

A review of the 2016 National Skeet Team HCIT Auchterhouse Scotland.

2016 proved to be a transitional year for NSK shooting in Wales with new skeet representatives Lloyd Morris and Del Davies together with some assistance from Nigel Hodgson delivering the skeet team to Scotland. The transition contributed to the selection of six new caps, Steven Pullin, Rob Trow (Seniors), Meuric Lewis (Super Veteran), John Davies (Veteran), Debbie Davies (Lady) and Kristian Thomas (Junior).

The team gathered for the captains' dinner on the eve of the HCIT following a relaxed training day for those who were able to attend at Mid Wales Shooting Centre. The day was sponsored by Heath Gizzi and supported by Jonathan Williams. The practice allowed shooters to begin to develop a team spirit.

The team ethic became a very strong theme throughout the tournament and this was reflected in the captains address 'one team'. It had been identified that although individuals had performed well 'Team Wales' had finished well down the team leader board in recent years and an improvement was long overdue. With this in mind every shooter, experienced caps and new caps were asked to contribute to the very best of their ability and every target was to be valued and fought for none were to be thrown away.

The tournament was opened on day one by a loan piper in traditional dress. Auchterhouse was in bright sunshine, with a difficult breeze with some testing targets and back grounds awaiting the competitors. It was clear team spirits were high as was the shooting standards, every shooter delivered what the captain had asked, every target was valued and fought for and some superb scores were posted, Nigel Hodgson 99, Lloyd Morris 98 and Brian Phillips 98. The support and camaraderie within the team was clear and at the end of the first day of competition Wales led the HCIT by one target from England and two from Scotland.

The majority of the team dined together on Friday evening where thoughts of improvement were replaced by a realistic expectation of victory. There was hard work still to be done no-one doubted the difficulty of the task and an early night was called for. This was a chance!

Day two and Auchterhouse dawned again in some bright sunshine, with little or no breeze just the testing background. The might of England showed through there is no doubt the two day format works for their shooters. Scotland, shooting at home strengthened their scores and got to within one target of the English to finish second.

Unfortunately the challenge of the Welsh team faded but was not without its bright spots. At the end of the competition Wales's senior team found them in third place much improved over recent years. Every target was valued and fought for by every shooter a credit to the team ethic and camaraderie that had been generated by the team and supporters delivering what had been asked.

Day two belonged to Hywel John who vaporized a 50 Straight. The inform Steven Pullin narrowly losing out in shoot off for new cap high gun but securing third highest score in the senior team. The machine that is Nigel Hodgson secured the top spot. Second was the ever combative Lloyd Morris.

Roy Partridge battled to top Welsh Veteran finding his form with a classy 49/50 on day two.

In the Super Veterans a legend of Welsh Skeet shooting Rob Hodson will reflect on his third round and what might have been a 143 found him 3 targets short of the tournament super vet top spot and finishing on battling 48/50.

Welsh ladies high gun was achieved by new cap Debbie Davies who found her rhythm on day two posting a confident 48/50. There is no questioning Debbie can be a corner stone of the ladies team with Carol Francis for seasons to come.

The undisputed find of the tournament was Kristian Thomas a young man breaking into the junior team at his first serious attempt and after a limited period of skeet shooting. Kristian was desperately unlucky not to win Welsh Junior High Gun in the main body of the competition on his debut. The experienced Luke English coming out on top in a shoot off. Kristian is a young man who can be very successful in the years to come not only as a junior but in the senior ranks.

There were shooters who experienced a very tough time at the HCIT but they remain an absolute credit to themselves and the National Team not a single shooter threw away a target and battled to the very end.

To represent your country is an enormous honour and every one strove to do their utmost.

Let no one doubt the arduous role of Team Manager, none of this would have been possible without the undisputed efforts of the 'rookie' Team Manager Leanne Pullin. The task of manager can be overlooked but make no mistake without Leanne's unstinting professional work the shooters and captain would not have been able to compete and enjoy the whole experience of HCIT.

The 2016 HCIT was a triumph for team spirit, camaraderie and effort which allowed for the senior team to finish in the best position for a number of years if we can solve the 'mystery' of two day competition we will win the HCIT and individual shooters will prosper.

It was an honour and a privilege to captain the Welsh National Skeet Team, the highlight of my shooting career and I would like to express my sincere thanks to all involved you delivered what was asked, and I thank you for that.

Finally thanks must be paid to the travelling Welsh support. Wales enjoyed the largest and most vocal support over the whole weekend an absolute credit to the NSK family in Wales.

Lloyd Handley

WCTSA 195

NSK Captain 2016.