

Beijing 08

2008 Australian Olympic Shooting Team preview

by Russell Mark

It took nearly two months of legal arguing, but finally, in early May, the 2008 Australian Olympic Shooting Team was settled. It seems that barristers and solicitors play an unfortunate but necessary role in determining the composition of any team these days, no matter what selection policy is adopted by Australian International Shooting Limited (AISL).

There were three appeals lodged against the nominated athletes put forward to the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) by AISL. The appeals were first heard by an independent tribunal appointed on behalf of AISL to determine whether there were any grounds for appeal based on the non-compliance of the policy. If an appeal was upheld at this level, the matter is referred back to the AISL Selection Panel for review. If the appealing athlete found the decision unacceptable after the Panel has referred the matter back to the Tribunal for its final decision, then they had the option to take the matter further to the Court of Arbitration of Sport (CAS), which is the



last avenue of appeal. Under the terms of the AOC's Selection Policy, it is every athlete's right to appeal a nomination by the individual sport's National Federation to the AOC and final nominations cannot be accepted until the appeals procedure has been exhausted. It can become a lengthy, expensive and emotionally draining process, but one which I feel is here to stay for future team selections.

The team was nominated after four designated competitions between October 2007 and March 2008. There are seven Shotgun shooters and five competitors in each of the Pistol and Rifle disciplines. There are five events in each of the three shooting disciplines and Australia has qualified to have a representative in all 15 of these events. This was determined by an international quota system that took place at the 2007 Oceania Games and all World Cup and World

Championship events in 2005, 2006 and 2007.

If a competitor is using one of their country's quota positions, they are then eligible to be nominated to compete at the Olympics only if they have achieved a Minimum Qualifying Score (MQS), as specified by the International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). This score must be obtained once at any of the predetermined world-class events that are conducted under the strict rules of the ISSF. After the completion of the Oceania Games in October 2007, only athletes who had an ISSF MQS were eligible to shoot-off for the Olympic nominations. A maximum of two shooters can be entered in each event, provided they have the required MQS.

In Beijing, you will see several shooters 'doubling' over into other events that they have an MQS in. This is very common in Rifle and Pistol events, but rarely seen these days in the Shotgun events, as

2008 Australian Olympic Shooting Team preview

the competitors here seem to be more specialised. In Olympic Rifle and Pistol events, there are competitions for both Air and .22-calibre firearms, but unlike the Commonwealth Games and World Championships, there are no Centrefire matches. Clay Target events are limited to 24g of maximum shot size No. 7 and shotguns no larger than 12-gauge. Side-by-side, self-loading and over-and-under shotguns are all allowed, but all competitions will use the latter configuration. Release trigger guns are prohibited. All Olympic events are conducted for individual awards only. There are no team competitions.

Unfortunately, due to pressure from the IOC, Shooting has lost two events from the previous Olympic Games in 2004. Women's Double Trap in Shotgun and Running Target in Rifle have both been eliminated from the program. This is largely due to the fact that the IOC wants more 'beds' available in the Olympic Village for other athletes, as it introduces and expands the more popular sports, while not wanting to increase the overall number of participants.

One of the biggest tasks that the ISSF faces in the future in regard to Olympic participation is keeping the shooting sports 'media friendly'. By this, I am suggesting that unless the event can be covered favourably by television, then it faces an uphill battle to keep its Olympic status. Fortunately, over the past 20 years, the ISSF have made great inroads into making all of the 'Finals' great spectator events, due to such innovations as electronic targets for Pistol and Rifle and easy-to-see 'flash' targets that explode into a paintball of smoke when hit in the Shotgun competitions.



Warren Potent on the victory dais in the Beijing trials in April this year.

Of the 17 Australian competitors, five are making their debut, which is a significant number. While experience is always a great benefit, constant turnover in team members is just as important, as often it will take more than one Olympic Games to gain the most out of an athlete.

