

30th August 2007

By This Correspondent

Of course, what that correspondent completely fails to mention is Squad A, otherwise known as "The Curse of Squad A".

Squad A suffered the "Man's Detail" at 900m on Tuesday - the ones with scores, from competent firers, as low as 110. It then suffered a few more "Men's Details", as the scores of our recent Canadian Grand winner and a double Bisley Grand winner will both testify. And then, at the end of yesterday, it was Squad A that went out to shoot as the lightning was coming down and was told to go home after getting everything ready.

That meant that Squad A would have to shoot 700m and 800m consecutively on Thursday morning, which some would find a tiring task - especially those without enough time to get there for the second shoot before everyone was called up onto the firing point. It also meant that, unlike the other squads, Squad A would have to shoot three times on Thursday (indeed three times before lunch). I would say "three or four times" because the ten-man World Championship Final would be the fourth, but of course there was no chance of anyone from that squad qualifying without some major heroics.

At the end of Tuesday, the highest placed Squad A shot was Jane Messer (clearly coping well with the so-called "Men's Details") in 22nd place, and Squad C shots were to the fore, with 17 of the top 19 places:

Pos	Name		Squad	Monday	Tuesday	Tot	V
1	WEBSTER, JOHN, GREENWICK, CT. USA	#330	C	150 12	448 24	598	36
2	PATEL, PARAG, GBRT	#165	C	150 13	447 28	597	41
3	MC QUILLAN, ROSS, GBRT	#162	C	149 12	448 20	597	32
4	ZINMASTER-MAYO, NOMA, JAMESTOWN, CA.	#264	C	150 10	447 20	597	30
5	GAMBOA, ROBERT, SHINGLE SPRINGS, CA	#120	C	150 8	447 21	597	29
6	REEVE, KENT, CARY, NC. USA	#261	C	150 15	446 27	596	42
7	LUCKMAN, DAVID, GBRT	#161	B	150 8	446 33	596	41
8	MOHIDEEN, FAZAL, PICKERING, ON	# 12	C	150 11	446 23	596	34
9	LOUGHNAN, TONY, NEW ZEALAND	#290	C	150 6	446 21	596	27
10	HURD, SHERRI, ENGLEWOOD, CA. USA	#249	C	150 11	445 25	595	36
11	LANGLEY, JEREMY, GBRT	#159	C	150 12	445 22	595	34
12	CALVERT, DAVID, GBRT	#150	C	147 5	448 28	595	33
13	JONCK, JAN, SOUTH AFRICA	#230	B	148 8	447 23	595	31
14	HOLDEN, PETER, GBRT	#156	C	150 5	445 21	595	26
15	WATSON, JAMES, GBRT	#171	C	149 11	445 23	594	34
16	GALLAGHER, MICHELLE, LA HABRA, CA. U	#267	C	150 10	444 22	594	32
17	BRUWER, JOHANNES, SOUTH AFRICA	#219	C	150 11	444 20	594	31
18	SCHULENBURG, CHRISTOPH, S AFRICA	#213	C	148 8	446 19	594	27
19	COLLINGS, MIKE, NEW ZEALAND	#293	C	150 7	444 19	594	26
20	TEGLASI, MIRKO, VANCOUVER, BC	#335	B	150 10	443 29	593	39
21	O'LEARY, MARCUS, UK	#194	B	149 9	444 26	593	35
22	MESSER, JANE, GBRT	#163	A	150 7	443 24	593	31
23	SIMS, ANDREW, AUSTRALIA	#203	B	149 7	444 22	593	29
24	SMITH, PIETER, SOUTH AFRICA	#234	C	150 8	443 21	593	29
25	JACKSON, J.J., HASLET, TX. USA	#114	C	150 10	443 18	593	28
26	BOWMAN, GARY, MISSISSAUGA, ON	# 59	B	150 9	443 14	593	23
27	BUXTON, LANE, ORANGEVALE, CA. USA	#255	C	150 9	442 29	592	38
28	CLOAD, JON, GBRT	#152	B	150 10	442 26	592	36
29	UNDERWOOD, JON, GBRT	#170	B	149 10	443 26	592	36
30	KOVAC, JOSEPH, FT WORTH, TX. USA	#246	C	149 9	443 22	592	31

A day later, within our team the Squad B shots were leading. The best from Squads B and C (the letters are not indications of quality, remember - it's all random) had dropped single figures worth

of points, while Jane remained the best from Squad A, on "20 off". If ever there was an argument for taking equal numbers from each Squad into the Final, that was it. I've been told several times over the last couple of days that the smallbore folks do it... and they certainly don't have nine minute wind changes to deal with!

So to Thursday's action... Squad A went down first at 700m. Mirage was undetectable at the start, so use of flags was the order of the day. There was enough movement to take people out of the bull, but it wasn't as hard as the last detail that fired the previous afternoon. Nevertheless, it was 700m, so not much of an opportunity for Jane and the boys to catch up.

Squad A then shot immediately at 800m. Again, there was variation but it was largely readable and scoring was in the acceptable range. That applied to the two subsequent 800m details too, leaving 900m as the potentially "interesting" range of the day.

