



TAKING YOUR BEST SHOT

Sporting clays and other shooting options are becoming popular at many club and resort properties, as an activity that can be added in a relatively simple and cost-effective fashion.

By Rob Thomas, Associate Editor

THE PHRASE “NICE SHOT” IS generally heard on the golf course—but many club and resort properties are now also taking shooting to a more literal level. As properties continue to search for ways to offer a more diverse set of activities for their members and guests, sporting clays and other shooting options are being offered along with more common sports like golf, tennis and swimming.

At the Country Club of Buffalo (CCB) in Williamsville, N.Y., legendary architect Donald Ross designed the 18-hole golf course, and an ice rink takes advantage of the region’s infamous winters. But the club also offers shooting enthusiasts the opportunity to enjoy that sport in five different fields on the property—trap, skeet, five-stand, “Crazy Quail,” and a “brush walk” field, described by Grounds Superintendent Anthony Tosh as a unique event that mimics field hunting by utilizing more than 60 traps hidden along a trail.

Demands for setting up a shooting activity can vary greatly, based on the type of field in operation, Tosh says.



Photo Courtesy Snake River Sporting Club

“Some can be very simple and require very little in the way of permanent structures, while others, such as skeet, will require high and low houses to host the target throwers,” he says. “For both our Crazy Quail and five-stand fields, we simply had to place the target throwers in the middle of an open area and designate five stations for where the shooters could stand.”

The basic needs of each field are relatively simple and can be achieved at a modest cost, Tosh says. But as a shooting program develops, more intricate and detailed setups, with permanent housing structures and raised shooting platforms, are common.

“The clay target throwers themselves are often the most significant cost with regard

to initial setup,” Tosh says. “Many great layouts and templates can be found online for each type of competitive shooting event.”

GETTING STARTED

While Tosh has never had to go through the process of establishing a new shooting range—his club’s shooting program is almost 100 years old—the first obvious step for any club looking to introduce the activity, he says, would be to review local regulations and restrictions with regard to size, line-of-fire, and noise ordinances. These will vary from town to town, he notes.

“If those needs can be met with the property in question, then planning can begin to implement the type of shooting events desired,” he says. “The National Rifle

SUMMING IT UP

- The basic needs to offer shooting as an activity for members and guests are relatively simple and can be achieved at a modest cost.
- Because of the nature of shooting, safety is paramount, including extensive training and qualifications for the staff and detailed instructions and rules for participants—both novice and experienced.
- While the sport is most popular with men, clubs are attracting more women with planned events, such as “couples shoots,” and also positioning shooting as a family activity.

Playing All the Angles

A sampling of sporting-clay options offered at the Longue Vue Club:

Skeet: Played on a semicircular, level field with eight shooting stations located around the field. Targets are thrown from a “High House” and “Low House” on opposite sides. As the shooter moves from station to station, the relative angle of targets changes from incoming and outgoing to crossing.

5-Stand: A type of shotgun sport-shooting similar to sporting clays, trap, and skeet, using five stations—or stands—and six to eight strategically placed clay target throwers, called traps. Shooters shoot in turn at various combinations of clay birds; each station has a menu card that lets the shooter know which trap the clay bird will be coming from. Typical five-stand targets are a rabbit, chandelle, overhead, standard skeet high-house and low-house shots, teal (launched straight up into the air), and an incoming bird.

Trap: A trap field has five stations arching around the trap house, which will throw out single targets in five different random and outgoing angles. A shooter calls for five independent targets at each station, for a 25-target round.

Wobble Trap: To add a twist to the game of trap, setting the machine for “Wobble Trap” varies the targets even more.

Double Trap: With a layout similar to trap shooting, the shooter stands 16 yards behind the house that releases the targets. Two targets are released simultaneously from the house and follow set paths, usually 35 degrees to the left and right of straightaway. The shooter can take one shot at each target.



Longue Vue Club has introduced multiple events to attract and introduce female members to the shooting sports.

Association's *The Range Manual: A Guide to Planning and Construction*, is a great resource for this.

“Our sporting fields themselves take up approximately 6.5 acres of land on our property,” he adds. “They are situated on the far end of the property on an unused 24-acre section of land. The fields are positioned so that the line-of-fire is directed away from anything situated outside of our property.”

It's expected, Tosh says, that towns will have restrictions regarding the size of the area that can be used for a shooting range, and line-of-fire minimum distances to both

property lines and occupied structures. Common line-of-fire limits are 500 feet from property lines and 3,000 feet to occupied structures. To reduce noise issues, the hours of operation at CCB are limited by the town to between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m.

LICENSED TO CARRY

Because of the nature of the sport, having experienced and highly qualified staff when offering shooting is paramount. At the Longue Vue Club in Verona, Pa., the club benefits by having an instructor who has made a career out of carrying a gun.



