



Sherry Rains



Jeff Sizemore

# Shooters win by breaking targets mentally

By TODD WOODARD  
Battalion Staff  
Annie Oakley couldn't have beaten these two Aggies. The national collegiate skeet and trap champions, both Texas A&M University students, started shooting 12-gauge shotguns in competition when they were 13. Jeff Sizemore, 19, defending overall national champion, and Sherry Rains, 22, women's champion, took their honors at Peoria, Ill., April 23-26. Both shooters say they intend to stay at the top of collegiate shotgunning. "I know what I am going to do every time I go to the line," Sizemore said. "Having international experience gives me an advantage that just about nobody else has." Shooting a 480 of 500 this year, he says he wants to win a record four consecutive championships. And he wants to extend his consecutive under-21 junior titles to three. He believes the way to reach his

goals is to shoot for team scores. "I always go to win a team medal first," Sizemore said. "If your team scores are good, then the individual scores will come. My main goal, my main mission is to win a team medal." Texas A&M placed first this year. Shooting 388 of 500, Rains couldn't use that strategy because she is the only female member of the team. In her sophomore and junior years, Rains said she performed poorly at Peoria. But the Houston senior said she had the confidence to win this year. "When I first went to shoot, I was traveling with a bunch of guys I didn't know, I had never shot in Peoria and I was intimidated," she said. "But this year I was ready. I found myself in class with my mental attitude in Peoria. I got so keyed up that I just didn't do much studying. The game has a lot of intimidation, but you either have a talent

or you don't. If you want to learn to shoot well, you have to practice. But it won't do much good if you're worried about the other person. That's what I call intimidation." The shooters compete in four different matches: — 100 shots, American skeet — 100 shots, international skeet — 200 shots, American trap — 100 shots, international trap. In American skeet, a shooter faces low and high houses between 21-25 yards away. The targets fly parallel to the shooter at about 60 mph from the two houses. After the "pull" command, the targets release immediately. A nearly perfect score usually wins, Sizemore said. International skeet speeds the targets to 110 mph. In contrast to American skeet, the gun must start at the hip; the shooter sometimes has to wait for three seconds for the target, and the gun must stay on the hip until the target is in sight.

The trap competitions are even more difficult. In American trap the shooter faces a building. The targets are thrown from the building away from the five shooting spots in about a 90 degree dispersion at 60 mph and one elevation. International trap has a wider dispersion with targets flying about 110 mph at varying elevations. Sizemore began shooting American skeet in Corpus Christi. The sophomore agricultural economics major went to the national tryouts in 1977 with three months of international skeet under his shoulder and took second in the junior competition. His shooting has since earned him trips to France, Mexico, Italy and Korea. He tasted the worst shooting of his life in Korea in 1978 at the World Championships. "I never shot that bad before or since," he said. "I don't know what it was. I don't think I choked. But here I was, 17, shooting against old men who knew international

competition. I shot 169 of 200. I never shot that bad, even when I started." But he said, "I learned that you can't win every time. You just have to keep the attitude that you can win every time. If you don't, you won't win. You can't win." After more international competition and junior championships in 1978 and 1979, he paced the third place Aggie team with his first collegiate title in April 1980. He said he wins because, "I can play the mind game better than they (his competitors) can." That mind game is simple as Sizemore describes it. He says he gets to the range in time to listen to the other shooters talk about the conditions. "When they bitch about the wind or the rain, I just sit back and laugh," he said. "Everybody has to shoot in the wind. I don't let any physical properties, weather, bother me. Everybody has got to shoot under the same conditions. And the condi-

tions won't make any difference. The good shooters will still shoot the best scores. The same people always win." He does not use any special preparation. "I don't go sit in a quiet place and meditate," he said. "I know what I'm going to do. I just stay relaxed, get my gun and shoot." He does what he calls a mental rehearsal just before each shot. "I go through each station about two times, shooting in my mind. I break the target in my mind. I never miss when I shoot in my mind. I do it for every target. Before I put the gun to my shoulder, I have run a rehearsal." Rains runs a different program. "All it is is mental control," she said. She said she eats a light breakfast, reads mental discipline

literature, listens to a Tanya Tucker tape and makes sure her stuffed monkey Skeeter is with her. Training for shotgunning can be demanding financially as well as mentally. Sizemore has two \$4,500 handmade Italian trap guns, Perazzis. He also has two \$325 Remington 1100 skeet guns, which have had trigger modifications to make the firing pin release faster. He estimated he would shoot eight cases (500 rounds per case) of shells a month if he were to train only on weekends. Rains, an education major, shoots her grandmother's Remington 1100 in both skeet and trap. She estimated that training only on weekends she would use four cases of shells.

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