

How To Survive Your First ATA Registered Shoot

By Roger Cox

Introduction

If you've learned to shoot trap, you are ready to shoot in competition! What's next? Attend a registered shoot, sanctioned by the Amateur Trapshooting Association (ATA).

This is an introduction to ATA registered trapshooting, from how to register through picking up trophies after a successful shoot.

ATA Sanctioned Shoots

"Registered" events are sanctioned by the ATA. ATA membership forms are available at all registered shoots. Allow some extra time to complete the forms, which can be done in the registration process at your first shoot. Forms are also available online at www.shootata.com.

Once a new membership is processed, two cards should arrive in the mail: (1) a permanent plastic card with magnetic strip and (2) an annual paper card, on which scores, averages, and yardage "punches" are maintained.

Shooters keep track of all scores from registered events. Until membership cards are received, the membership application copy provides space for a temporary shooting record.

The ATA sanctions three forms of competition: singles, handicap, and doubles:

Singles: Shot from the 16 yard line, the front line on a trap field. Most ATA singles are 100 target events, with "championship" events at larger shoots running 200 targets. Shooters are assigned to a 5-person squad, which rotates through each of the five posts on each trap field – five shots each post, for each round of 25.

Handicap: Shot like singles, but at varying yardage distances. Most beginning shooters start at the 20 yard line, in hopes of working their way back to the 27 yard line (based on performance in prior events). Ladies and sub-juniors start at the 19 yard line. Most registered shoots feature "yardage groups" for purposes of trophies and other awards. Additionally, shooters should always shoot in squads of similar yardage, typically allowing no more than two yards between shooters in a squad. This enhances safety and avoids unnecessary distractions.

Handicap yardage is "earned" based on raw scores and placement in earlier events. When a shooter "earns" yardage, a "punch" is made on the shooter's paper card. This is called "earning a punch."

Doubles: Features two targets thrown simultaneously at the same angle each time. Like singles, doubles are shot from the 16 yard line. Most registered doubles events throw 100 targets (50 pair).

Classification

In singles and doubles, shooters are classified based on recent averages and known ability. In most shoots, there are five classes, ranging from AA (the best) down to Class D (the lowest average group). Larger shoots may include six classes, including AAA. The ATA rule book provides the recommended numbers for how the classifications work.

To discourage "sandbagging," new shooters will sometimes be classified higher than their actual ability until an average can be established. Those temporary classifications should be published in the program for a given shoot. At larger shoots, "penalty yardage" may be assessed in handicap events in much the same way for shooters who have not registered a minimum number of handicap targets.

Once a shooter establishes a reliable average, he or she will be classified based on the ATA guidelines, with adjustments possible for "known ability."

Buzzwords - "Talkin' the Talk"

Many official terms can be found on the ATA website, in the ATA rule book, and in official shoot programs. That said, as with any other sport, there are some words of art that every shooter needs to know. Some examples:

AAA27AAA – This is the highest rank to which a shooter can aspire. This reflects an AAA classification in singles, earned handicap yardage back to the 27 yard line, and AAA in doubles.

ATA – The Amateur Trapshooting Association.

Bank – A group of trap fields used in a particular shoot. In the most common setting, shooters shoot one round of 25 from each trap, in a group of four traps. This is said to be a "bank." Sometimes, a bank may consist of two traps when, for example, shooters shoot 50 targets at each trap.

Caps – Slang term for handicap events.

Comb – The top portion of a gun's stock, which is often adjustable on trap and other target sports shotguns.

Dead – A target successfully broken by a shooter. The target must have a broken piece visible to the scorekeeper to be considered dead – merely "dusting" a target is not enough and will be considered "lost."

The Grand – The Grand American, held each year in Sparta, Illinois (see Section 9).

House – The traphouse – the structure from which the targets are thrown.

Lost – A missed target.

No Target – A target not counted as an official target – for example, a target that is broken coming out of the House.

Post – The location on a trap field from which a shooter shoots. There are five posts per field, and shooters rotate to each post, typically 5 shots per post.

Punch – Literally a hole-punch on a shooter's paper card; occurs when a shooter earns additional yardage as a result of performance in a handicap event.

Squad – The group of shooters with whom a shooter shoots in a registered event. A full squad has five shooters. A squad with fewer than five shooters is said to be a "short" squad.

Straight – The breaking of consecutive targets without a miss. Sometimes a shooter will be said to have "run" a trap or an event if the shooter was "straight."

Ties Divide – Shooters with the same score split the option money, if any, for that placement. This typically occurs with option payments rather than trophies and trophy purses.

Unsingle – A single barrel trap gun, which uses the lower portion of an over/under receiver. An unsingle looks like an over/under gun without the top barrel.

