan Trindall, 22, QLD  
Suzanne Balogh, 32, NSW

### **Trap Men**

Adam Vella, 34, VIC  
Michael Diamond, 33, NSW

### **Trap Women**

Suzanne Balogh  
Deserie Baynes, 45, SA

### **Skeet Men**

George Barton, 28, NSW  
Clive Barton, 34, NSW

### **Skeet Women**

Lauryn Mark, 25, VIC  
Natalia Rahman, 23, VIC

### **Pistol (Melbourne International Shooting Club, Port Melbourne)**

### **50M Pistol Men**

David Moore, 52, NSW  
Daniel Repacholi, 23, VIC

### **10M Air Pistol Men**

David Moore  
Daniel Repacholi

### **25M Rapid Fire Pistol Men**

David Chapman, 40, SA  
Bruce Favell, 41, QLD

### **25M Pistol Women**

Lalita Yauhleuskaya, 42, VIC  
Pamela McKenzie, 43, WA

### **10M Air Pistol Women**

Lalita Yauhleuskaya  
\* **2nd position to be announced**

### **25M Centre Fire Pistol Men**

David Moore  
Bob Dowling, 59, NSW

### **25M Standard Pistol Men**

David Moore  
Bruce Quick, 45,