

# THE BLACK POWDER SHOOTING UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA



Affiliated to:

MUZZLE LOADERS ASSOCIATIONS' INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION (MLAIC)  
SOUTH AFRICAN BISLEY UNION (SABU)

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## BPSU NEWSFLASH 2 OF 2023 MLAIC LONG-RANGE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

Good day BPSU members

Preparation for World Championships takes a long time and we started in 2019 upon our return from Bisley, UK, for the next Long-Range World Championship that was scheduled to take place in 2021. However, the COVID-19 pandemic had other plans and although a MLAIC and BP Cartridge Rifle World Cup was presented in 2022, the 13<sup>th</sup> Long-Range World Championship was only realised in 2023.

The official Long-Range World Championship took place in Várpalota-Veszprém, Hungary, about 120 km south-west of Budapest, from 27 August to 2 September 2023. After the Longshot long-range camera system was tested out for scoring during the World Cup in Hungary in 2022, the use of this electronic scoring system was approved by the MLAIC to be used in Long-Range World Championships and successfully utilised in this year's World Championship. The principle of this system is a camera that is placed at a set distance in front of the target, taking pictures of each shot that goes through the target. The cameras are connected via Wi-Fi and / or network cables to communicate with electronic devices (iPads, tablets, laptops, or other IOS devices) being operated by individuals on the firing line, recording and scoring each shot. The use of this electronic scoring system replaces manual target marking in shooting butts during long-range matches.

The team that represented South Africa in official SASCOC Protea colours was Johan de Beer (captain, shooter), Corena de Beer, Pieter Truter and Neil Marsh as shooters, and our stalwart team manager, Hubert Heydenrych. A total of 11 countries participated (South Africa, Austria, France, Netherlands, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Spain, Switzerland and United States of America) and the event took place on a military shooting range, but it looked a bit different to the military shooting ranges to which we are accustomed. The team was sent off by some of our members at the Cape Town International Airport before we departed on 23 August 2023 and flew with Qatar Airways via Doha to Budapest, Hungary.

We arrived in Budapest without any hiccups, although an "incident" outside the airport caused a bit of chaos with passengers arriving and Customs not being available for us to go through. Fortunately, we got our rifles and shooting gear and could leave without any problems. We stayed in a guesthouse in Veszprém not too far from the range and later found out the American team was staying in a hotel within walking distance from us. We spent the time leading up to the start of the proceedings by doing some sightseeing in and around Veszprém and also visited the range to familiarise ourselves with the surroundings. Registration and weapon scrutiny took place on 27 August at the Óváros Restaurant in Veszprém, Hungary, and we were treated to a traditional Hungarian goulash meal. The opening ceremony was held in Varpálota and all the dignitaries and patrons of the event were introduced to the competitors. This was followed by a show of traditional Hungarian dancing and re-enactment firing of a cannon and other antique muzzle loaders.

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Some of the world's biggest names in black powder firearms manufacturing and sales competed in the World Championship, including Dave Gullo (Buffalo Arms company, USA), Lee Shaver (Lee Shaver Gunsmithing and Single Shot Exchange, USA), Ulrich Eichelberger (Switzerland) and Andreas Baumkircher (Austria).

Johan, Pieter and I used our Ferriss rifles, custom-built by Lee Shaver of the USA, while Neil used a Pedersoli Gibbs built in Italy. While most international competitors use .45 calibre rifles for long-range, I prefer to use my .40 calibre Ferriss rifle up to 600 yards. For 900 and 1 000 yards, I also use my .45 calibre Ferriss, similar to the rifles Johan and Pieter are using.

The competition experienced all the elements nature could throw at it; heatwave, thunderstorms, gale-force winds that even broke some of the target frames and damaged gazebos, rain, cold, poor visibility, and more. Scheduled competitions were continued despite conditions. Relays were however interrupted twice because of rescue helicopters that had to fly across the army range airspace, and once because a jogger was busy with his morning exercise and ran straight into the line of fire. It is still unclear how this person got access to the range, as we had to sign in at Checkpoint Charlie every morning before we were granted access to the range.