For a more complete glossary, including official terms from the ATA rule book, visit any of the following links.

www.traphof.org/General-Information/glossary.html

www.shootata.com/GeneralInformation/TrapshootingTerminology.aspx

www.shootata.com/GeneralInformation/ShotgunTerminology.aspx

Websites and Sanctioning Bodies

The Official ATA Website - www.shootata.com

Trap Shooting Hall of Fame - www.traphof.com

Website of Trap & Field Magazine - www.trapandfield.com

Website of Trapshooting USA Magazine - www.trapshootingusa.com

World Shooting & Recreational Complex - dnr.state.il.us/worldshooting/home

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Intro To

REGISTERED TRAPSHOOTING



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Special Categories

The ATA also provides special categories based on gender and age. Not every shoot features all special categories, but at most major shoots, the following categories are offered:

Sub-Junior. Shooters not yet 15 years old. (Those who have not turned 15 by September 1 can continue that classification for the remainder of the trap year.)

Junior. Shooters not yet 18 years old. (Those who have not turned 18 by September 1 can continue that classification for the remainder of the trap year.)

Junior Gold. Shooters not yet 23 years old. (Those who have not turned 23 by September 1 may continue that classification for the remainder of the trap year.)

Lady I. All female shooters, up to age 55 years old.

Lady II. All female shooters age 55 and over. (Those who have not yet turned 55 by September 1 may continue Lady I for the remainder of the trap year.)

Sub-Veteran. Shooters age 55 to 65. (Those who have not turned 65 by September 1 may continue Sub-Veteran for the remainder of the trap year.)

Veteran. Shooters who have reached the age of 65, but are not yet 70. (Those who have not turned 70 by September 1 may continue Veteran for the remainder of the trap year.)

Senior Veteran. Shooters who have reached the age of 70.

Special categories allow shooters an additional chance to win a trophy. Winning shooters may not win more than one special category at a time, and they must elect between an award based upon their special category or on an overall or classification basis. This allows the next ranked shooter in the special category or class to take the prize that day. As a general rule, the special category award takes priority over a class trophy. A special category must be declared during the registration process. (Note: special rules may apply at major shoots where "All American" points or ATA Trophies are awarded.)

Registration for Registered Shoots

Registration consists of three steps: handicapping, squadding, and "cashiering." Here is how it works at most shoots:

Handicapping. Each shooter must be classified, or "handicapped," based upon average or "known ability." A shoot official will review the shooters' averages and handicap yardage. The shooter will be assigned ATA classifications for singles and doubles, and handicap yardage will also be verified. This is when the shooter must declare any special categories. Classes and handicap yardage rules are found in the ATA rule book.

Squadding. The shooter will choose or be assigned a "squad" of up to 5 shooters. At smaller shoots, this can be as simple as a written squad sheet near the cashier or handicap window. At major shoots, this can be done in advance by use of websites like presquad.com. Some shoots require a shooter to be handicapped first, but the squadding process can allow shooters to shoot with friends or others of similar ability, even allowing some control over the time of day during which they shoot.

Cashiering. After handicapping and squadding, the shooter heads to the cashier to pay all entry fees and the cost of any special "options" the shooter may be playing. A nominal daily fee for the ATA and the state organization is also collected.

Declaring Special Categories. A reminder: A special category must be declared during the registration process at each shoot!

Conduct of The Shoot

The first squads will typically be alerted to the beginning of a new event with something like a ten minute call. Squads then head to their assigned beginning trap field or bank. Shooters should find out how many "banks" (see below) are being run to have a better idea of their squad's starting time.

In singles and handicap, most events provide for one round of 25 targets to be shot at each trap field, five (5) shots per "post." Shooters move to the next field for the next round, and so on. In most 100 target events, shooters will shoot on four adjacent trap fields, called a "bank." Some shoots provide for two or more rounds to be shot at the same field.

Conduct of The Shoot *Continued...*

After all shooters complete a particular event, there will be a very short break, and the next event begins.

Championship and Category Winner

a. *Champions and category winners:*

For each event, winners are awarded for overall performance and for results within a particular class, yardage group, or special category.

No shooter may win more than one award in a single event. For example, the overall winner of an event will also be first in his class and/or category. He must choose between taking the overall championship or his class trophy. That shooter should select the championship, which will leave the class or category win to the next highest shooter in each.

If ATA trophies or All American points are awarded, category shooters may shoot off or carry over for the Event Champion trophy, but if unsuccessful are then considered only for category trophies (not for additional place, class or yardage trophies). A category shooter with a score that does not qualify for a category trophy may be considered for event place, class or yardage trophies. Category shooters should be aware that if ATA trophies or All American points are NOT awarded gun club management may allow category shooters to fall to additional place, class or yardage trophies BEFORE falling back to category trophies.

b. *Ties:*

In the event of a tie for a championship, special category, classification, etc., the shoot program will determine how those are resolved. Typically, a "shoot-off" will follow. Shooters will shoot complete rounds against each other until a winner is determined. This is one of the most exciting aspects of trapshooting.

