Equipment Guidelines for Beginning Sporting Clays Shooters

As a beginning sporting clays shooter, it is easy to become overwhelmed by the number equipment choices one has to make to get started in the sport. Guns, chokes and ammunition are all topics of consideration for a beginning shooter. Below are some important criteria to look for and general guidelines to help a beginner choose their equipment:

Shotguns

- Sporting clays targets are always presented as "doubles" (true pair, following pair, or report pair); therefore a sporting clays shotgun must be **capable of firing two shots** in rapid succession. Semi-automatic or double barrel (primarily over and under) configurations are the most suitable tools for the job.
- The next consideration when choosing a shotgun is **gauge**. Most beginners should select a 12 or 20 gauge. Junior and other small framed shooters should avoid .410 bore shotguns and instead choose a semi-automatic 12 or 20 gauge shotgun in a lady / youth configuration. The 12 gauges dominate most competition shoots.
- Another important factor when choosing a shotgun is **gun fit**. Most shotguns are made as "one size fits all" so post-purchase gun fitting is often necessary and can be done with a few simple, inexpensive modifications. Most beginners will benefit from seeking out a competent shooting instructor or gun fitter to assist them with fitting their new gun. A properly fit gun will result in more consistent success and greater comfort while shooting.
- Sporting clays shotguns should be equipped with **interchangeable choke tubes**.

Ammunition

- **Shot size** for sporting clays cannot be larger than 7.5 or smaller than 9 (the higher the number, the smaller the shot). Beginning shooters should not complicate their routine by differing shot sizes for each target presentation on a sporting clays course. Instead, they should choose a single shot size (8 shot is preferable) and use it for all stations.
- Beginning shooters should use only **moderate to low velocity ammunition**. A one ounce shot charge in the 12ga is all that is needed. Avoid high-velocity or "Super-Handicap" loads. Instead choose brands labeled "Light" or "Ultra-Light". If in doubt, look at the velocity in feet per second (FPS) printed on the box and choose shells at or below 1200fps if possible. High velocity shells result in more recoil and discomfort causing the shooter to lift their head and / or flinch. Avoid ammunition with DRM EQV (measure of powder) equal to 'MAX' or '3'. The differences in forward allowance between high and low velocity ammunition is only a few inches at the target, even on the longest of sporting clays targets.

Chokes

- As a beginning sporting clays shooter the only consideration in choke selection should be an **open choke**. Improved cylinder or skeet chokes are preferable. Most sporting clays targets are shot within 30 yards, which makes these chokes ideal. One should think about changing chokes only once they have progressed to intermediate or advanced levels of sporting clays shooting.

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