

THE BLACK POWDER SHOOTING UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA



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Formerly The Historical Firearms Shooting Union Founded in 1958

Affiliated to:

MUZZLE LOADERS ASSOCIATIONS' INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION (MLAIC)
SOUTH AFRICAN BISLEY UNION (SABU)

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Captain's Report: 28th Muzzle Loaders Associations' International Confederation (MLAIC) Short-Range World Championships, Eisenstaedt, Austria, 19-25 August 2018

After complying with all the required trial and selection criteria, SASCOC awarded Protea Colours to the team to participate in the 28th MLAIC Short-Range Muzzle Loading World Championships in Eisenstaedt, Austria, from to 19 to 25 August 2018. A total of 25 countries were represented (Argentina, Australia, Austria [host country], Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of South Africa, Russia, Switzerland, Slovak Republic, Sweden and the United States of America) with a total of 395 competitors participating in 2073 individual senior events and 17 individual junior events.

As is customary for the BPSU, no team manager is appointed for Short-Range Teams and the captain takes care of both portfolios. Corena de Beer was appointed captain again and the team consisted of Corena, Pieter Truter, Jacques Jansen van Vuuren and Chris van Gaalen as senior shooters participating in their 13th (SR & LR), 6th (SR & LR), 3rd (SR only) and 3rd (SR & LR) MLAIC World Championships respectively, and Marx Meyer, Simon van Gaalen and Corné Schreuder as junior shooters, all for the first time. The 2 juniors that participated in the MLAIC World Championships in Hungary in 2016 also set out to qualify for the team, but both are at University now and had to withdraw due to academic commitments. SASCOC approved official Protea Colours for the team on 17 March 2018.

The main obstacle in the preparations leading up to the Championships were the unavailability of Swiss black powder and the fact that developments were still ongoing for the different firearms with the available Obatex. However, both groups (Gauteng and the Western Cape) prepared as best as possible and travelled with an open mind to make the most of the practicing days before the Championships to finalise loads and settings for the different events.

The South African Black Powder teams have always supported South African Airways in the past, due to the fact that SAA allows 20kg sports equipment at no extra cost. However, the SAA tickets from Cape Town to Munich were more than R17 000 per person and that would have meant that we had to drive from Munich to Austria like we did to Hungary in 2014. Other options had to be explored and the main criterion was to make sure they have a firearm policy that was acceptable to us. Emirates and Qatar were approached and in the end we were the most comfortable with what Qatar could offer us – 45 kg per person (regardless if it were suitcases and/or rifle boxes) at just less than R9 000 per person flying from South Africa via Doha to Vienna. Their firearm policy was also very straight forward and we took the quantum leap away from SAA. I booked everyone's flights so that the 4 members travelling from Cape Town met the 3 members travelling from Johannesburg at Doha and we travelled on the same flight to Vienna. The return flights were similar – everyone on the same flight from Vienna to Doha and then we split to go to Cape Town and Johannesburg respectively.

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Three days before our flights Pieter and I went to the Qatar office at the Cape Town International Airport to make sure all our paperwork was in order before our flights on Monday, 13 August 2018. What complicated matters a bit, was the fact that muzzle loading rifles and pistols are also not licenced in Austria and we could therefore not obtain any import and export permits as required by the airlines. It took quite some time earlier in the year to obtain confirmation from Austria and after several fruitless requests from the organisers to provide me with a simple statement confirming this, I approached the Austrian Embassy in Pretoria. A complete list of travellers, booking references, passport numbers, types and makes of firearms and serial numbers were provided to them and they followed up directly with Austria. After 3 months, I received a return email to confirm that there are no licences (and therefore no import / export permits) required for the firearms that were listed in my email and Qatar was satisfied with this document, together with the standard BPSU letter with the same information for each traveller, confirming the status of muzzle loading firearms in South Africa according to the Firearms Control Act.

The team departed on 13 August 2018 and met at Doha airport about 2 hours before the last combined flight on the morning of 14 August. Once in Vienna, we went through baggage claims and customs for the firearms without any glitches (except for one rifle's front sight coming loose during the travels), due to the complete and detailed paperwork. We learned that several other travellers from different countries experienced serious problems with their firearms and some only arrived a day before the competition started. We rented two estate vehicles / station wagons to ensure that there is enough room for everyone with their luggage and rifle boxes. Pieter drove the one vehicle where the seats were flattened so that all the rifle boxes and suitcases could fit in the back and Jacques drove the other vehicle with Chris and the juniors as his passengers. Pieter's vehicle had a built-in GPS to show us the way.