Photo Courtesy: Cleghorn Gun Club

The Cleghorn Golf and Sports Club requires that all shooters sign a waiver of liability before participating. Those new to the sport must also take a lesson from one of the club's instructors prior to shooting.

“We are lucky to have a tenured shooting instructor who has been with the club for many years,” says Assistant General Manager Jennifer Vanderveld. “He’s a retired police officer and sportsman, providing a great background for this position.”

Longue Vue also trains current staff who are interested in the sport, to qualify them to be able to assist with the program. These employees are referred to as “trappers,” Vanderveld says, and are trained in safety, machine operation and scoring.

“I wouldn't say it is difficult to find qualified candidates; however, we haven't been in the position to need to recruit either,” she says. “I do think that sporting clays has gained popularity in the Pittsburgh area, and we are lucky that if we did have to recruit, we have the market to do so.”

The Cleghorn Golf and Sports Club at Tryon Resort in Rutherfordton, N.C. offers golf, swimming and an International Equestrian Center, in addition to a Gun Club. Bob Standish, General Manager and Lead Shooting Instructor, says the club has sought a manager with Certified Instructor credentials from the National Sporting Clays Association and a strong resume that reflects not only vast shotgun shooting experience, but also a strong background in business management. But it's difficult to find an individual meeting both requirements, Standish admits.

The Brush Walk at the Country Club of Buffalo is a unique venue that mimics field hunting by utilizing more than 60 traps hidden along a trail.



SAFETY FIRST

Attention to safety is understandably an ongoing concern for any property that introduces a shooting activity. The Cleghorn Gun Club requires all shooters to sign a waiver of liability prior to shooting, Standish says. Additionally, a safety orientation is given to each shooter.

"If an individual arrives who has not shot before, then a shooting lesson by our shooting instructor is required that entails the proper and safe use of the shotgun, shooting etiquette, and basic shooting skills," he says.

The Longue Vue Club's number-one priority is always the safety of its members, guests and staff, Vanderveld says.

"Our shooting grounds staff goes through an extensive training program before they are allowed to operate machinery and assist with the operation of the facility," she says. "The club is also lucky to have a member-driven shooting committee that is involved with the training of the new staff and is heavily safety-focused.

"We are strict with our safety policies, and are not afraid to enforce them," Vanderveld adds. "That includes alcohol use and not adhering to firearm safety 101. Any private shooting events are required to go through a safety instruction prior to shooting."

The National Rifle Association provides a great template for the safe operation of a shooting range, CCB's Tosh notes.

"We've adapted many of their range procedures, along with some site-specific safety regulations that enable us to maintain a safe and fun operation for all levels of shooters," he says. "Every shooter must go through our safety training tutorial before they can participate. Any first-time shooters or novice shooters must be accompanied by a more experienced shooter, to help assist them.

"We also keep a range safety officer at every field while in operation," Tosh adds. "There are obviously federal, state, and local ordinances that must be abided by, and those regulations may differ from club to club."

At the Snake River Sporting Club in Jackson, Wyo., Executive Vice President and Director of Sales Jeff Heilbrun says the property benefits from having "multi-skilled staff" who can not only instruct with shooting, but also additional outdoor activities. Exclusivity also helps.

"This facility is not open to the general public—members and guests only," Heilbrun says. "All shooters sign waivers, and a

range safety officer [is] always on duty and closely supervising shooting activities."

Heilbrun also points to the importance of only having a small number of shooters participating in the activity at any specific time, and of providing personalized instruction for all new shooters before they ever load a gun, as further safety precautions that are taken at Snake River.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

CCB now hosts family and couples shoots, to encourage participation from spouses, children, and women of all ages and skill levels.

"We offer shooting lessons for those interested in learning or improving their abilities," Tosh says. "Our attendance levels for the family and couple's shoots tend to be some of our more well-attended events. We also added a number of smaller and lighter shotguns to our inventory, to better accommodate shooters of all skill levels."

All minors must be accompanied by an adult when shooting at CCB, and all participants must be at least 12 years of age.

While Longue Vue's shooting facility tends to be more popular with men, the club has made a concerted effort to broaden its reach. "To attract women, we have held 'ladies nights,' 'learn-to-shoot events,' and 'couples shoots,'" says Vanderveld.

The club would also like to start a youth shooting group, targeted at 14 and up. "It would be fantastic to get that age group engaged in the program," says Vanderveld. "Our 'intro to shooting' event has been geared towards anyone that isn't familiar with the sport, families included." **C+RB**



Cleghorn Golf and Sports Club seeks managers who are certified instructors and strong in business management.