The reality is that the Olympics are different from the Commonwealth Games or World Championships. I concede they are not different in 'theory' only, as the events themselves are shot in exactly the same format as other major tournaments. However, the Olympics can be a very daunting event for the first-time competitor due to the scrutiny that the event is placed under by the general public, media and even family and friends of the athletes. The great benefit I see for our five first-time Olympians is that they already have a great deal of international experience under their belts and shooting competitive scores has not been a problem.

The Australian team has some outstanding medal prospects. The most improved shooter in Australia, and possibly the world since the previous Olympic Games in Athens, has been Prone Rifle shooter Warren Potent. At 46 years of age, Warren is still getting better. He is ranked world number one by a sizeable margin after he again received a medal (bronze) at the first World Cup of the year in Brazil. To top this effort, at the Olympic Test event in Beijing the following month, he won another gold medal and along the way, equalled the 'Finals' World Record with a staggering 704.8 points. This follows his two World Cup gold medals in 2007.

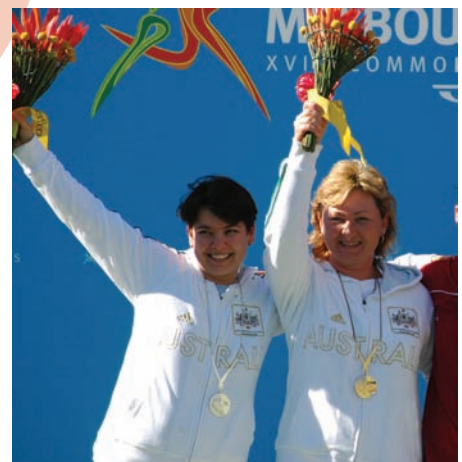
The turnaround in form by Warren has been nothing less than amazing. Although, we should not forget that back in 1986, in what was then East Germany, he was part of the World Championship gold medal-winning and World Record-breaking Australian Prone Team. He is hardly an overnight sensation I would dare say. For this reason, he will be starting as the favourite on August 15.

SSAA member Michael Diamond will also start as the number-one contender in the Men's Trap competition. The reigning World Champion and World Record holder will only have himself to beat as he makes his way towards a history-making third gold medal.

Michael's shooting partner will be 29-year-old debutant Craig Henwood from the Melbourne Gun Club in Victoria. Craig finished a solitary point ahead of 2004 bronze medallist Adam Vella after the six months of trials. He then had a nervous wait as Vella unsuccessfully appealed against his non-selection by AISL to the Olympic Team.



Craig Henwood shooting a 'flash' target in the Trap event.



Dina Aspandiyarova, left, and Lalita Yauhleuskaya are distinct medal possibilities in the Sport and Air Pistol events. Photo by David Hume.

The next two medal prospects are Pistol shooters Lalita Yauhleuskaya and Dina Aspandiyarova in the Sport and Air Pistol events. Both ladies are constant finalists at nearly every World Cup they attend and with a touch of luck, a podium finish is a distinct possibility. Lalita was the 2000 Olympic bronze medallist in Sport Pistol when she was competing for her native country of Belarus.

In the Women's Trap competition, Stacy Rojall from Victoria makes her first Olympic appearance at the expense of reigning gold medallist Suzy Balogh. Her world ranking of 11 (May 2008) sells her short of her real chances in Beijing. A World Cup gold and bronze medallist in 2004 and 2005, Stacy has had a rollercoaster career already. Surprisingly, she missed selection for the 2006 Commonwealth Games, but then fronted at the Opening Ceremony in Melbourne

2008 Australian Olympic Shooting Team preview



Trap shooter Stacy Roiall, with Double Trap shooter Russell Mark.



Stacy Roiall in action during the Trap event.

as the head coach of the Falkland Islands Team. She is diversified in her shooting talents and has a big chance of success on August 11.

