



# GUNS ON THE RAIL

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN PIN SHOOTING FEDERATION – SEPTEMBER 2014, VOL 1, NO 3

## Editorial

Nationals! Yes, it's that time of the year again. In a few weeks' time, we'll be placing our *guns on the rail* for the start of the 2014 Nationals at Roodepoort.

I trust that your guns are ready and sighted and that your loads are sorted. While the proverbial Murphy is always prowling, being well prepared shows your professional approach to the sport and your respect for your fellow shooters.

One aspect that we often neglect, is preparing ourselves as well as we prepare our guns and ammunition. Shooting pins at the Nationals takes its toll on our bodies and minds. Do not neglect your own fitness, health, and mental preparation.

So good luck at the Nationals, but remember this aphorism attributed to Gary Player: "... the more I practice, the luckier I get."

## From the Chief RO's perch

One big difference between pin shooting and most other action shooting sports, is that we repeatedly unbag and bag a large variety of firearms contained in a variety of bags or cases during a match. Often one bag or case may contain more than one firearm with some muzzles pointing uprange and some downrange when unbagging.

Note: A firearm may only be unbagged or bagged when the barrel is pointing downrange within the 45 degrees to the left and 45 degrees to the right of centre, facing the tables.

Handling a firearm with the muzzle pointing uprange is obviously a

DQ'able offence. While I am not aware that anyone was disqualified for this at a Nationals, it has certainly happened at club level. Because it is a serious safety infringement, such a DQ will apply to the whole match, not just to an event in the match.

My advice to shooters is to mark all firearm bags and cases clearly with tags to indicate in which direction the muzzles of each firearm is pointing. Shooters can then ensure that the firearms to be used next is pointing downrange when opening the bag, removing the danger of inadvertently handling a firearm that is pointing uprange and being DQ'd.

## Neuroscience Tips

*"You have a headspace problem"*

No, I'm not referring to the kind that may cause KaBooms. I'm referring to the metaphorical kind, issues of mind that can hinder or help your performance.

In this edition I shall address the influence of practice and experience on performance. Repeated and correct practice of basic skills (i.e. trigger and sight management, timing) leads to these skills being delegated to lower brain areas and to these skills becoming fast, automatic and sub-conscious. The smooth, efficient, fast and accurate shooting of the expert is a sign that the decision making in the brain is fast, automatic and heuristics based (based on rules of thumb).

The *"headspace"* problem that can arise here is when the expert for some reason (i.e. stress, a bad run, lack of confidence) reverts to conscious decision making about basic skills that is normally

automatic. He in effect relinquishes his expertise and reverts to being a novice. An analogy is the championship golfer who after losing confidence in his putting, reverts to consciously thinking through his putting and goes into a putting slump. This is one form of choking.

The lesson? Do not change or overthink basic technique during a competition and risk losing the neurological advantage of your experience and expertise.

Note: Items under *Neuroscience Tips* are based on replicated scientific studies.

## Dedicated status

SAPSF members are reminded to protect their dedicated status by shooting the required number of pin shoots per year. The current requirement is half the number of advertised shoots in a club/province. In most provinces that would translate to five shoots per year. Members battling to meet these requirements due to valid reasons, i.e. health, being out of the country, etc., must keep their clubs/provinces informed. The SAPSF Executive is considering converting to a points based system.

## Our pins have arrived!

The 5 000 bowling pins imported from China have been delivered to our warehouse in Gauteng. As far as things to shoot at goes, our sport is safe for the next three to four years. Thank you again to Phillip Jackson and Enzo Di Sante.

**Results** - No results were received.

*Stay pin safe!* 🏹