Prior to the last 900m shoot, David Luckman was in 2nd place, a point behind Noma Zinsmaster-Mayo of the USA, with Jon Underwood, in 10th, the only other Brit in a position high enough to qualify for the Final. The others in the top ten were four Americans - they were strong, as ever, and those four included three women with mother and daughter Nancy and reigning World Champion Sherri among them - a Canadian, an Australian, a South African and a New Zealander. Jane Messer was the highest placed member of Squad A, in 29th place (meaning Squad A had been having a harder, not an easier time of it subsequent to the first day), and was the only Squad A shot in the top 50 overall! The "interesting" 900m was still to come...

And interesting it proved to be. Squad A went first, completing a tiring 450-point morning, and found the wind conditions rather different at various points on the range. Those on the right seemed to have a single step-change of a couple of minutes, while those on the left experienced about 2 minutes left to 3 minutes right, with viciously quick changes. It was, to a great extent, readable provided you had your spotting scope focused at the right distance between firing point and target, but the mirage would lie blatantly if you didn't. And the flags frequently disagreed. The other key was letting quality shots go *quickly* - really quickly. Some of us can do quality or speed but not both at the same time. Amidst the mediocre scores on that detail, Toby had an excellent, quick, 146 and David Dyson shot brilliantly to score 144 in recovering from a 6 to start after, it seems, a false sighter was marked to start with.

Scores from Squad B were broadly similar, with a very strong knock for a 147 from Richard Jeens, which looked like it would take him into the Final from 19th place. It looked like Squad C (or those on the left hand side of the range, at least, given the relative shelter on the right - this correspondent was on target 1 twice, and was delighted with the opportunity to learn more about the Connaught wind!) may have drawn the short straw for the last day. While Parag managed a 145 on range 12 (right-hand side), the highest score on range 5 (left-hand side) was, according to John Webster, a mere 131.

Cue much mirth, as various illustrious members of the team returned to the hut reporting scores that, in other circumstances, might have been described as embarrassing.

The hilarity continued as the "out of the pram" bear was today awarded to Ross McQuillan. Having helped Matt and some of the Under 25s entertain some of the locals the night before - until the latter's 10 o'clock curfew! - he could be forgiven for being distracted. He had appeared in the hut, in his shooting jacket, as the last detail had been about to start, had grabbed his (clearly forgotten) box of ammunition off the table and then run back to the range, landing on the firing point as the French version of "This is the World Long Range Championship, range 900 metres, you have two sighting

shots and fifteen rounds on score" was being recited – Ross's preparation time consisted merely of "Load; chargez. Commence the match; commencez."

As I write, we do not yet know who has made it to the Final – only ten firers, remember, so a much more exclusive affair than your average Queen's or Governor General's – but we had been in receipt of enough on-range intelligence to know that David Luckman, having dropped 16 points out of 1350, had pulled ahead of Noma Zinsmaster-Mayo by three points, with Mirko Teglasi (an Australia-based Canadian) having shot brilliantly today to move up a place, now a single point behind David. Richard Jeens, six points back from David, was a likely finalist, while Parag and the Jons Underwood and Cload were possible finalists, a further three points adrift. David Calvert and "Squad A Champion" Jane Messer, four points further back, were our 6th and 7th best scorers overall and unlikely qualifiers.

The Palma teams dinner is this evening. After much to-ing and fro-ing about driving arrangements, Richard Jeens has now declared to his bus team, and the room in general, that he would drive back afterwards "unless I win". Cue cheers of "go on Lucky!"

News just in: David Luckman and Richard Jeens are our only qualifiers for the World Individual Championship Final, in 1st and 7th place. The others are two Canadians, two Americans, two South Africans, a New Zealander and an Australian.

Other GB positions in the Grand Aggregate:

12th Underwood

13th Patel

14th Cload

17th O'Leary (ind)

21st Charlton (Ire)

22nd McQuillan

25th Messer (and "Squad A Champion")

26th Langley

27th Armstrong

28th Calvert

32nd Dyson

33rd Brasier

39th Morris

40th Raincock

50th Ball

We'd better go and watch David and Richard in the Final... and David is World Long Range Champion. Unlike the Governor General's Final, there were scoreboards behind the firers so it was possible to keep track of progress. Mirko Teglasi started very strongly and was the only shooter clean after the first five shots, but once he had lost one to wind his performance deteriorated and David, who had already suffered an 8, was in the lead again. Performance of the Final was from Mike Collings of New Zealand, whose 147.5 moved him up into 2nd place overall. Noma Zinsmaster-Mayo of the USA and Fazal Mohideen of Canada equalled Lucky's gun score of 145 to finish 3rd and 4th but once again David's X count was vastly superior: 9, with the next best being 5.

Final scores (score in final, followed by grand total)

1st D. Luckman (GB) 145.9 1479.96

2nd Collings (New Zealand) 147.5 1478.70

3rd Zinsmaster-Mayo (USA) 145.3 1476.61

4th Mohideen (Canada) 145.4 1472.71
5th Sims (Australia) 142.2 1470.61
6th Hurd (USA) 140.4 1469.74
7th Teglas (Canada) 135.3 1 1468.69
8th R. Jeens (GB) 140.2 1468.61
9th Bruwer (South Africa) 141.6 1467.72
10th Jonck (South Africa) 139.4 1466.60

Well done Lucky! And thanks to Richard for promising to drive back from the Palma teams dinner tonight. And then onto the serious stuff...