Two interesting family pairings in this year's team include Victorian Skeet shooting brother and sister Paul and Natalia Rahman, as well as recently married husband and wife Pistol and Rifle competitors, Daniel Repacholi and Susan McCready. I would think this is a first in the Olympic Shooting Team on both accounts and certainly would be quite unusual in most other sports as well. At this stage, sadly for Daniel and Susan, the village is separated into male and female rooms only, but they are hoping some unisex accommodation can

The 2008 Australian Olympic Games Shooting Team

Event Competitor State Finals date

Shotgun

Men's Trap	Michael Diamond	NSW	August 10
	Craig Henwood	Vic	August 10
Men's Double Trap	Russell Mark	Vic	August 12
Men's Skeet	George Barton	NSW	August 16
	Paul Rahman	Vic	August 16
Women's Trap	Stacy Roiall	Vic	August 11
Women's Skeet	Natalia Rahman	Vic	August 14
Shotgun Coach	Valeriy Timokhich	Vic	

Pistol

Men's Free	David Moore	NSW	August 12
	Daniel Repacholi	Vic	August 12
Men's Air	Daniel Repacholi	Vic	August 9
	David Moore	NSW	August 9
Men's Rapid Fire	Bruce Quick	Vic	August 16
Women's Air	Dina Aspandiyarova	Vic	August 10
	Lalita Yauhleuskaya	Vic	August 10
Women's Sport	Lalita Yauhleuskaya	Vic	August 14
	Dina Aspandiyarova	Vic	August 14
Pistol Coach	Anatoly Babushkin	Vic	

Rifle

Men's Prone	Warren Potent	NSW	August 15
	Benjamin Burge	Vic	August 15
Men's Air	Matthew Inabinet	Vic	August 11
	Benjamin Burge	Vic	August 11
Men's 3-Position	Benjamin Burge	Vic	August 17
	Matthew Inabinet	Vic	August 17
Women's Air	Susan McCready	Vic	August 9
	Robyn Van Nus	WA	August 9
Women's 3-Position	Susan McCready	Vic	August 14
	Robyn Van Nus	WA	August 14
Rifle Coach	Miroslav Sipek	Vic	
Team Manager	Nick Sullivan	SA	



Benjamin Burge will be compete in the Prone, Air and 3-Position Rifle events. Photo by Tim Bannister.

be found for their stay in Beijing, although their coaches may disagree!

Benjamin Burge will be the busiest shooter on the team competing in three Rifle events. He will accompany Warren Potent in Prone and SSAA member Matthew Inabinet, who will be competing at his second Olympics, in the Air and 3-Position Rifle events.

Robyn Van Nus, the sole non-Victorian or New South Welshmen in the team, will also make her Olympic debut and compete in both Women's Rifle events. Robyn was the last competitor named officially for China, nearly two months after the first athletes, as she had to endure a long and drawn-out appeals process against her original nomination from AISL. Unfortunately, the appeals process cost Robyn the chance to compete at the test event. Hopefully, however, this won't have a detrimental effect on her performance at the Olympics.

It is worth noting that two of our Pistol shooters, 48-year-old Bruce Quick and 54-year-old David Moore, are making their second and third Olympic appearances respectively in China and have no signs of retirement in sight. They both have unique occupations too - Bruce is a radiologist specialising in nuclear medicine, while David is an instructor of Boeing 747 pilots. >

2008 Australian Olympic Shooting Team preview

The Shooting Range in Beijing has been purpose-built to host the Olympics, but will no doubt be utilised to host major Asian and World shooting events for many years to come. Most athletes gave the range a confident thumbs-up after competing there in April. The weather at this event played a major part in the overall scores, with very cold and wet conditions at times making high scoring difficult. Tamworth Skeet shooter George Barton would testify after his great fifth place in the constant driving rain. The cold certainly won't be an issue in August though, with predicted temperatures in the mid-30s with extreme humidity.