Only one distance was shot per day with practise in morning, followed by two individual relays and then the team shoot in the afternoon. A lot of the competitors struggled to get to grips with the conditions on the range, and literally everybody had to make peace with several zeroes on their scorecards. The surface of the range was extremely uneven and hard, making prone shooting challenging, and the fact that the backstops were only trees and no sand, made it very difficult to see the impact of the shots if not on target. For his first championship, Neil did really well at mid-range, but struggled at the long-range. Conditions were extremely challenging and hardship and past experience taught the rest of us not to throw away sighters at 900 and 1 000 yards if the conditions were as bad as they were. I am sure this will haunt Neil for a very long time to come 😊.

Overall, the scores were much lower than usual, but everyone was subjected to the same conditions and the competition was fair. All the South Africans had a slow start, with Pieter being the most successful in making it to the podium. He was 6<sup>th</sup> on the 300 yards, 5<sup>th</sup> on the 500 yards, 3<sup>rd</sup> on the 600 yards, 2<sup>nd</sup> on the 900 yards and 2<sup>nd</sup> on the 1 000 yards. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> on the Mid-Range Aggregate, 1<sup>st</sup> on the Long-Range Aggregate and also won the Grand Aggregate to be the reigning Long-Range World Champion! Excellent shooting, Pieter!

Other achievements / scores of note: Neil had his best performance at the 600 yards, and finished in 7<sup>th</sup> place. Well done, Neil! I won the gold medal at the 1 000 yards with 56.1/75, with Johan in 6<sup>th</sup> place. Thanks to an 11<sup>th</sup> place on the 900 yards, I was 4<sup>th</sup> on the Long-Range Aggregate and Johan 9<sup>th</sup>. And on the Grand Aggregate, I was 7<sup>th</sup>, Johan was 12<sup>th</sup> and Neil 24<sup>th</sup>. My 7<sup>th</sup> place in the open Grand Aggregate secured me the Ladies Long-Range Trophy again.

Without the luxury of a dedicated coach, the team only managed to win a bronze medal in the Mid-Range Team match, and was placed 4<sup>th</sup> in both Long-Range and Overall Team Aggregates. As we had 2 targets, Johan could not coach both targets and shoot, so Johan and Pieter shot and coached in tandem. Pieter provided wind readings for Neil and Johan for me, but this is far from ideal. Some of our members shot really good scores in the team shoots, but we were just not good enough. Pieter had 45/50 on 300 yards, 41/50 at 500 yards, and at 600 yards, Pieter had 43/50 and I had 41/50. At 900 yards, both Johan and I had 58/75 and at 1 000 yards, Pieter was the top scorer in the team again with 49/75. Scores were far below standard for all the competitors, not only the South Africans.

Saturday evening was the award ceremony and closing function and the South African anthem was played 4 times. South Africa ended with the Long-Range World Champion, Grand Aggregate World Champion and Ladies World Champion. We won 4 gold, 3 silver and 1 individual bronze medals and bronze medals in Mid-Range Team event. We also successfully defended our “Ladies Long-Range World Champion” title for the 7<sup>th</sup> time in a row.

A very special word of thanks to our team manager Hubert Heydenrych, who again did an exceptional job. He was always at hand and took an enormous weight off the shoulders of all the shooters. He did a lot more than what was required from him and carried rifle boxes, set up our mats and tables, and ran endlessly to carry water and rehydrate us all. Thank you, Hubert, you are truly the Best Manager in the World and you have the cup to prove it!!

After completion of the World Championship, the team had a few days spare to do sightseeing and exploring the rural areas of Hungary with other international shooting friends. One of the highlights was undoubtedly when the team visited one of the most well-known black powder enthusiasts in the world and creator of the YouTube channel “Cap and Ball” in his gun shop, Kapszli, in Budapest. He is also an active shooter and well known to the team since 2016. The team were allowed to handle and photograph all the antique firearms in his shop and purchase spare parts for the equipment back home. It was literally like watching kids in a candy store! We were also invited to his house for dinner the night before we returned to South Africa and he shared his personal collection of antique firearms and documents in his cellar with the team. What an experience!!

The next MLAIC Long-Range World Championship will be hosted in Raton, New Mexico, USA, in October 2025. Preparation will start again soon to prepare the team.

