

Dear Delegate,

Letter From Sweden

I would like to thank Sweden for their reply to newsletter 136, I am happy to receive such letters and believe that they should be circulated to all. By this means the MLAIC can be seen to be open and democratic.

In connection with item 1: I was asked by delegates and shooters to give advice on slings following the disqualification of a competitor in Adelaide. Having been asked I had no alternative but to comply, my advice was based on what I believe would be accepted by the arbitration committee. I think the explanation I have given is clear and should prevent further disqualifications.

Item 2: I too would be interest to know the feelings of other delegates on the question of slings.

Item 3: There is no evidence to suggest European matchlocks existed, therefore they may not be used in MLAIC events until such evidence is forthcoming. Please advise your competitors as one **was** in use in Valencia

As a rider to this; I received a letter From Artax, they said that they have found and example of a Portuguese European matchlock and wanted to produce one for use in MLAIC events. In my reply I suggested that if such an pistol existed it would be very likely to be big bore and without sights, any copy would have to be a reasonably exact copy. In addition, any such evidence would have to be presented to the MLAIC before the firearm could be used.
I have not yet received a reply!

Item 4: It is clear from the photographs in NL136 that some competitors are stretching the rules in order to gain an advantage; if the rules are applied rigidly there is nothing to stop a shooter wearing ski boots and rigid arm braces. There must be a point where this becomes unacceptable, not only to the arbitration committee but to other competitors as well.

I have to remind you that the photographs were taking by MLAIC officials and brought to my attention for action. I would be very grateful if you would let me know if I have exceeded my authority.

Commission News

I received a letter from a reporter in South Africa asking about the MLAIC and its policy on performance enhancing substances and our non compliance with the WADA Code. As you are aware, we have no such policy.

His letter related to an incident in South Africa, after much discussion with the SA Delegate, their legal representative and members of the commission I drafted a reply which was approved by all.

Now that this issue is in the public domain we are virtually obliged to include a drugs policy in the new constitution. This document should be with you soon.

The commission was asked to give an opinion on left handed matchlocks, after much discussion and consultation with Shigeo Sugawa, this is their guidance:

- Original matchlock pistols = if you can find one, left hand is OK
- Reproduction matchlock pistols = left handed NOT OK
- Original Japanese matchlock muskets = left handed OK
- Reproduction Japanese matchlock muskets = left handed OK
- Original European matchlock muskets = you can find one left hand is OK
- Reproduction European matchlock muskets = these things are nothing like the originals so left hand is OK.

We have also discussed extensively shooting jackets and slings

Shooting Program: It has been suggested that since we are now starting training on Sunday competitions should now start on Tuesday. This would reduce number of presentations each day and allow the presentations to finish earlier. This will be placed on the agenda for discussion in Portugal

New Events

Hungary has proposed a new team event for Pennsylvania named Kossuth
The Netherlands have propose a new team event for Hizadai named Hinawa

Family use of Firearms

In Valencia at the European Zone Championships last year the delegates were asked to vote on the sharing of firearms amongst family members. They decide by a substantial majority that it was acceptable for direct family members to share the same firearm in the same event. Although this was not a full MLAIC Committee Meeting I will be asking the delegates at our meeting in Portugal to approve this decision for this championships.

Direct family members means; mother, father, husband, wife, son, daughter, brother and sister.

Firearm Legislation throughout Europe is changing and travelling with firearms is likely to become more difficult. This is likely to cause problems for those countries where muzzle loading firearms are free and permits are not required. It is almost certain that in the future it will be absolutely necessary to hold some kind of official documentation before cross border transportation of firearms can take place.

As onerous as this may be, I must advise all member countries that it may be in their best interest to obtain official documentation for the international transportation of their firearms. Countries wishing to host international events should also give this matter careful consideration and seek assurances from law enforcement agencies that all member countries will be permitted to participate. Special provisions may need to be implemented in this respect.

MLAIC Anthem: I was asked in Valencia to provide an anthem for the MLAIC and was unable to do so. During the presentations a particular tune was being played which seemed appropriate, so with the blessing of some of the delegates present I decided that 'Festive Overture', for orchestra in A major, Op. 96 by Dmitry Shostakovich' was a good choice. I will place a copy for download on the MLAIC web site.

Member Status: The Muzzle Loaders Association of Great Britain (MLAGB) is an independent organisation; it has a director on the board of 'British Shooting' but is not governed by them. I am aware that that some of our members are part of a larger international shooting organisation.

It would be helpful to me if I knew whether your organisation is independent or otherwise. I would be grateful if you could let me know.