We booked rooms at the Orange Wings Hotel in Wiener Neustadt, about 30km from Eisenstaedt, as by the time our team was confirmed, all the accommodation in Eisenstaedt were sold out. In an ideal world, we would have liked to stay in the same place as where the championships are held, but to keep the cost as low as possible for the individuals who went, it was not possible. For future teams, we have two options – (i) book in advance with a thumb suck number attending (history has shown us that at least 2 individuals had to withdraw after qualifying for the team due to financial reasons from every championship in the past few year) and then the final number of participants will have to carry the cost for unused rooms; or (ii) carry on like we do now where affordable, but non-refundable bookings are made only when the final number of team members are known, even if it means staying within 30 minutes from the range. Option (i) had the added complication that sizeable non-refundable deposits (if not the full amount) has to be paid upon confirmation. The next Short-Range World Championships will take place in Pforzheim in 2021 and since this is the 50th Anniversary of the MLAIC, a record number of participants are expected and from experience I know Pforzheim cannot accommodate everyone. I leave this up to the Executive Committee to advise on how to handle the bookings for 2021.

To ensure we had no problems with our firearms we left a few days earlier than usual. We spent the first few days doing sight-seeing around Vienna and Eisenstaedt with Pieter as our dedicated driver assisted by the built-in GPS. On Wednesday we visited Burg Forchtenstein in the Burgenland of Austria and despite the fact that the tour was narrated in German, we thoroughly enjoyed their weapons museum. We also invited for a glass of wine by a priest and the mayoress of the Forchtenstein Village while we were having lunch at the castle. The next day we explored Wiener Neustadt and met a waitress from South Africa who was quite pleased

to hear Afrikaans being spoken. On Friday we drove to Vienna and spent the day sightseeing and trying out some of their finest cuisines. A visit to the Austrian Zoo was also planned, but somehow the priorities got changed and we did not get the opportunity to go there. We went to look for the range on Saturday and eventually found it, despite only one or two very non-descript signs in town. The different ranges were still closed and we could not really get a good idea of what to expect. However, we were able to get our registration packs and then we explored the town centre where we ran into the Australian team.

Sunday was our first practice day and also the day set aside for the MLAIC Delegates Meeting. I asked Pieter to rather coordinate the practice than to join me in the Delegates Meeting, as I was not yet sure about the selection of my teams at that stage. The rest of the team practiced 50m and 100m Military and Free Rifle at our allotted targets and try to figure out loads and elevation settings.

The Delegates Meeting started at 10:00 and only finished around 19:00 with still some unfinished business to be continued before the captains' meeting on Monday. Several proposed changes to the MLAIC Constitution were discussed and voted on. The MLAIC has successfully moved their bank account to a Swiss bank and affiliation fees will now be collected every two years, instead of every year, at €120 per year. The period of appointment of the office bearers (secretary general, deputy secretary general, treasurer and committee) was temporarily changed to 3 years to correspond with the next MLAIC Short-Range World Championships that will only take place in 2021 as a result of the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of the MLAIC. Very few of the proposed changes in shotgun and short-range rules affect us, as they were for events that we do not shoot internationally.

Some of the issues of note were that the Hadley eyecup with adjustable dioptre disc that we use on our free rifles will no longer be allowed and tunnel front sights on flintlocks is still unresolved. It has been referred to the Small Arms Commission again. Priming powder for muskets and flintlocks may also not be stored in a container where all the components are brass. For safety reasons, it must be fitted with a plastic / rubber / cork stopper that can be displaced should the pressure inside the brass container gets too high or in separate plastic containers in small volumes (one container per prime only). There is still confusion about which revolvers are classified as military type and what sights, grips and clothing are allowed for these events and what not. This had been referred back to the Small Arms Commission and I hope when the revised rules are published, this will be clearer. A minimum calibre for flintlock muskets of .65 or 16.5mm had been approved. It is not allowed to use a palm rest and a sling for offhand events. A new team event for Original Military Rifles only had been proposed by Hungary and accepted. It will be the Königgratz, while the Enfield can be a mixed team of Original and Reproduction rifles.

In an effort to limit cheating and unfair advantages, random checks to firearms and equipment may / should be performed before a shooter leaves the firing point. Also no hearing protection or spotting scopes equipped with radio / two-way communication will be allowed and the use of cell phones, iPhones and tablets on the firing point will be strictly forbidden while the match is in progress. Phones and tablets may be used as cameras only after the shooter has completed his / her relay.