Curiously, the Chinese Olympic Committee has been experimenting with the weather science of 'cloud seeding' with such great success that they are guaranteeing a 'dry' Opening Ceremony. Stay tuned on this one, but from all reports, they have mastered the art of making the rain clouds precipitate over the surrounding hills and mountains around Beijing, thus leaving the urban areas where the Olympic Stadium is situated with fine, stable weather. The much-spoken-about smog will certainly be a factor in many sports, but it won't really play a role in the outcome of the medals at the Beijing Shooting Range.



Men's Rapid Fire Pistol shooter Bruce Quick.
Photo by David Hume.

The Chinese Team as a whole will provide the biggest competition. The home-ground advantage will be significant, coupled with the fact that this is now the home of their National Shooting Team. They will also have had exclusive use of the range for the four months prior to the

Games commencing. The Russian, Italian, United States and German teams all performed very well at the test event and will again be countries to watch.

As always, success at the Olympic Games will carry some weight towards future funding of the shooting sports. Although not entirely dependent on results in Beijing, it will always be far easier to negotiate new initiatives and increased funding from the Australian Sports Commission if the sport has Olympic medallists. At the 1900 Paris Games, when live pigeons were used instead of clay targets, Donald Macintosh won a gold and bronze medal. We waited 84 years for our next medal, then another 12 before the medal drought was again broken in 1996 with three Olympic podium finishes. This was repeated in 2000. 2004 then produced two more medals and I think that two or three medals would be a realistic expectation once again this year.

Channel 7 are the Australian television broadcast rights holder for the Beijing Games and will generally only televise live coverage of any finals that Australians have a realistic chance of winning a medal. Let's all hope we get plenty of 'live' action during the second and third weeks of August! ●



NOW OPEN 7 DAYS

19 Babbage Road, Roseville Chase, NSW 2069 - 02 9882 2689 - www.magnumsports.com.au

LOW PRICES AND FREE DELIVERY ON OPTICS FROM MAGNUM SPORTS

Leupold Scopes VX-I 2-7x33 \$290 VX-I 3-9x40 \$310 VX-I 3-9x50 \$405 VX-I 4-12x40 \$375 VX-II 1-4x20 \$425 VX-II 2-7x33 \$425 VX-II 3-9x40 \$425 VX-II 3-9x50 \$565 VX-II 4-12x40 \$600 VX-II 4-12x50 \$670 VX-II 6-18x40 AO \$670 VX-II 6-18x40 AO TGT \$715 VX-III 1.5-5x20 \$575 VX-III 1.75-6x32 \$575 VX-III 2.5-8x36 \$575 VX-III 3.5-10x40 \$675 VX-III 3.5-10x50 \$770	VX-III 4.5-14x40 \$720 VX-III 4.5-14x40 AO \$755 VX-III 4.5-14x40 LR \$815 VX-III 4.5-14x50 \$815 VX-III 4.5-14x50 LR \$935 VX-III 6.5-20x40 AO \$815 VX-III 6.5-20x40 EFR \$890 VX-III 6.5-20x40 LR \$905 VX-III 6.5-20x50 LR TGT \$1105 VX-III 8.5-25x50 LR TGT \$1210 Leupold Rangefinders RX-I \$370 RX-II \$420 RX-III \$550 RX-IV \$655 RXB-IV \$1050	Bushnell Elite 4200 Scopes 1.5-6x36 \$525 2.5-10x40 \$630 2.5-10x50 \$750 4-16x40 AO \$615 4-16x50 AO \$780 6-24x40 AO \$680 8-32x40 AO \$730 Bushnell Elite 3200 Scopes 10x40 \$290 2-7x32 \$275 3-9x40 \$285 4-12x40 AO \$390 5-15x40 \$440 5-15x50 \$475 Aimpoint Scopes Comp C3 \$590 9000SC \$530 Micro HI \$615
--	---	--

FREE DELIVERY

anywhere in Australia for phone and internet orders over \$200
(excludes safes and dangerous goods)

Call for the best prices on other products

www.magnumsports.com.au

Dealers Licence No. 409564311