MLAIC 50th Anniversary: 2021 will be the 50th anniversary of the MLAIC and I think we should make this a special occasion. As this is a Zone Championship year I believe that we should change the program and make this year a World Championship event, I am proposing that we make this decision in Portugal if someone is prepared to second it.

I have been thinking that it might be a good idea if both the Long and Short Range Championships could be held together with an extended program to enable competitors to try other events. This would naturally limit the number of nations that can hold the event and would require considerable planning, other proposals are also acceptable. For this reason I am drawing it to your attention now. We could allow a short time for discussion on this in Barcelos but without any decision.

Event Descriptions: There are five events for which there is no description they are; **Forsyth, Batesville, Pennsylvania, Lamarmora** and **Kunitomo**. It is usual for the proposing nation to supply the trophy and also describe the origin of the name. I have no record of who proposed the above events, will the nation that proposed these events please write a description and forward it to me as soon as possible for inclusion in the new constitution.

MLAIC Sub Committees

The work undertaken by the Rules Committee, Long Range Committee, Black Powder Committee and Shotgun Committee has been outstanding; they have worked tirelessly to produce rules which have been combined into the new constitution. I would ask you to accept their contribution as is. If necessary a representative may be asked to give a brief report in Portugal.

I have decided that these sub committees will be permanent during my tenure as Secretary General, they will advise the commission on specifics relating to their disciplines.

Deputy Secretary General

I am pleased to confirm that Nancy Crouse (Malson) will be standing for re-election as Deputy Secretary General

Letter From Spain

Following a team from Catalonia entering the Austrian Open I received a letter from the President of the Spanish Shooting Federation. He said that Catalan was not an official Spanish Team but just a region of Spain and as such they were not entitled to attend MLAIC GP events. In my reply I pointed out that the purpose of GP events was to encourage teams from countries not currently in the MLAIC and also to enable individuals to attend where no national team is present. By this means we are able to promote the MLAIC to a wider group. I also pointed out that many of our members specifically invite entries from regional teams within their country; France is a typical example. I told him I would pass his wishes on to our delegates but it would be very difficult to comply.

MLAIC enamel and cloth badges

I have made enquiries and I can obtain enamelled badges for a very reasonable price, less than 1 Euro. With your agreement I intend to get these manufactured and then sell them to delegates AT COST for you to sell for a profit, the funds received contributing to team funds. The same applies to cloth badges and stickers.

The only reason that this has not been done yet is the fact that the MLAIC logo artwork is not satisfactory, I have written to Reno Martin (the original designer) at least ten times but he has failed to produce the original. I have also tried other contacts to see if I can get it done but to no avail – even with the offer of payment! It seems that we have no option but to go to a professional graphic designer, this is likely to be expensive.

I am grateful to Paul Buckley from Australia for providing the following simplified version of the logo:



Unless I can get a better copy of the original it is likely that this version will be used.

I would be very grateful if you could let me know how many of each you are likely to require.

Croatia

Following the sad loss of our delegate in Croatia I have been in contact with them in order to ensure ML shooting in Croatia continues. I have asked them to come forward with another delegate but have not as yet received a reply.

New Nations

With the help of Pierangelo Pedersoli I have been in contact with ML shooters in Russia, they are keen to join the MLAIC but have no internal structure and no national organisation; I have offered them my assistance and look forward to them joining us some time in the future

I have also spoken to shooters in India where the standard of ISSF shooting is very high. Although there are many examples of ML firearms (most of which were left by the British) in India, they are strictly illegal, it is very unlikely that they will ever join us.

Firearms Inspection

For some time now there have been reoccurring problems at firearms inspections; delays for shooters, illegal firearms getting through etc. I asked the commission to look at this and Gary Crawford has provided the following for discussion:

It would be nice to think that all competitors will bring totally safe firearms and since all competitors can read the rules, all will make sure that their arms and accoutrements fully comply with the same without the need for inspections. However, this is not likely to happen in this century nor did it probably occur in the 20th or 19th centuries. So we have rules and inspections to keep the playing field safe and relatively level.

Goals of Inspection (Scrutiny).

1. To assure that all firearms are safe and comply with the current MLAIC rules.
2. To assure that accoutrements and clothing comply with current MLAIC rules.

Methods of Inspection

1. Pre-match inspection of all firearms and accoutrements by appointed inspectors.
- 2 Total inspection of the potential top six scorers at the end of each relay.
- 3 Inspection of the arms of the top six scorers following the completion of each event.
4. Spot inspections immediately following a relay.