Award ceremonies are unnecessarily long and a database of IOC approved national anthems should be obtained and made available on the MLAIC website for organisers to use. The presentation of the ceremonies must also be reorganised not to waste time.

The Pacific Zone rules as proposed by South Africa had been accepted without change. Mike McDaniels of the USA seconded the proposal. The only changes were the awarding of medals that will be independent on the number of entries and the resolving of shotgun ties, where the individual shots for each shotgun participant must be provided to the Match Organiser and resolved in reverse order from the second relay until the tie is resolved.

There was only one proposal from the Long Range Committee, i.e. that the change in the maximum weight of the rifles that had been accepted in 2009 already and still incorrectly refers to 13lb instead of 15lb. The UK delegate started an email conversation including some unfounded accusations before the Delegates meeting and it was decided that since the minutes of the particular meeting where the decision was taken could not be accounted for, to refer the issue back to the Long Range Committee to discuss at next year's Long-Range World Championships in Bisley, UK, and make a detailed recommendation for the next MLAIC Delegates meeting. Gerhard Lang was unanimously re-elected as Secretary General, as was Ramón Selles Calabuig (Deputy SG), Antonio Ferrerio (Treasurer) and the MLAIC Commission (Gerda Lejeune, Antonio Ferrerio, Kim Atkinson, Mike McDaniels, Balázs Nemeth and Robert Szuppin). I was officially appointed as one of the Vice-Presidents, in my role as the coordinator of the Pacific Zone Championships.

Anti-doping in Sport was an issue for the organisers of this World Championships, as our rules are very vague about it. The MLAIC needs to make a decision about our future involvement in WADA. A separate presentation from Austria's NADA (National Anti-Doping Agency) was held before the Captains' meeting on Monday.

The team practiced again while I attended the WADA and captain's meetings. The delegates were in agreement that the MLAIC needs to be a non-signatory to the WADA code, as we currently do not qualify (needs 40 active members and it will cost CHF4 000 per year). The Constitution will need to be updated to make provision for this and it will be finalised over the next few months to be presented and voted on in 2021.

The Captains' Meeting reiterated the rules that needs to be adhered to and issues that needed attention before the World Championships could start were highlighted and addressed. There was a single target on Range 1 (handgun), which meant that shooters had to change their own target after 6 or 7 shots. There were no lines officers on any of the ranges, only a single range officer for every 4 or 5 shooters. This was in direct conflict of the rules and the organisers had to secure the services of additional individuals to fulfil this role. I specifically asked what roles the seniors standing behind the juniors may / must fulfil and it was decided that (for this match) the seniors must resolve all issues the juniors may have, i.e. replace nipples, resolve misfires, etc. This is different for each championships where I had been captain and the Exco should consider if we should make a standard recommendation to the extent of support a junior may receive within a match and forward it to the next MLAIC Delegates' Meeting in 2021.

By the time all the meetings were done, Pieter had to deal with and resolve several issues with the team and their equipment. Thanks to the good relationship we have built with fellow shooters over the years, he was able to secure extra practice time to sort out some of the senior members' rifle issues. The juniors practiced their 100m and 50m and were all set and comfortable. I literally had time to practice 5 shots at 100m with my free rifle, as Pieter and I shared a borrowed target after the trouble shooting he had to do for the rest of the team left him with insufficient time to sort out his own rifles. On Tuesday we were only allocated practice time at 25m and again I relied on Pieter to look after everyone. I waited on the 50m range for an opportunity, as the range was fully booked. However, there were only musket targets

available on the 50m range and I had a very interesting practice to say the least, when one of the countries did not turn up for their practice, much to the amusement of some of the other countries, wondering if I even realised I shot with my little percussion rifle on a musket target ... Then Pieter had to borrow a scale to weigh more charges for Marx's pistol after a fairly disastrous first practice, so that he could be settled before the competition started.

The opening ceremony was again a march through the streets of the hosting town and I was very impressed that the South African team was one of only two teams that dressed formally for this occasion. It generated several comments of appreciation and as long as I am involved in the management of the Protea team, our tradition will go on. One small irritation was that all the speeches during the Opening Ceremony, except that of the SG, were in German, and several countries complained about it afterwards. On the other hand, we have just marched several kilometres and were standing in the blazing sun and heat – we were only too happy when all was over, but there was a lot of information that we missed due to the language barrier.

