

A Spectator's View

The hype and excitement that the people of Scotland felt when Glasgow was awarded the 2014 Commonwealth Games was spectacular and wonderfully patriotic. After the London Olympics it was fantastic that Scotland had become the host for the world's next top multi-sport event. The opening ceremony was something to remember. The imagery was stereotypical and at times crude but it was aimed at a global market and delivered in terms of the entertainment factor, crucial for getting off to a good start.

Now for the shooting. Rifle, pistol and shotgun were all held at the MOD grounds at Barry Buddon which are just on the outskirts of Carnoustie. This was the first issue that spectators encountered, location. One would assume and in fact did assume that the shooting would be held in Glasgow or at least in the area surrounding it. The distance of the grounds from the centre of Commonwealth activity was quite far and therefore lacked the diverse activities that could be found around other venues used during the Games but the site did a good job of generating its own energy and atmosphere.

If you have not previously been to Barry Buddon it would have been a struggle to find. Keeping in mind that a lot of spectators would be coming from all over Scotland and even further afield, the sign posting and promotion of the venue was poor.

Parking was easy and the pathway was well manned and obvious enough to guide you to the grounds. What was not previously disclosed was the distance that it took to get to the grounds. It was a decent mile at least. Most people would find this a doddle but to not be pre-warned it was a surprise, especially for those who were with the young, elderly, disabled or even just inappropriate footwear. There were shuttle buses put on from the train station to the ground but it was still quite the walk. A good effort was made to accommodate guests with mobility issues by providing transport with golf buggies but these had to be pre-booked. Guests should be booking ahead but organisers should have made the walk clear.

The volunteers were absolutely brilliant. There was a definite case of overstaffing of both volunteers and police but with no test event sanctioned beforehand it was always going to be difficult to judge. Despite the abundance of volunteers all of them were helpful and cheerful even till late on into the day. Security at the entrance was done in a professional and courteous manner and police officers patrolling the site were lovely and friendly to the public showing all in all that the organisers had done a fantastic job in securing an international shooting event in a safe, relaxed and friendly manner.

Once through the gates the venue was fantastic. People were issued with wrist bands and ear plugs showing that they had considered the health and safety aspect of spectating at a shooting event. The grounds were clean and pathways were clearly marked out and signs were up to find the entrance and other amenities. There was the option to pick up your tickets before entering the ground from the information office and also a disabled entrance after you had exited the grounds of the golf course. A large TV screen was put up so that spectators could watch some of the other elements of the games whilst being there showing that there was an effort to keep people connected. Hanging around the ground was the 2014 Commonwealth Games mascot 'Clyde'.

All of the arenas for each discipline were in close proximity to each other making everything easy to access. The indoor smallbore and pistol range was laid out brilliantly. There was a good number of constructed platform seating as well as extra chairs on each side of the stands. There were TV screens for each electronic target so that spectators could see the score for each shot, scores that were displayed immediately. There was also a large screen displaying the positioning and score of each shooter. Spectators were also allowed in to watch the athletes practice. The grounds had also considered the damage that the high influx of people could do to the grounds especially with the influence of the Scottish weather and had taken care to put down plastic flooring where possible.

The fullbore range looked great and spectators were able to stand a few feet from where the athletes were positioned and also advance down the range with them. The viewing was brilliant and enough seating was provided.



As for the clay pigeon shooting, there were 3 separate arenas for hosting the skeet, trap and double trap events. The central arena provided spectators with a large tiered seating area providing a superb atmosphere and viewing spectacle for the finals of all the clay target events. For those with a concern for the environment, extra netting was constructed to collect the used clays to limit the impact of the event, despite the clay being biodegradable anyway.

I witnessed the final of the Men's Double Trap which was an event not to be missed. England was set to win regardless but the tension and concentration of the final as two teammates went head to head for gold was an event not to be missed. Steven Scott won with a perfect 30/30 with Matthew French so close behind with 29/30. Such a performance by both shooters is not commonly seen and demonstrated the high quality of the competition.



The award ceremony was quick and simple with a Scottish Quaich gifted to each medal winner in addition to the traditional gold, silver and bronze medals (designed with a Scottish twist) awarded to each athlete respectively. The day overall flowed very smoothly and the commentating for the clay shooting was superb. The commentator really took into account his audience and was considerate to those new to the sport. Everything was well explained and the stands were set up so that viewing was up-close and clear.

My overall thoughts for the Commonwealth shooting was that Scotland has made a strong, positive impression of how well we are able to organise international shooting events. Even though there were issues, for such a large scale event it was done to a very high standard. I would hope that other Scots, whether they participate in the sport of target shooting or not, would feel the same sense of pride that I felt when being there. I also hope that Scotland made a positive lasting impression on those visiting Commonwealth nations that attended and viewed the shooting from across the world. I think that the standard of organisation and consideration for the public was brilliant and it certainly makes me proud to be Scottish.

Shooting as a sport was definitely displayed in a good light. So often people associate shooting with the negative aspects of guns but I think this even can help illustrate to the public that shooting can be done safely and securely and does not have to involve shooting animals. It also positively demonstrated that shooting is a sport that women can enjoy as well as men.

I think the future is bright for shooting in Scotland. Like any publicised sport, there will be an expected peak in interest of new shooters getting involved into all disciplines of shooting. I hope

that the shooting world is prepared to accommodate this generated interest of new shooters and have publicised events/introduction courses ready and available for the demand.

There are already regular competitions and qualifying events being held in Scotland. Our Junior and Senior teams do fantastically well and I think that there is a good system set up to take those with potential to the next level. I hope that the high standard of shooting and coaching will continue into the future and bring us success in the next big event, the Olympics!