On Thursday 7 September we drove back to Budapest to start the long trek back home. We suddenly had to adapt to the Cape winter, after experiencing temperatures in the high 30°C in Hungary and high 40°C ranges in Doha. As we walked into the arrival’s hall at Cape Town International Airport, a group of people waving South African flags burst into spontaneous applause. They were obviously waiting for another South African sports team to arrive from overseas, but it was quite refreshing to see their enthusiasm and experience their admiration.

*Here are a few personal comments from the team members:*

**Johan de Beer, Long-Range team captain and 11-times Protea team member since 2006:** *It was a privilege to again be part of this special group and event. Despite the lack of resources, this South African team yet again produced excellent results against the best in the world under incredibly difficult conditions. Hungary should be congratulated on hosting a very successful championship, even with everything thrown at them from extreme weather to technical issues.*

**Corena de Beer, 16-times Protea team member in short-and long-range international shooting since 2006:** *Although this type of shooting is physically demanding and mentally challenging, it forces one to focus and clear one’s mind of any other issues. I usually come back from events like this physically exhausted, but mentally super relaxed. I have made so many dear friends on shooting ranges all around the world since my first international competition in 2006 and I absolutely love the sport.*

**Pieter Truter, 8-times Protea team member in short- and long-range international shooting since 2014:** *Black powder muzzleloaders once again set the standard for Bisley-style target shooting competitions by being the first to use an electronic camera scoring system in a World Championship. The Hungarian organisers showed that such a system can work successfully, despite the challenging weather conditions.*

**Neil Marsh, 1<sup>st</sup> time Protea team member 2023:** *What an experience! Hungary, great people, great competitors, and doing what we love ... Black Powder shooting.*

**Hubert Heydenrych, 5-times Long-Range team manager since 2015:** *The weather conditions that we had to endure were severe, but the people running the shoot more than made up for the weather challenges with their good humour and hard work. A smile is a smile in any language.*



The Protea team at the Cape Town International Airport - Hubert Heydenrych, Pieter Truter, Johan de Beer, Corena de Beer, Neil Marsh



Rifle Scrutiny prior to the start of the Championship is performed by experts to ensure that the rifles conform to the specifications and are safe to use in competition



Amongst all his other duties, Hubert had his hands full with pinning the shooting mats and loading tables to the ground with tent pins to prevent it from blowing away / over in the gale-force winds.



Johan de Beer



Pieter Truter



Corena de Beer



Neil Marsh



Johan, Corena, Pieter & Neil



Hubert, Johan, Pieter, Corena & Neil



All dressed up the Award Ceremony. Veldskoens Shoes™ (Cape Town) sponsored the team with a pair of Heritage velties with green soles for this year's tour.



1 000 yards winners. Pieter Truter (SA, 2<sup>nd</sup>), Corena de Beer (SA, 1<sup>st</sup>), Harold Rudiger (Germany, 3<sup>rd</sup>), Lee Shaver (USA, 4<sup>th</sup>), Lajos Meszesi (Hungary, 5<sup>th</sup>) and Johan de Beer (SA, 6<sup>th</sup>)



Long-Range Aggregate. Gerhard Lang (Secretary-General of the MLAIC), Lee Shaver (USA, 2<sup>nd</sup>), Pieter Truter (SA, 1<sup>st</sup>), Harold Rudiger (Germany, 3<sup>rd</sup>), Corena de Beer (SA, 4<sup>th</sup>), Dave Gullo (USA, 5<sup>th</sup>) and Henning Langnes (Norway, 6<sup>th</sup>)



Bronze medal for the Mid-Range Team Competition handed over by Laura Törőcsik from Hungary



2023 Long-Range World Champion Pieter Truter, with our mascot Bokkie, who worked very hard in supporting the team.



Some leisure time in Budapest with Balász Németh, at his gun shop, Kapszli, in Budapest. Hubert is sitting where Balász makes most of his YouTube videos for Cap and Ball



Neil Marsh, Pieter Truter, Hubert Heydenrych, Corena de Beer and Johan de Beer  
**Well done, TEAM SOUTH AFRICA!**

Kind Regards 

**Corena de Beer**

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