



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT ARE: BOB BLAKE (TEAM MANAGER), DAVID WARD, MIKE QUENAULT, MARCUS HILL.



On target

Martyn White meets Bob Blake, team manager for the pistol shooters in Jersey's Commonwealth Games squad, who is looking forward to returning to Melbourne

Tell us more about the pistol shooters representing Jersey in Melbourne...

The team members are Dave Ward, Mike Quenault and Marcus Hill. Dave Ward has the most experience and will be competing in three disciplines (Air, Standard and Centrefire). For Mike Quenault and Marcus Hill, this will be their first event at this level. However, they both have the right mental approach and with Dave partnering them in the Pairs Matches, I would consider us to have a very strong team.

How do you view your role?

My role as team manager is to make life as easy as possible for my team, in order that they can concentrate on their performance without distractions, hassle or bureaucracy.

How has the team prepared in the run-up to the Commonwealth Games?

The Air Pistol Competitors (Dave Ward and Mike Quenault) have the best situation, with Air Pistol being very much a 'winter discipline'. The British Air Pistol Championships are being held shortly before departure to Melbourne, which is perfect for them. The Centrefire and Standard Pistol Competitors (Dave Ward and Marcus Hill) need to peak somewhat earlier in the year than would be normal. However, this is not causing too many problems. It's a shame that Dave Ward does not have a partner for the Centrefire Pairs match, and it would have been nice to have one or two lady competitors representing Jersey.

What do you know about Melbourne and the facilities?

I spent quite a lot of time in Melbourne during the 70s and 80s, but I am expecting to see quite a few changes! The Melbourne Shooting Facilities were used for the Commonwealth Shooting Federation Championships in March 2005 and several Jersey Pistol Club Members attended, so we have

had quite a detailed report on the facilities. And we know most of the top Commonwealth pistol shooters who will be there, so there should be no great surprises.

What have the team been doing in training to ensure they reach their peak at the Games?

We are fortunate to have superb facilities in Jersey, so training is no problem. The mental side needs extra attention for a competition at this level, yet all the team are experienced and well able to plan their training to peak in March.

Apart from the Olympics and World Championships, this is the premier sporting event for sportspeople in the UK. How does knowing this affect your preparations? And have you been to any other major Games?

All the team have competed in the Commonwealth Shooting Federation (European Division) Championships and both Dave and myself in the Commonwealth Shooting Federation (World) Championships (Dave at Bisley in 2001 and myself in Malaysia in 1997). So the whole team have already competed against many of the shooters who will be in Melbourne.

But can they win a medal?

Clearly a medal would be the icing on the cake, however, it is just as important that each team member competes with dignity and that they are able to depart from Melbourne with the satisfaction that they did their best.

What would be the ultimate achievement from these Games for you and your team?

A medal of any colour would be nice, but more importantly it is hoped that everyone will have enjoyed the experience and made a lot of friends.

Will you be holidaying afterwards?

Unfortunately, we will not be holidaying afterwards as we have an event to attend in France a week after our return to Jersey.

What advice would you give to potential pistol shooters who have dreams of competing at this level?

Go for it! Shooting is a sport with no age or gender bar and with the right mental approach and sufficient determination the sky is the limit.