

## Parents Introduction to Shooting Sports and Reference Guide

Welcome to shooting sports and Mid Carolina 4-H Shooting Sports Club. If you are new to shooting sports, there are probably quite a few things you don't understand, words or acronyms you have never heard before, or protocols or rules you are not familiar with. This is intended to help with that. Please feel free to ask any questions if you need to.

The Mid Carolina 4-H shooting sports club is both a 4-H and a SCTP club. The fee to join is \$10 for 4-H and \$20 for SCTP each year. The application gets you registered with us, gets the young athlete covered under the insurance policies and gets email addresses added to the distribution list. We are currently a shotgun sports club – we may one day expand into rifle, pistol and archery but are not equipped for that yet. The 4-H club is sponsored by Mid Carolina Gun Club (MCGC). MCGC provides shells at a discounted rate (club buys them for \$6/box – we sell for \$5/box) and reduces target fees below the member rate – currently \$2/25 targets. These rates only apply to sanctioned youth shooting events and practices. Checks can be made payable to MC4-H. Members of MCGC who are shooting with youth do not receive this benefit and must pay the normal member rate.

We have been shooting in the South Carolina Youth Shooting Foundation (SCYSF) events in years past. To compete in these events, there are additional fees.

**4-H** is the oldest shooting sports program and focuses on safety and building young people of character. The coaches are all 4-H certified which means they have undergone a background check and donated their time to learn how to safely teach shooting sports. 4-H generally accepts kids aged 10 and over. 4-H normally has two divisions – Junior and Senior – under 9<sup>th</sup> grade and 9<sup>th</sup> grade and above respectfully. There are 4-H State Championships each year with awards going to the top 3 squads of 3 shooters in each division in each of the three sports – skeet, trap and sporting clays. There is a 4-H National Invitational each year – the top 4 shooters from each state are invited to participate. They can only go to Nationals one time.

**SCTP** is another youth shooting program which gives our kids even more chances to compete. SCTP allows younger kids to participate. There are multiple divisions in SCTP including Rookie, Intermediate Entry, Intermediate Advanced, Junior Varsity 1<sup>st</sup> year, Junior Varsity Advanced, Senior Varsity 1<sup>st</sup> year and Senior Varsity Advanced. SCTP has state championships for skeet, trap and sporting clays and a National Championship each summer generally held in Sparta Illinois in July. You can attend SCTP Nationals as many times as you want. SCTP generally shoots registered targets whereas 4-H and SCYSF do not. The athlete must shoot in the state championship in order to qualify for the National Championship. The key here is commitment.

One general note about commitment. When you sign up for a competition, we put together squads based on age and experience levels. Withdrawing impacts the entire team financially and specifically the squads which either have to shoot in higher divisions or

compete against full squads. Sometimes unavoidable things happen but it is important to know the impact on other – coaches and kids - so if possible – honor the commitment

Our club competes in **South Carolina Youth Shooting Foundation (SCYSF)** Events. These are now only sporting clays events, are not registered events and are held from December to April or May with the State Championships at the end of April or first of May. There are several categories of teams competing. Groups such as gun clubs, churches, Boy Scouts and others compete in the SCYSF divisions only. The private schools compete in the SCISA (South Carolina Independent Schools Association) Division. Both 4-H and SCISA also compete in the SCYSF divisions. The divisions are similar to SCTP with the addition of Ladies Divisions. Trophies are given for first place in each division at each event. Awards are given to the first, second and third place teams. We compete in 3 person squads. Squads are registered generally a week before the match and the parents pay the fees – generally ranging from \$25 to \$65. At the beginning of the season, we will register our team and each athlete will complete and return the consent waiver with the membership fee. Each shooter then gets a t-shirt at the first event they attend. Athletes can be added at anytime during the season.

An athlete can participate in our 4-H club and not compete as part of a competition or competitive squad. Most eventually do and we encourage it because of the opportunities to learn teamwork, build confidence etc. that comes with competition. The 4-H club meets usually twice a month but sometimes less due to holidays, matches, etc. The 4-H club meetings consist of a short meeting run by the officers of the club and followed by shooting practices. We generally divide the shooters into smaller groups based on experience levels.

