

SUN OF A GUN

Another OF grabs international colours.

From Shooting Correspondent Steve McDowell

OF shooters, it seems, are like great cheese. They get better and more noticeable with age.

Two of our number ventured into the blistering heat of the high veldt to compete in the South African Bisley Union Meeting in Bloemfontein – their equivalent of our Imperial Meeting, and culminating in the State president’s Prize, a testing endurance match over three days and at ranges from 300m to 900m. And our small contingent showed that even though we may be 5500 miles from our alma mater, we can still compete with the best.

James “Crossfire” Mehta, already decorated with GB colours, reported the ferocious heat and fickle veldt winds, never mind the extraordinarily star-studded international field, provided more challenges than the normally more benign Bisley conditions. And nobody believed his excuse that his daughter’s wedding in Johannesburg was a convenient two days just before the Meeting started.

Generally speaking, Bisley does not have 35-degree heat with no shade and ranges covered with lethal animals with names that sound like cocktails. Boomslang, anyone?



Big showings from other powerful international teams were also a threat to the GB superiority, with full strength squads from not only South Africa and Great Britain, but also USA, Canada, and Australia. Yet, once again, there emerged a shining southern star in the distinctive yet diminutive shape of our second-most senior member, affectionately known as Red Leader – who in the colloquialism of today’s youth “absolutely smashed it”.

Showing exactly the Zen-like calm of 74-year-old fighter pilot, Air Commodore (reluctantly retired) Jon Ford , attending with the RAF team, shot high score after high score to the point where he so impressed the powers that be, that a scratch GB Veteran’s team (which means aged over a mere 60) was pulled together. He smashed that too. And now he wears GB Vets colours.

This brings to five the number of OFs who wear GB colours. (Nigel Burnip, David Argent, John Horton, James Mehta, Sandy Walker).

Air Comm Ford was unavailable for comment having been last seen heading at pace towards a bar full of, largely female, GB under-19s.

Meanwhile Mehta, after giving a good show and increasing his chances of further representative shooting, makes the President’s final only one point off the maximum 150 – he has a great chance heading back to Long Range for the final.



The South Africans shoot at 800m (874 yards) and 900m (984yards), yet with the slight advantage over range, the bungling fangmaster deploys the legendary OF custard cannon and manages to cross-shoot and put a bull's eye on the adjacent target and consequently scores a miss. No silverware for Mehta – for once.

Now the OFs look forward to our season which begins in earnest with the Q match this weekend (8 April).

Look forward to further reports of OF shooting glory....or not.