

# LOVATT LOOKS AHEAD

**Steve Lovatt** of The Clay Shooting Company talks to **Mark Brown** about operating post Covid-19, and what we can expect at the CPSA British Open English Sporting in September.



**A**s practice and registered shoots get underway, we spoke to the charismatic Steve Lovatt about the measures he has implemented to ensure compliance with social distancing rules, and also his feelings about the future of our sport.

## NEW BEGINNINGS

So, what changes has Steve implemented to adhere to the 'new normal' for practice and registered shoots?

First and foremost he stated that the single biggest change is the near closure of the clubhouse – it's open for entries (behind plastic screens) and toilet facilities, on a one-way system with entry in one door and exit through another. There is no sitting or waiting allowed inside and the familiar smell of bacon cooking has all but gone.

Hand sanitiser stations and soap/handwashing areas are more abundant, and a new card machine allows contactless payment, although cash or cheque is still accepted.

After checking in you are instructed to wait in your car or in the car park area until your allocated time slot to shoot.

Slots are restricted to six people and as your time approaches you will be met by a member of staff, who

will explain how to move around the ground and how things work. You are placed in pairs to shoot, starting on Stand 1 with markers on the ground to indicate where you should wait – as with the clubhouse it works strictly on a one-way circuit.

Steve admits that the whole set up is like a "clinical, military precision operation that actually works more efficiently and is easier to run. Having timed slots

(roughly every ten minutes) enables me to control the ground better."

## THE PLAN IN ACTION

An important and key new measure is shooting the stands in

numerical order, with scorecards kept on each stand, only ever touched by the scorer on that stand, who will have them in order of the next people to shoot.

After shooting, scores are verbally agreed, the cards put back into a sealed storage box and collected at various times during the day. All of these measures ensure that shooters only ever touch their own equipment whilst out on the ground.

Steve was quick to praise Nicola Heron at the CPSA for working with him back at the start of the lockdown, on how a 'structured practice' could be set up that would follow government guidelines.

This is now the basis for

all grounds and owners to follow for the foreseeable future, if they wish to register scores or offer practice shooting.

## LIFE AFTER LOCKDOWN

The lockdown has hit clay shooting hard, and with finance in mind I wanted to understand what the cost implications might be for adopting the necessary measures to ensure compliance. Steve was quick to point out that it's not as bad as people may fear – he pinpoints expenditure of around £1,000 for plastic screens, extra admin work, printing, hand sanitiser and soap across both of his grounds. There are also extra running costs of two more members of staff on shoot days, to meet and brief shooters as they arrive.

In addition to this, he also estimates that his clay wastage will increase from around 6-8% up to 10-12%, as squads of two will not have had a chance to see the targets beforehand.

However, it's important to note that increased efficiency brings more numbers throughout the day, therefore more people can get round the ground in a day. These measures could increase his capacity by up to 55%.

Interestingly, the worst part of the process so far, he says, has been writing the Coronavirus risk assessment.

Steve stated "the major casualty is the loss of the social aspect of the day out, but we've got people out shooting again and they really do appreciate that. They are compliant and we are not having to nag people to remember to distance themselves. Demand is really high, and I've got people wanting to book as far ahead as August."

## BRITISH OPEN

I couldn't resist the opportunity to talk to Steve about the British Open, and ask what he had in store.

He was keen not to give away too much, but coyly advised that he has been working on the course layout since January/February time and it will be "a standard challenging Lovatt course with a few special twists involved." Anyone who shoots at Garlands regularly can expect a challenge, Steve says. "We will be walking the same paths but the targets and presentation will be very different – that I can assure you!"

His positivity is infectious and it's clear that there is a life after lockdown, and it's really encouraging to see how people are rising to the challenge of keeping the sport growing for us all to continue to enjoy. 🍀

A standard challenging Lovatt course with a few special twists involved.