The 4-H club has some club guns which belong to the Clemson University, the youth program, or the local 4-H office which are available for use. If you don't have a gun, we can loan one for practices. Most eventually buy their own. See the section on guns. One note. We don't call them weapons – they are called guns or firearms. Guns are a tool that when properly used is not any more dangerous than a screwdriver. However, even a screwdriver can be used for malicious purposes. See the section on choosing a gun for more on types and considerations.

### **Acronyms and Definitions.**

**Concurrent** – a shooter classification based on age. For example, skeet shooters who are under the age of 15 are Sub-Junior. If they are 15 at the beginning of the shooting season, they move up to Junior. Each NGB has its own concurrent system.

**Dead** – term used to describe a “hit” or target broken as the result of the athlete shooting at it.

**Dead Pair** – term to describe that both targets in a pair were hit or broken.

**FITASC** – a clay target sport which is governed by NSCA Rules (see below). It is popular in Europe and considered by many to be the most challenging of the clay target sports. Our program doesn't currently participate in FITASC events.

**Five Stand** – A clay target sport which has targets similar to those in sporting clays and is also regulated by the NSCA. A round of 5 stand includes 25 targets. There are 5 stations where a shooter will shoot at 5 targets. The targets are from up to 8 or 9 trap machines typically. There are levels of difficulty options at each station.

**Lost** – term used to describe a missed target.

**NGB** – National Governing Body. The Sanctioning and regulating body for the specific shooting sport. There are 3

ATA – Amateur Trapshooting Association

NSCA – National Sporting Clays Association

NSSA – National Skeet Shooting Association

**Registered Targets/Registered Event** – Scores from the events are reported to the NGB. You must be a member of the NGB to shoot. See additional guidelines for Registered events below.

**Report Pair** – When the shooter calls “pull” a target is thrown. When the shooter fires the gun, the second target is thrown. The second target is thrown on the “report” of the gun.

**Shooter Classification** – for registered targets, a shooter is classed based on shooting skill and experience. Generally shooters start off as a E or D class Shooter. They can work their way up to A or above by shooting registered events and improving their scores. A shooter can be D class in sporting Clays and A class in skeet because they are separate NGBs and have different classification rules. Also, see Concurrent for a related discussion.

**Singles** – a single target thrown. Trap normally has singles (except in Trap doubles events) and certain skeet stations involve single targets.

**SCTP** – Scholastic Clay Target Program. A youth shooting program sponsored by the Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation. Designed to

facilitate and encourage youth shooting opportunities it fosters a sense of fair play. National Championships are held each summer in Sparta Illinois. There are something like 1500 kids from up to 30 states participating in Nationals. State Championships are held during the year in skeet, trap and sporting clays.

**SCYSF** – South Carolina Youth Shooting Foundation. A non-profit organization established to promote youth shooting. It is the organizing body for the skeet, trap and sporting clays events which generally run from December to May. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources is a primary sponsor of this organization. Visit the SCYSF website at [www.scysf.com](http://www.scysf.com) for more info.

**Skeet** – One of the older clay target sports. A round of skeet is 25 targets. There are 2 trap houses – High and Low, and 8 shooting stations. Singles are shot from stations 3, 4, 5, and 8. Stations 1, 2, 6 and 7 have singles from the high and low house and a true pair. Registered skeet events are “4 gun” events meaning shooters compete in 12, 20 and 28 gauge and .410 and a doubles event each of which will include 4 rounds. You don’t have to shoot in all 5 events all the time but to qualify for All American teams or State teams, you will

**Sporting Clays** – A clay target sport which is intended to simulate the targets often found in hunting situations. There are a number of shooting stations – generally 10 to 15. The number of targets shot at a given station vary. One of the newest clay target sports, it is one of the most popular. A round of sporting clays is generally 100 targets.

**Trap** – the oldest of the clay target games. Originally, live birds (pigeons) were released from “traps.” Later “clay pigeons” were “released” from trap machines. In this sport, targets are thrown from a single trap house away from the shooters. Five shooting stations – starting at 16 yards from the trap house and increasing in “Handicap” yardage to the 27 yard line, are in an arc behind the trap house. Five targets are shot at each station for a total of 25 targets. Each shooter shoots one target and the next shooter on the adjacent station then shoots his. After the fifth shot from a station, the shooters rotate to the right (the shooter at station 5 rotates to station 1). Trap doubles are similar except that 2 targets are thrown simultaneously.

