Wiping the Eye of the World
How American Marksmen, Cleaned Up in the Olympic Trap Shooting Contest
By Peter P. Carney

At shooting—trapsnitching in particular—the United States outclasses the remainder of the world. This has been proven time and again, and the demonstrations will continue as long as the United States—as a national or through its individual citizens—is invited to participate in competitions in which shooting irons play a prominent part.

You very well can recall the part the United States played in what we know as the war, how the German lines sagged after the youth of America reached the line of fire, but what we want to tell you in this message is of shooting events of more recent origin.

The pick of the world's athletes are to be found in the Olympic games. Nations that never turn out a good track athlete or swimmer can be depended upon to turn out fairly good marksmen. Most every one can shoot—there are some who can shoot better than others. The best shots in the world will be in the Olympic games.

How the United States outclassed the other nations can be summed up rather quickly. The lowest shot on the United States team in the World's Championship team competition broke many more targets than the highest scorer on any other team. Each nation was allowed five entrants in the Individual Championship of the World. The first five places were won by Americans.

And in the English trapshooting championships, which preceded the Olympic games, the American shooters won 52 of the 72 prizes offered in eight events, winning seven firsts. The other first place would have come to the United States, too, but for the rule restricting a shooter who had already won a first from winning this event. And that is what happened. In the English Championships the American shooters also gathered in five seconds, four thirds and four fourths. There was nothing much left for the home shooters but the odds and ends.

Evening Other Scores

Ed Ray came over and took the United States Golf Championship to England, but we are even up because Frank Troeh brought back the English Trapshooting Championship. America has much better prospects of winning back the golf championship than England has of winning back the trapshooting championship, for until Englishmen greatly improve in their shooting Troeh or some other American will win the English championship. If Troeh doesn't defend the championship next year Forrest McNier will go to England prepared to keep the trophy in the United States.

When McNier broke 100 straight targets in the events in the English championships he performed a feat which never before had been accomplished in Great Britain. Englishmen didn't think it was possible to make runs of that length. They know better now. McNier's run carried through three days, one event of forty targets and two others of thirty targets each. The last thirty targets decided the championship of England and on this string Troeh also broke thirty straight and outshot McNier the shoot off. Troeh's shooting was nothing short of marvelous. Most of the events in England are at ten targets and there are usually a lot of ties. They are shot off miss and out. Troeh one day broke 138 straight and another day broke 119 straight in the events and shoot offs. The longest run ever made in England prior to this visit of the Americans was 49.

Troeh Investigates

Frank Troeh went out in the field and collected some of the targets that had been shot at. One of them he fastened to a post with nails and went back sixteen yards and shot at it. He put the entire charge on the target without breaking it. He brought it home as a souvenir. Thus will give you an idea of the hardness of the English targets and the difficulties in compiling high scores and long runs. It also spells the reason for the lack of interest in trapshooting in England.

One cannot be expected to participate in a sport in which he or she cannot obtain results. This was pointed out to the Englishmen and the American shooters went so far as to go to the factory in which the English clay birds were manufactured and showed the producers how targets are made in the United States and also convinced the Englishmen that if they made targets that would break when they were hit that the sport would benefit, and that Englishmen would improve considerably in their shooting.

In the Olympic games targets made in America were used. They broke when they were hit. The longest run made by any shooter in the Olympic games was 43 by McNier.

While the Americans were allowed to shoot from the position in vogue in this country, other conditions were vastly different abroad. The trap arrangement is vastly different than in the United States. Here we use a stationary trap erected in the ground about sixteen yards in front of the firing line. In Europe expert traps are used. They are placed in a trench built of stone, seventy-five feet long, five feet deep and five feet wide. The trench is on a straight line and the firing line is sixteen meters, about seventeen yards, behind the trench. The pegs are fifteen feet apart, also on a straight line. There are three expert traps in the trench in front of each shooter and he never knows from which of the three the trap is going to be released.

Difficult Conditions

This is difficult enough but the hardest part is to come. In the English championship events ninety targets were shot from the regular formation and the last ten were shot from two pegs, 2 and 4, the shooters changing places after five shots. Shooting this way, each shooter had nine traps to contend with, the shooter on peg 2 having the targets thrown for him from traps in front of positions 1, 2, and 3, and the shooter at number four getting them from 3, 4, or 5.

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up, and moving to the next peg after each shot. They claim, and rightly, too, that it is more of a walking match than a shooting competition, and readily understand why the target events are mainly at ten birds. The squad style of shooting as in vogue in the United States was demonstrated both in England and in Belgium in practice matches and the shooters of these countries were much interested and promised to give it a trial. In Europe two shots are allowed at each target. One is allowed in this country. The European idea heretofore has been to fire the first shot quick and the second shot quicker, the shooter hoping to hit the target without stopping to take aim. To show the quality of the United States shooters I want to say that some of the members of the foreign teams shot both barrels every time and still didn't average 60 per cent of their targets. The Americans did their shooting with the first shot, seldom using the second barrel. McNier only used the second barrel twice in the Olympic games, and the others didn't fire the second shot much oftener than the Texan.