

International Sporting

The game of International Sporting, commonly referred to as “FITASC”, is considered by many shooters to be the highest form of shotgun sport. It is a game that is strictly controlled with very specific rules of conduct, both on the sporting field and off. Unfortunately, the game has acquired a reputation of being a very complex and unfriendly game, which is unwarranted. There are plenty of rules, but they make sense to the average shooter once they become familiar with them, and the trained official is there to help shooters. The best officials see their role as to help the shooter break as many targets as possible within the confines of the rules.

Safety is strictly adhered to during all International Sporting events. Everyone on or near the shooting position must wear both eye and ear protection.

At larger events, such as Grand Prix shoots, National and World Championship shoots, there are ceremonies with specific dress codes, and all shooters and officials are expected to comply with these requirements.

Origins of the game

International Sporting was designed to replicate hunting conditions, and to test the shooters skills as they would be during a day in the field hunting game. The rules even describe the requirement to set targets that are neither too close nor too far, as to shoot game too close would destroy it and to shoot game too far away would result in a wounded animal or bird.

Fundamental Rules

The one rule that everyone who has had any contact with International Sporting will remember is the requirement to have the gun unmounted before the target is called for. This is referred to as the “Starting Position”, and it is defined by the highest, rear-most part of the stock being below a line on the shooter’s vest or shirt. The line is 25 cm below the apex of the shoulder. The rules require the shooter to place the butt stock in the proper starting position, with the stock below the line and touching the body, and to remain still before calling for the target. Any movement before the target is visible will result in either a warning for the first infraction, or possibly a lost target for any subsequent infractions. Click [here](#) for a YouTube video. The video has some good points, even if the presenter seems to ramble a bit!

Other rules which are less well known, but which add to the enjoyment and the challenges of the game, include:

- The targets must be visible and in sharp contrast to the background
- The shooter must have time to fire two shots at each target

- The target can be released immediately or up to three seconds after the target has been called for
- The next target must be called for within 15 seconds

How the courses are laid out

There are several different layout methodologies available for the International Sporting course. The old style, which is the most likely one to be encountered here in Canada, will have at five traps (target throwing machines) arranged around three shooting positions, with the shooting positions often referred to as “pegs”. In reality, each peg is a location that is defined by a hoop on the ground. The shooter must engage all of the targets from within the hoop. In the old system, shooters are presented with 15 singles and five pairs of doubles as they move between the three shooting positions, for a total of 25 targets. Since the singles are shot with the full use of the gun, a shooter may require as many as 40 rounds to complete one layout. If there are broken targets or “no bird” situations that require the shooter to re-shoot a presentation, the shooter may require more than 40 rounds.

At each shooting position there is a small menu on the ground in front of the shooter, as well as signs in the field in front of the shooter, to indicate the general direction of the trap. Each trap is identified by a letter (A, B, C, D, and E), arranged from left to right in front of the shooting position. An example of a menu might be:

Singles

C
D
A
E
B

Pairs

D on report A
C & E True

From this, we can see that the targets are not necessarily thrown in alphabetical order.

This layout is referred to as a “parcour”.

In larger shoots, there is the option to use the new system, which requires a great deal more infrastructure. In the new system layouts with four shooting positions, 15 traps are required per parcours, as well as an official at each shooting position. These new system layouts allow for many more shooters to be moved through the

course over the course of a day. It also ensures that there is very little waiting time for shooters as they move between the layouts.

The three new system layouts are structured as follows:

Type of Layout	Number of Traps	Composition of targets
Four shooting positions	3 shooting positions with 4 traps and one shooting position (peg # 2 or #3) with 3 traps	15 singles, 5 doubles of which two are on the peg with 3 traps
Five shooting positions	5 shooting positions with three traps per shooting position	15 singles and 5 doubles
Three shooting positions (Grand Prix only)	5 traps per shooting position	15 singles and 5 doubles

Targets

Any of the common sporting clays targets can be used in International Sporting. The standard (108mm) target, rabbits, midi (90 mm), mini (60 mm) and the battue are all available for use, however, it is rare to see the mini used in competition. Flash targets (a target with a small payload of coloured powder) and the ZZ targets are also allowed under the rules, but are unlikely to be presented in Canada.

Targets are classified by their level of difficulty for the average shooter. The Class A target must be one which can be broken more than 80% of the time by all shooters. The Class B target is one that should be broken between 60% and 80% of the time by all shooters, and the Class C target is one that must be broken between 40% and 60% of the time.

On a stand with four traps, there must be one A, two B and one C target. Where there are five traps, the fifth target must be either an A or a B target. These rules ensure that the course is not set to impossible levels of difficulty, giving everyone an opportunity to enjoy the game.

Rotation of the squad

Ideally, each squad is comprised of six shooters, which ensures that everyone on the squad starts at one of the pegs. In a normal rotation, shooter 1 moves into the hoop (Peg 1) and views the singles in the order they are to be attempted. After shooting the singles, shooter 2 moves into the hoop and attempts all the singles. When the entire squad has attempted the singles, Shooter 2 will move into the hoop to start on the doubles. If the targets are On Report or Following, there are no view pairs thrown. If, however, there is a true pair, the shooter is given a view pair. If the true pair is the second or third pair in the sequence, the shooter has the option of viewing the view pair before starting or after having shot the preceding pair or pairs. Every shooter starting with singles is allowed to view the targets in the order they are going to be presented. Click [here](#) for a YouTube video regarding rotations.

On Peg 2, Shooter 3 starts singles, and Shooter 4 starts the pairs. On Peg 3, Shooter 5 starts singles, and Shooter 6 pairs. The order is shifted somewhat so that the order remains the same, but another shooter will start on the next layout.

The Future of International Sporting in Canada

The introduction of the game has been hindered to some degree by some events in which the targets were unnecessarily difficult, and which were run without trained FITASC officials. These unfortunate events, despite being well intended, left some people with a bad taste in their mouth for the game. In reality, a properly set course with targets that comply with the rules is a lot of fun to shoot.

International Sporting presents unique challenges to clubs wanting to host such events. For instance, in a typical shoot, the club is faced with increased costs (additional traps and officials) as well as a reduced revenue stream, as the target count is usually significantly lower than the club would realize during a sporting clays event. This results in increased costs to the shooter, with targets sometimes costing \$2 per target or more. Traps are expensive, and officials often require some form of remuneration, and the facility is usually tied up for several days, further restricting the revenues of the club while the shoot is being prepared and conducted.

There is increased interest in International Sporting across the country, and several clubs have discussed having a “fun” layout set up on the property to introduce new shooters to the game. Such a layout would have a trained official present, and the layout would be shot as it would during a sanctioned competition. Instead of penalizing the shooters, however, the official would explain what just happened and the relevant rule, and the target would be shot again. The purpose of the layout would be to introduce people to the game in a non-threatening and friendly environment, to remove some of the mystery and intimidation sometimes associated with the game. As shooters become more familiar with the game, it is hoped that its popularity will grow accordingly.