

Report to the South African Target Rifle Federation, South African Shooting Sports Confederation and South African Sports and Olympic Committee on the attendance of its Athletes and Members at the International Shooting Sports Federation - World Cup in Argentina in April 2025

Persons in attendance

Bernard Laferla

Team Leader, ISSF level D Coach, Athlete

Arnold Bailie

Athlete

Rationale for attendance at the event.

The Olympic Games only recognizes 2 disciplines in the rifle category of shooting sports the one being the 10m air rifle event which falls under the jurisdiction of the South African Air Rifle Association the second is the 50m three position.22 rifle event which falls under the jurisdiction of the South African Target Rifle Federation.

The three-position event is considered the blue-ribbon event of sport, traditionally South Africans previously competed primarily in the Prone event which was discontinued as an Olympic event after the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Until recently we have had no athletes who wished to compete in the 3P and accordingly were unable to attend any international event in this regard. Fortunately, SATRF has been able to engage with athletes to compete in the 3P and we can now proceed to develop our future athletes and attend international events to obtain.

- a) the necessary skills and exposure for our athletes and
- b) secondly to start earning ranking points which potentially could result in one of our athletes competing in a future Olympic Games.

Accordingly, the persons in attendance, attended in SASSCo colours, as a development team with the primary purpose of:

- a) Obtaining an understanding of the requirements and standards for future attendance by athletes in the 3 Position Event
- b) Obtaining an understanding of the dynamics of such an event (e.g. equipment controls, officials' interpretation of rules etc.)
- c) Physically participate in a World Cup to understand the psychological, physiological and other factors which can only be obtained experienced under competition.

It must be noted that the event including entry costs, accommodation, flights, and all other costs was self-funded, by Mr Laferla and Mr Bailie with no funding provided by any federation.

The Event

The event was held in Buenos Aires Argentina from the 1st to the 10th of April 2025, and included all Olympic disciplines, in the rifle, pistol and shotgun events. The only athletes participating in the event were the 3P athletes and coaches. It must be noted that there will be a rifle and pistol world championship in Cairo Egypt in November of this year and therefore it was deemed necessary to obtain some form of exposure for both athletes and coaches should we wish to send a team to Cairo.

We traveled to Argentina via Sao Paulo Brazil a trip with a total travel time more than 16 hours.

We were very fortunate in that we obtained a sponsorship from the law firm Messina Inc which covered our travel our flight costs and gratitude is expressed to Mr. Messina in this regard.

Argentina is five hours behind South Africa so one of the purposes of the event was to test the effect of jet lag on athletes and athletes' performance, this is important since the next Olympic Games will be held in Los Angeles.

This was the first World Cup event hosted in Argentina in over 28 years, and due to our attendance was able to boast that it had competitors from all continents as we were the sole representatives from the African continent. In this regard we were welcomed by the Argentine Federation and thanked for our attendance and made to feel welcome.

During our attendance will experienced nothing but goodwill towards ourselves from all Federations. It was commented by 2 Federations India and the United States, that they were very pleased to finally meet South African athletes as for a variety of reasons we have had no representation whatsoever in the 50-meter events in over 10 years.

The event was held at the Tiro Federal Shooting Range in northern Buenos Aires.

The range itself consisted of pistol, air rifle/pistol, rifle and shotgun ranges all meeting the ISSF minimum criteria. Additional electronic targets were flown in by the organizers and accordingly in the 50m event more than 50 SIUS electronic targets were available.

We left South Africa on the 30th of March and arrived in Buenos Aires in the early hours of the morning on the 31st of March 2025, and met by the event organizers at the airport and escorted to the hotel. To overcome to the effects of jet lag the first day was spent acclimatizing to Buenos Aires in which we proceeded to regularize our sleep patterns, as is common with all.

The 1st of April constituted the first official day of the event in which we registered the team and had a brief practice session.

It was noted that to obtain the maximum benefit of the equipment imported the Argentine Federation had organised a South American Championship just prior to the World Cup itself accordingly participants from South America had already been in Argentina for at least seven days.

We further proceeded on the 1st of April to go through the process of equipment control in which all equipment was inspected by ISSF officials. It was noted that all our equipment passed on the 1st of April it was observed the countries that participate at the highest level namely China India Austria Germany and the USA had athletes who failed their equipment control. As team leader and coach, I observed techniques and processes used by these countries to pass equipment control. It must be noted that all countries had dedicated team management, who performed all administrative matters, whilst their athletes focused only on their performance.

Since there were less than 50 participants an elimination round was not held allowing us a second day namely the 2nd of April to have a free practice session.

The 2nd of April furthermore included the formal opening ceremony and technical meeting which I attended as the team leader, we noted the conduct all the other team's leaders/management who raised various issues with what they believed could influence their athlete's performance.

It was noted that the major effect of jet lag occurred on the 1st and 2nd day of April namely 24 to 48 hours after arrival in Argentina. Because the next Olympic Games will be held in Los Angeles we now have a benchmark in which to ensure that our athletes are not adversely affected jet lag.

In terms of the athletes present at the event in the 3P event, the "large countries" namely China, India, United States, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Kazakhstan (and Russia competing as individual athletes) were all present. On average a team consisted of at least three individuals per event in most cases furthermore there were at least two team officials. The larger teams such as China India and the United States all had physiotherapists, and specialist fitness coaches who worked continuously on their athletes. It must be noted that 90% of athletes are effectively professional and accordingly as one would be accustomed to any professional sport there was limited interaction between different athletes and nations until the completion of the relevant event.