**True Pair** – two targets are thrown simultaneously. Known as doubles in trap and skeet.

## **General Recommendations**

- Keep a shooting calendar. A “Month at a Glance” calendar works well. Color code practices, matches, registered skeet, trap and sporting clays events.
- Purchase a travel wallet, planner or some file folder system to keep all of your information handy. Hunter Ed card or number, contact phone numbers, NGB cards and shooting record
  - When you receive the NGB card, there is a form which includes which class the shooter is in and a place to record events and scores. This is handy when registering for registered events.
- Get a notebook or something similar to serve as a shooting journal. This will help track progress and allow you to better remember milestones such as a shooter’s first 25 straight in skeet or trap.

## **SCYSF Youth Shooting Events**

- Visit the SCYSF website at [www.scysf.com](http://www.scysf.com) for more info on the foundation and the divisions.
- We try to squad shooters in the lowest possible division and we try, within divisions, to squad the strongest possible shooters together. When we squad shooters from different divisions, they compete at the highest division level. For example 2 rookies paired with a senior will shoot in the senior division.
- We expect changes to SCYSF events in the future. Participation has grown making it extremely difficult to accommodate all shooters at a single event. Regional or zone matches have been proposed as one option.
- A SC DNR hunter education number is required for shooters in grades 7 and higher. 6<sup>th</sup> grade and under are exempt. Options for hunter education include attending a one day class or taking the class on-line and taking a proctored test. The Mid Carolina 4-H head coach can proctor these exams for you.
- Sometimes things happen and you are forced to miss a competition after you committed and have been squaded. Try to minimize this as it impacts your squad mates. Squad scores are the combined scores of the three individual shooters. It is very hard for two shooters to outscore a squad of three.

## **Registered Targets**

- Registered events require you to register with shoot management and present your credentials. This includes your NGB numbers and you will be asked your concurrent and/or classification. This is where keeping the information in planner, travel wallet or other folder pays off. You pay at registration.
- You shoot as an individual but you may be squaded with a number of other shooters of varying ages and skill levels. This does not matter!
- You will be assigned or sometimes can choose a shooting rotation. You must be at the assigned location at the assigned time or you forfeit the opportunity to compete and the entry fees.
- Registered events have to stay on schedule. You should be ready to go as soon as the trapper/referee shows up with the roster/score sheet.
- You will need to have enough shells (5 boxes - 125 shells - for a 100 target event to compensate for gun, ammo or trap malfunctions). Also water and anything else you may need. You will get only a short break between rounds.
- Etiquette is very important. You should be quiet when other shooters are on station so as not to distract them. You should be on station when it is your turn...don't make them wait on you. When it is your turn to shoot, you should not take an excessive amount of time. Some NGBs have rules regarding how much time you have. Referees will issue warning then start deducting targets.
- In skeet, you should line up behind the lead shooter and move to the back or behind the shooters when you are finished.
- Registered targets are the big leagues – they are not “youth only” events and there are no coaches on the field with them. It is a great opportunity for kids to get practice and learn from the older experienced shooters. However, a shooter needs to know the rules of the game and the rules of shooting etiquette so those new to the game may benefit from waiting or observing for a time.

## **Choosing a gun!**

Shotguns are break action (over/unders or side by sides, double barrel or single barrel), semi-automatic or pump actions. (lever actions although rarely used fall into the pump action category which means the shooter must manually cycle the gun to shoot the next round). All have their advantages and disadvantages.

“Over and Unders” are the most common gun encountered in competition. They are safer in that it is easier to visibly ensure that the gun is unloaded and they are less prone to mechanical issues and are easier to clean. Because they have two barrels and no way to mechanically disposition the recoil, they are generally heavier and “kick” more. In a sport where gun malfunctions translate into lost targets, the simplicity of the break action guns can be an advantage.

Semi-automatics use the recoil of the shot fired to cycle the action. This reduces the recoil and they are lighter. They also require more frequent cleaning and a complete cleaning is more complicated. They can react negatively to certain types of ammunition – low recoil ammo for example may not cycle the action reliably. Since the action cycles

automatically upon firing, additional caution is necessary to make sure the gun is maintained in a safe configuration – pointed in a safe direction.

