

## SUNDAY – Lauren leads the Grand

Sunday was the first full day of Grand Aggregate shoots, comprising the Alexandra at 600 yards, the Duke of Cambridge at 900 yards and the Daily Mail, a 15 shot match at 500 yards. I've long found it slightly anomalous that, four shoots into the Grand Aggregate each year, we find ourselves having fired more shots (30) at 500 yards than at all the other ranges put together (20), even though most people tend to fire less often during the season at 500 than at the other ranges. Some, however, consciously prepare for it – good for them!

Those people hoping to benefit from early morning details at long range were disappointed when it transpired that the first two details 'enjoyed' wind varying mostly between 6 and 10 minutes with occasional forays outside that bracket. It was manageable, though, if you had your wits about you and avoided firing just as one of the flicks higher or lower occurred. Conditions varied over the course of the day, but 48 people managed to score 50, with David Williams (OGRE) and George Irish (NLRC) making 50.9 but being squeezed out by a superb 50.10 from Canada's Choquette, on her first senior tour.

At 600 yards, fortunes were mixed. In some later details in particular, the left wind went through step changes at times. Note to shooters: when confidently winding on your new wind call, make sure you have remembered which distance you're shooting at, lest your confidence be misplaced. 50.9 was enough to gain a place in the tie shoot, which will be between three people. Matt Millar (Old Epsomians) was joined at the top of the list by two names that often feature close together on the Grand board – D.Armstrong and J.Underwood (Old Guildfordians). However, this wasn't David Armstrong but a female Tyro from Sedbergh School – well done her! There were 53 'possibles', among which David Curtis must be kicking himself for his 'V' first to count, which denied him the possibility of achieving the 'impossible possible' – he finished with 50.1.

Finally (for most) came the Daily Mail, shot mostly in muggy conditions. The start of the five o'clock detail was very mildly marred by raindrops, with the black clouds promising more; so quite a few shooters got up and put their waterproof trousers on, only to find that they finished their shoots with the inside, not the outside, of their waterproofs soaking wet... with sweat from the building heat! The wind was light and the indicators suggested it was always from the left, but lots of shooters needed right wind on their sights... Was there an as-yet-invisible shift to right wind on the way? There were more than 67 scores of 75, with many of them not making it onto the prize list. The five tie shooters, on 75.14, are Jim Corbett (Australia), Alex Coetzee (South Africa), Glyn Barnett (OGRE), Parag Patel (OERC) and George Cann (Exonia & Tiverton).

Only three people managed full scores in the Sunday Aggregate, with Chris Watson's (UVRC) 175.25 edging out Tom Laing-Baker (LMRA) and Michael Cooper (Comber). The five 175s in the Clementi Smith Agg were something of an international "who's who", with Don Thompson (Australia), Jim Paton (Canada), David Luckman and Parag Patel (England) beaten by a 175.30 from Alexander Coetzee (South Africa). David Luckman managed to win the Weekend Aggregate by a clear point from Coetzee, dropping two for a 348.54.

After four shoots, the first Grand Aggregate board was put up outside the NRA Offices. All those with 3 off (or better) were on the board (top 50), with the ten best of those having dropped only one point – amongst them, two Australians, a South African, a Jerseyman, a Welshman, an Irishman (this is starting to sound like a joke!), three Englishmen and, atop the list, an Englishwoman - overnight leader, Lauren Crowson. Impressively, the top O on the list at that stage was Dollar Academy shooting master Craig Stewart, in 20th place, with one of his former pupils just five places behind him.

The day ended, as ever, with plenty of enjoyable socialising, which for many competitors is what keeps them coming back every year. Two events stood out: first, a memorial reception kindly hosted by his family for the wonderful Simon Fraser, who did so much for cadet shooting in this country and who led many cadet teams to South Africa. The degree to which he was loved in the shooting community was very evident in the large turn-out, which spanned all age groups and contained many who owed Simon their gratitude.

Later, the Canadian teams hosted their many invited guests at the beautiful Macdonald Stewart Pavilion. As always, they were very generous in their servings, which we hope won't have adversely affected too many guests' performances the next morning in the Times!

Tomorrow brings the Times at 300 yards, the Wimbledon at 600 and the dread Corporation, at 1000...