The weather was not conducive for good shooting with extremely hot and fairly humid days. The ranges were far apart and the weapons were stored in one of the Fire Brigade's halls, which was even further away. Parking close to the ranges was limited to the individuals who stayed in caravans on site and the rest of us had to carry heavy rifle boxes uphill between the storage area, 25m range and 50m/100m ranges. Cleaning tents were put up – one for handgun and one for the 50m/100m ranges, but the space was totally insufficient to accommodate everyone. Time between our relays were initially only 1 detail, but I managed to have it changed so that we have more time to finish shooting, pack up, clean firearms and carry our stuff to the next range for the next competition. Refreshments on the range was extremely expensive and only available in the exhibition tent quite far away from the 50m/100m range. It would have been nice if the organisers had a water / cool drink stand at this range as well.

The scores were not what we are used to at MLAIC level and the full scores were few and far between. No individual records were broken, only 7 were equalised (none of these were full scores). There were 5 new team records. By Friday afternoon it started raining while Chris was shooting 100m and by the time Pieter shot (the detail after Chris), it was very dark and with the 100m targets against a black backstop, almost impossible to see. I had to shoot after Pieter and then the Juniors had to shoot their Whitworth Junior event. I sent Chris to file a protest and tried to see if we could at least get the juniors to shoot on Saturday, but it was not successful. I shot in atrocious conditions and could only see the first three shots on my target. Needless to say, Pieter and I shot the worst Whitworth scores of our international careers, but miraculously when we started packing out for the Juniors' relay, it cleared up and they had near perfect conditions again.

The scores were a bit disappointing for us with Pieter 9th in Vetterli (score of 97), Chris 9th in Whitworth (score of 96) and me 11th in the Walkyrie. After finishing 2nd for the Rigby team in 2016, we only managed 10th place, but with the scores Pieter and I shot in the dark, we did not expect much better. Jacques was the top scorer for single shot pistol for the South Africans, with a 6th place, and Pieter was 44th in the Lamarmora. Although there were only 17 juniors with only 6 competitors in the events our juniors took part, we are very pleased with their performance. Due to costs countries only enter the very best junior shooters. Marx Meyer came 2nd in the Vetterli Youth (score 96/100), Simon van Gaalen was counted out to 5th (score 94) and Corné Schreuder as 6th (score 87). Marx again took the honours in the Whitworth Junior taking 3rd place (score 92/100), Simon was 4th (score 91) and Corné 6th again (score 88). Simon

got 3rd place for Kuchenreuter Junior (score 87/100), Marx was 4th (score 79) and Corné 6th (score 74).

We spent Sunday doing a last drive-around in fairly wet and humid weather before we all went back to the hotel and started cleaning and packing. We returned the vehicles on Monday afternoon and then waited around the airport for the check-in desks to open and security to take the firearms. Again everything went smoothly thanks to our elaborate documentation.

The Cape Town group nearly missed the connection flight on Doha because some repairs had to be done to the plane in Vienna and we left more than an hour later than expected. However, as we ran into the airport building, Qatar officials were waiting there for us with a huge sign with my name. We were then escorted through security, through the gate into the air bridge, then onto a bus waiting just for us, eventually onto our plane. As we entered, the doors were closed behind us and the pilot announced that all the passengers are on board and that the plane will take off immediately. Fortunately the plane was not too full and most of us could manage to sleep. In Cape Town, we could see the parents and families waiting for us, but we had to wait for our luggage ... which did not make it onto the plane. However, we were just happy to see the rifle boxes did and our suitcases arrived safe and sound 24 hours later.

On a personal note, I want to thank the entire team for their support and good spirit. We did not have any problems or incidents and we operated very well as a team. A special thank you to Pieter Truter, who were literally me extra pair of eyes and hands, who made it possible for me to sit in the meetings tending to administrative issues, while not having to worry about the team or our equipment. Thank you to our two chauffeurs, Pieter and Jacques, for keeping us safe and on time all the time.

Every time before a Short-Range World Championships, I write to the organiser to request that they consider certain things, such as not having the meetings at the same time as the practice times, as many countries are in the same boat as us, where the captain and/or delegate is also a shooter and miss out on valuable practice opportunities. So far my efforts had been unsuccessful, but I am confident with the new management of the MLAIC and a sympathetic SG, there might be a change of heart before I retire shooting ☺.

Thank you once again for the confidence you as Exco put in me to appoint me as the captain of the Short-Range Protea team again, it is an immense privilege for me and I am humbled by the support and recognition on national and international levels.

Kind regards



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