Pump actions require the shooter to take action after the first shot by “pumping” the action and chambering another round. This can be hard for younger or smaller shooters and the recoil felt by the shooter is generally more than semi-autos. In the heat of competition, failure to cycle the gun results in loss of the second target. One purported advantage of pumps is that the shooter remounts the gun after the first target. This can be both good and bad. Shooters can remount the gun incorrectly for the second shot resulting in an incorrect sight picture and a lost target.

If you do not have a gun, let us work with your young athlete before purchasing one. We can make recommendations and we also have special deals and ways to save you money on guns.

Many young shooters start with 20 gauge guns and eventually grow into 12 gauges. Buying an inexpensive 20 gauge is a good way to get them started and make sure they are interested in the sport before buying a higher quality gun once they have “grown” into it. If they are committed to it, purchasing a good quality competition gun versus a “field gun” is recommended.

Also recommended is having the gun fit by a reputable gun fitter. We have one we recommend who visits the area a couple of times each year.

## **Our Coaches**

Our coaches are volunteers and have various levels of certification and experience. We generally have twenty (20) 4-H certified coaches who have completed the 4-H shotgun course. They have undergone background checks. They paid for the 1 ½ day course and gave up a weekend to support the youth program. The training focuses on safety, introducing shooting sports to the novice, positive youth development and helping the shooter progress.

We have several SCTP certified coaches. They also paid for their certification and took a 3 hour on-line training course and completed another background check. The background checks are completed annually. They are certified under the Positive Coaching Alliance meaning they are taught about positive reinforcement, avoiding win-at-all costs approaches, how to deal with sportsmanship issues and the mental aspects of shooting.

There is a few NSCA Level 1 certified sporting clays coaches, several Level 1/Associate Level 1 NSSA certified coaches, two 4-H Level 2 coaches and another is available for part time support. There are also a large number of experienced shooters available to assist with improving the skills of the shooter.

Please remember, they are all volunteers. Showing up to practice on time and being respectful is appreciated.

Parents are encouraged to take one or more of the coaching certification classes. By doing so, you will become more familiar with the objectives and techniques and also become a resource for our program. When we go to competitions, we must have a qualified coach for each 3 shooter squad. Shooting skill or experience is not necessary. We have several moms certified as coaches and they are invaluable.

### **Team Uniforms**

Our team wears the team uniform when competing – our summer or winter shirts are worn with khaki pants...long or short depending on the season. We provide team hats, shooting towels and other apparel items for free to kids who shoot on the competitive teams and represent our program. The team shirts (winter and summer) and jackets are purchased by the parents and coaches. Blue jeans and other hats are strongly discouraged. We are a team and should look and act like a team. Some of our kids shoot in registered events – which are not youth only events – and they wear the team shirts on either Saturday or Sunday – as representatives and ambassadors of our program. This is highly encouraged.

### **Bernie's Rules**

Sometimes, you will hear the words “Bernie’s Rules.” Simply put, these are standards of behavior we put in place to help us achieve our real goals – that of positive youth development and helping these young people become the adults we want and our society needs. A focus on **Safety** goes without saying so Bernie’s rules don’t address it. Bernie’s rules are secondary to safety but still very important. Bernie’s rules address a person’s code of conduct at shooting events – whether a youth event or a registered shoot. We expect our shooters – and coaches – to say thank you and shake hands. We expect them to use the words “Yes Sir” or “No Ma’am” as appropriate. We expect them to demonstrate teamwork and sportsmanship. They should be quiet when others are shooting, engaged when their squad is on station and respectful when they off the range. Our kids are leaders in this area and have a dramatic impact on other kids, parents, coaches and teams. Parents can help by reinforcing this at a level consistent with their personal standards and expectations. Coaches will be checking to make sure this is standard practice at every event. These kids represent our club, our team, and our coaches – not just themselves. Because our kids are practicing Bernie’s Rules, they are more welcome among older shooters who were originally reluctant to having a bunch of undisciplined kids show up with shotguns. They are then willing to invest more in them – both financially and in terms of shooting counsel.

### **Thank You**

Thanks for your interest in our youth shooting program!