After discussion with other countries which have large delegations and many athletes it was noted the countries effectively it had one team for this event, a second team of athletes probably be sent to Munich in June, and a third team will be sent to Ningbo China in September. Based on these three performances the larger countries will then choose a team for the World Championships in Cairo.

It was interesting to note that some elite athletes chose not to come to this event as they consider traveled to South America to be too long and would affect their performance. Unfortunately for South African athletes all events involve significant travel with the closest events being in Cairo or Buenos Aires.

The official PET training occurred on the 3rd of April in which we participated it was noted that both on the 3rd and the 4th of April had significant weather change. This significantly affected the final performance of all athletes resulting in lower-than-expected scores.

It must be noted however that the ISSF in accordance with its ranking protocols did not utilize scores as a basis for ranking but rather position achieved in a particular World Cup or similar event.

We participated in the qualification event on the 4th of April finishing 44th and 45th respectively with two athletes from Oman not starting.

One must take into consideration that the purpose of attendance was not primarily to achieve a high ranking as

- a) is the first event we have attended more than 10 years,
- b) our equipment is outdated
- c) we do not have any facilities currently in South Africa upon which athletes can practice with electronic targets.
- d) This matter is however being actively address as it is important that we have facilities to allow for modern training methods to be implemented.

In terms of equipment all athletes competed with modern Olympic 22 rifles mainly of the Walther, Gruning or Bleiker brand, it is noted that in South Africa It is not possible to easily obtain these firearms as our market is not significant enough to warrant distribution.

Accordingly athletes will have to in future attempt to obtain this this equipment in their personal capacities which could take more than a year to be delivered. This places us at significant disadvantage as such rifles have attachments allow quick release and accordingly are able to move seamlessly between the three positions namely kneeling standing and prone positions.

Furthermore it must be noted that there have been significant rule changes in the past 10 years. The time allowed to complete the event has been reduced and pressure on the athlete a significantly higher.

Accordingly, athletes now have to maintain a significantly higher fitness level than previously was the case.

Subsequent to our participation I engaged in my capacity as a team leader and coach with coaching officials from the United States, India in Australia in particular.

The coaches of India and Australia engaged well with us and further possibilities can be explored in future in both India and with Australia with respect to working together to get our coaches and athletes to an internationally competitive standard. All contacts in this regard will be forwarded to the heads of the respectable organizations in both the rifle and air rifle disciplines to allow them to engage formally with these federations with a view to further collaboration

Observations

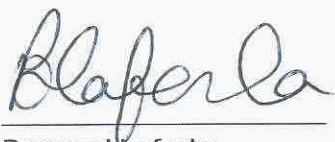
In my capacity as team leader and coach I noted the following observations which will be needed to bring our athletes up to level where they will be able to successfully compete against African countries such as Egypt or other international countries with a long-term view to achieving competing in a Olympic Games

- a) Level of professionalism. Shooting is no longer an amateur sport. Accordingly, your large and mid-tier nations such as the United States China, India, Russia Kazakhstan, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, etc. all have multiple full-time coaches and athletes. It was noted that especially with respect to European and American athletes most were all enrolled in United States Colleges and compete in the NCAA shooting championships. Athletes therefore all know each other on a personal level.
- b) Coaches have had some experience at an international athlete and all of whom are fully accredited at either level A or level B ISSF rankings. Furthermore, coaches are full time employees their respective Olympic Federations and are remunerated accordingly.
- c) No athlete or coach that I held conversations with incur any financial costs whatsoever and the personal capacities to attend these events. In the case of China, India in Australia in many other countries there are National Institutes of Sport which ensure that the Olympic athletes are provided with the appropriate technical physiological and psychological assistance to achieve appropriate results.
- d) In many cases athletes themselves are sponsored and in all cases national federations have sponsorship from various sponsors.
- e) Professional behavior both on and off the range is vital . This is important as in South Africa there is a tendency to view shooting sport as a recreational hobby. While this is admirable for lower-level competitors at the top level it is very clear they're athletes or expected to always maintain a professional behavior accordingly all aspects from diet, socialization, and the language used he's very professional.
- f) Athletes conditioning is optimal. Once again since the sport is now professional items such as diet exercise fitness and overall health strictly monitored. I observed that while not competing athletes still engaged with the relevant fitness coaches to maintain performance. I noted that the diet was strictly controlled with an optimal diet maintained to enhance performance.
- g) It was noted that all teams had at least 1 with some teams having up to 5 non athlete team management members In most cases this consisted of ISSF approved coaches and additional management. The primary purpose of the team management and coaches being to alleviate all responsibilities from athletes to allow athletes to solely focus on their performance. In the main competition (qualifiers and finals) it was clear that the coaches responsibilities included observation of other athletes who may pose a threat to their athletes' performance. This was specifically highlighted in the teams of China and India who both ensured that their respective competition was yellow carded.

Final Conclusion

Given the objectives stated above the event was a success.

1. Athletes obtained valuable experience, in handling the pressure of the event, and competing on an ISSF approved range, with ISSF jury members, using electronic targets.
2. Coaches obtained significant insight into the latest, trends, performance and techniques used by modern accredited coaches.
3. South Africa once again was visible after a 10-year hiatus
4. Significant contacts were made with other federations and coaches which if managed appropriately can result in further interaction (especially between the Southern Hemisphere federation), for the common good of the sport and of all athletes.
5. We now have a framework to develop athletes with a view to attendance of future World Cups and specifically the World Championships (and potentially African Championships) in Cairo Egypt.



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Team Leader

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