Problems

Each of the four options have specific problems but the overall system has the challenge of locating and determining the varying levels of expertise resident with each inspector. How are the candidates being vetted before being appointed? As far as I know, we are relying upon the delegates to nominate personnel from within their teams and from those presented six to nine inspectors must be selected. But it is doubtful that all nominees or even those eventually selected are fully conversant with every type of firearm and every type of accoutrement. Perhaps the delegates could include a pertinent resume with their nomination(s) to allow the President to more effectively select a knowledgeable inspection team. If it is a "given" that nobody knows everything, we should redouble our efforts to create a computerized catalog of all known firearms and their variants. This computer reference should then be available during the inspections not only to enable proper decisions but to add to the general knowledge of the inspectors. With the number of firearms and accoutrements to be initially inspected and then potentially reinspected we need a significant number of such personnel. They need to cover all ranges and we must take in account the desire not to inspect those from one's own nation, nor one from a match in which the inspector is participating and the non-availability of inspectors as they prepare for and fire in their own events.

As each arm and its accoutrements are inspected and approved (notated with approving stickers) a close-up digital photo should be taken of the arm and entered into the computer under the competitor's number. Inspectors armed with portable laptop computers can later quickly retrieve the digital photo to make visual comparisons during a relay without disturbing a competitor. Speaking of approval stickers, they preferably should be of the type that become destroyed if removed. This to preclude careful removal and placement on another non-approved item. Kim has recommended a system of permanent marking of the approved equipment so as to cut down on repetitive and time-consuming inspections. This may be a sound proposal if we can determine the form of such markings and where and how they are to be placed. Digital chip implants, anyone?

Now for the four options previously mentioned:

1. **Pre-match inspection** -- Has generally been working but has holes and is dependant upon the skill level of the inspector and perhaps the skill level of the competitor to convince the inspector that the arm or accoutrement is in full compliance. Once approved I'm sure there are "ways" of making substitutions with non-approved parts etc. Thus the need for post-match inspections as well.
2. **Inspection of the top six in each relay** -- Multiple problems here. First, someone has to be scanning all the targets in a given relay to determine which are being fired with original and which with replica arms. Then that person must select the potential top six for each category. Once those determinations have been made the competitors have to be notified prior to their leaving the line or breaking down their firearms. The inspectors will then have to quickly verify that the arms are still within the approval levels. In multiple-relay matches the following detail's targets would again have to be scanned and compared to the twelve of the previous relay to determine the need for scrutiny. Same for a potential third relay. Even with all this work there are the situations wherein competitors have back-to-back events, often at some distance from the previous event, and there would not be time to wait for a turn with the inspectors. Should a competitor, deemed to potentially finish in the top six, be held for inspection and caused to miss the next scheduled event, what would be the remediation? Even a minor delay can cause problems and hastening to refit and rushing to a new range can cause performance-affecting stress. Additionally, any delays with inspections while coming off the line will cause additional delays to those setting up for the next relay. These are not the goals of the MLAIC.
3. **Inspection of the arms of the top six following the completion of an event** even a multiple-relay event. Especially in the case of a multiple-relay event the competitors will have gone elsewhere and gathering them together again for an inspection would be nearly impossible. Nor would it be conclusive since any tampering or interchanging of parts would long since have been remedied.
4. **Random spot checks** -- While not perfect, this method may be the most democratic and effective of the four. It would start days or weeks in advance of the championships, once the squadding of the various matches has been completed. A select committee of the host nation or even the selected Firearms Inspection Team can perform a random drawing by position in each relay. Perhaps four from each relay. This to be done by position number, not by name or nation. Then the director can make a quick check to see if the competitor at that chosen position has a match immediately following that relay. If so, a new position would be chosen instead. Inspectors can be pre-assigned so that they are not chosen to inspect someone from their own team nor anyone from an event in which they are also a participant. An explanation of this system should be universally distributed (via the delegates and a notice in each competitor's packet) so that all will know that the drawings have been random and that they could be the ones chosen for inspection immediately following the relay. The inspectors could be armed with the computer photo of the arm and accoutrements as approved in the pre-match inspection to assist in their review. This option would

also have to have the ability of accommodate a specific challenge by another competitor or match officer and that inspection added to those of the random pre-drawing.

As stated at the outset, I don't have a perfect answer, but hope to instigate further thoughts and suggestions from other commission members by outlining of the challenges we face.

Gary Crawford.

I propose to place this at the end of the agenda for Portugal, hopefully there will be some time to discuss this issue and where we want to take it.

Facebook

I have set up an MLAIC page on Facebook, this is an excellent way for us to disseminate news quickly and post photographs. Please see <http://www.facebook.com/mlaic>

Best wishes

David Brigden
Secretary General
Muzzle Loaders Associations' International Committee (MLAIC)