

Interview with a Shooter – GB U25 Rifle Team's Seth Dowley



A few weeks ago, The Edinburgh Reporter was contacted by Edinburgh University student and member of the GB Under 25 Rifle Team, Seth Dowley.

Seth has been selected to represent Great Britain at the Long Range World Championships at Camp Perry, Ohio, USA this August and thought some coverage might gain the team a modicum of publicity and, possibly, bring the sport to the attention of any potential sponsors. As one of the UK's 'minor' sports – there is no ball involved. At all. – funding can be hard to come by.

The ER caught up with Seth, via e-mail, and this is what he had to say –

Tell us a wee bit about yourself.

I'm 19, about to be 20. I'm a student at the University of Edinburgh studying Economic History and Business Studies. Before coming to Edinburgh I was at school in Cheltenham which is where I started shooting. I have three brothers, one older two younger, the youngest one shoots as well.

Why did you choose shooting as your sport?

Well about seven years ago at school I had to sign up to do a weekly activity for a term. I was doing quite a lot of other sports at the time such as squash and running, both of which I still like to do, but anyway I thought just as something to do once a week for a few weeks I'd give shooting a go. This was just in a .22 indoor range but after a few weeks I went with the school team to try fullbore rifle shooting at Bisley in

Surrey, this is shooting with 7.62 rifles outdoors ranging from 300 to 1000 yards. After that I was asked if I wanted to join the school team and I've been shooting ever since.

What do you get out of it?

Enjoyment. The shooting itself can be quite challenging at times, trying to work out what the wind is doing or trying to manage the psychological side of it and remain calm and focused at important times. But the shooting is only really one side of it, it's a very sociable sport and I've made great friends from all over the world through it. One of the great things about it which makes it quite unique from most other sports is that it's very inclusive, able bodied, disabled, men, women, 13 year olds, 90 year olds, everyone competes on a level playing field.

And probably the best thing about it is that you get the opportunity to travel and compete all around the world. I'm very fortunate in that this will be my fifth tour. No two tours are the same and I'm sure the U.S. this summer will be another memorable experience.

What downsides have you come across?

Travelling can be a bit of an issue, there aren't many places in the country you can shoot fullbore and most of the training and competitions I do are down at the National Shooting Centre in Surrey. It can also be quite expensive at times with the costs of ammunition these days being particularly high.

The only other downside I can think of is that unfortunately shooting can sometimes have a bit of a stigma attached to it. I think this is mainly down to people not understanding what it is exactly that we do and sadly stories of guns in the wrong hands creating a negative image that for some reason people like to associate the unrelated and very safe, sport side of shooting to as well.

What are you hoping to achieve, both in Ohio and long term?

As a team out in Ohio we really only have one goal and that is to win the Under 25 World Championships. Whilst out there though I'll also be competing in the Individual World Championships with probably around 400 other people. I think, particularly for my age, I'm very fortunate to be going to the World Championships in the first place so I'm not dreaming of that World number 1 spot quite yet, but I'd be very happy with a top 200 finish. In the longer term I'd love to continue to make World Championship teams, unfortunately fullbore shooting isn't in the Olympics but maybe shooting in the Commonwealth games one day would also be nice.

You mentioned sponsorship in your initial contact. How important is that?

Sponsorship is quite important, especially for tours like this World Championship one that involve quite high costs. We approach and get approached by a number of companies ranging from very small businesses that may just want a small advert or to show their support to FTSE 100 companies that can really make big difference to success of a tour. It can sometimes be difficult to find, however, thankfully for this tour we're competing in the World's largest shooting market so are likely to receive a fair amount of media coverage and being a National team, companies should hopefully be quite keen to support us.

There's been a fair bit of Biathlon on satellite TV recently. You don't have to slog away for a number of kilometres before shooting, but what difference is there at the target end of the 'process' and would you consider giving it a go?

In terms of the target, in biathlon there are 5 small targets 50 meters away whereas with fullbore shooting you just have one target and the size of the target depends on what distance you're shooting at. Biathletes also shoot both standing and in

the prone whereas fullbore is just prone and the rifles we use are bit different, it would be incredibly tiring to carry a fullbore rifle on your back for kilometre after kilometre.

I did think about giving it ago a few years ago because I'm quite a keen skier as well but unfortunately there aren't that many places to give it a go in the UK and most of our Biathletes come from the armed forces. I'm also not too sure if I'd be any good, although the shooting would probably be quite straightforward, the cross-country skiing requires an unbelievable fitness level. If they ever decide to change cross-country for downhill though, I'm in.



The images were shot at Edinburgh University Shooting Club's range in the bowels of the University's Centre for Sports and Exercise on The Pleasance. Reassuringly, it took almost as long to access the range— via reception, a three lock door, another locked door, a safe (combination required, but not revealed!), another safe (two locks – keys on a length of wool) and a final two/three lock door – as it did to conduct the photoshoot.