Often, however, ties "carry over," especially in preliminary singles and doubles events. Carryover ties will be determined by those shooters' performance in the next event designated in the program. As to those shooters, the first trap in the next event is effectively their shoot-off. If still tied, The second trap is considered & so on.

Many options and other purses may contain the designation "ties divide." This means that there is no shoot-off for that option, and any money paid to a particular place will be divided among all shooters with that score.

c. *Shoot Offs & "Falling Back"*

One more twist: in certain situations, if a shooter enters a shoot off in one category or class, he or she may not be able to "fall back" to the other category in the event of a loss. In the example of the female shooter above, assume she is tied for high lady and also high gun in Class A. If she shoots off for high lady and loses, she cannot "fall back" and claim the A.

Options and Purses

Most shoots award trophies, trophy purses, or other awards for the overall winner of each event and one or more runners up. Prizes may also be awarded to the winner of each class, and in the case of handicap, to the high gun in each yardage group for that event. Special category winners are also awarded in shoots in which special categories are designated. (Note: Smaller, local shoots may not feature all categories, etc. – see the shoot program.)

Many shoots also provide for "options" – as the name suggests, these are optional and do not impact trophy competition. This may include any one or more of the following:

25s. For those playing this option, a special purse is set aside based upon results in each 25-target round of an event. For example, in a 100 target event, 25s would be paid for each of the four 25-target rounds. This typically only pays one place, with those tied dividing the money.

50s. This works like the 25s, but in 50 target increments. In a 100 target event, for example, there may be three 50 purses – one for the first 50, one for the middle 50, and one for the final 50 targets. Depending on the size of the shoot, this may pay more than one place, with ties also dividing money.

100s. This works like the 25s and 50s, but in 100 target increments. This or some variation may also be designated as a "jackpot purse" in a 100 handicap event, for example. *Continued on next page*

Options and Purses *Continued...*

Jackpot Purse. This is much like the above options, but paid on the total number of targets in an event. This typically pays more than one place, with ties dividing.

Lewis Purse. This varies from shoot to shoot, but in general, shoot management will bracket one or more artificial "classes" from which payouts can be determined. For example, in a Lewis purse paying two places, the top two scores in a shoot will share the money for that first class. A second class may be established at another pair of numbers, and a similar payout made. This allows for additional payouts to the top guns in the event, while also allowing similar payouts to those who record lower scores.

The Shoot Program

A written program is required for registered shoots. In addition to listing events, trophies, and optional purses, the program contains special rules for that event, which might include penalty yardage and classification, handicapping methods, and the like. Shooters should always read the program prior to registration because some of the concepts and rules described above may be modified in the program!

Special Shoots

The ATA and state organizations sanction major shoots throughout the country.

Grand American. The ATA's biggest shoot (and its premiere event) is the Grand American World Trapshooting Championship, held in August of each year in Sparta, Illinois. This event is open to all ATA shooters, and it provides trophies for all classes and categories. The "Grand" attracts thousands of shooters from all over the world. No trapshooter's career is complete without attending the Grand!

Satellite Grands. A number of events around the country are designated as Satellite Grands. These are also larger shoots, attended by shooters from that particular region and from throughout the country. Shooters contending for "All-American" team status will typically shoot in as many Satellite Grands as possible.

ATA Zone Shoots. The ATA is divided into five geographic zones. Each zone holds a zone shoot, typically in mid-summer, just before the Grand. A zone shoot can be held simultaneously in more than one location, with both local or "club" awards and zone awards being provided.

State Shoot. Each state and Canadian province hosts a championship tournament. These shoots run a number of days, with a variety of preliminary events leading up to the championship events. Championship events are typically held on the final weekend of the shoot. State / Provincial shoots are among the most popular annual events in registered trapshooting. Most state shoots provide for "open" or "non-resident" trophies, which encourages non-resident shooters to participate.

State / Provincial Zone Shoots. States are usually divided into zones, each of which also hosts an annual zone shoot. These are held throughout the year at local gun clubs throughout the state. Like state shoots, most zone shoots also award "open" or "non-resident" trophies.

Most major shoots feature both preliminary events and Championship events. It is not necessary to shoot in a preliminary event to shoot in most Championship events; however, shooters competing for "high overall" may need to shoot in all events. "High All-Around" trophies are also awarded, based on total performance in the three championship events – typically 400 targets (200 singles x 100 handicap x 50 pair of doubles).

Gun Safety

Shooters must always carry a gun with the action or breach open at all times, and without any ammunition in the gun. On the trap line, in singles and handicap events, a gun may never have more than one shell loaded.

Even out on the line, all guns must be unloaded whenever changing posts or any time shoot personnel are headed to or from a trap house.

"The only real safety is an open, unloaded gun."

The Online ATA Rulebook is Always The Most Up To Date