

WHEN I TRIED SKEET

[By CARLOS QUIRINO]

"Come on to the Cosmopolitan Gun Club and let's try the shotgun," invited Teddy Kalaw to "Topin" Jaranilla and myself, after the Hunters' Headquarters Shoot in the Pureza ranges the other Sunday morning. Jaranilla and I were feeling pretty chipper—and who wouldn't after mowing down opposition in that difficult Swiss course rifle match?

The proverbial hospitality of the CGC open house tempted us. We decided to invade the Makati gun club after luncheon, in order not to appear like cheapskates.

The road beyond Santa Ana was crowded, for it was Sweepstakes Day, but we made good time and got there in the early afternoon. Teddy had brought his 12 gauge shotgun with a polychoke and tried a bit of trapshooting. He missed the first two, because the polychoke was not adjusted, and then proceeded to bust those rocks pretty regularly. He made a 16 out of 25, which wasn't bad considering everything.

Alvarez of Heacock's had a similar 12 gauge (without the polychoke or the rubber butt pad) which he generously loaned to the writer, who proceeded to try a round at the traps. Teddy was also firing.

Bang! went my gun, and the rock broke into a hundred pieces. Both Teddy and Topin looked amazed.

Bang! went the second shot, and again my companions gazed open-mouthed.

Bang! Bang! I must have been phenomenally lucky to get those first four birds, because this was the first time I had handled a shotgun!

To tell the truth, after you've been firing with a rifle, even a .22 caliber rifle at that, shooting with the 12 gauge proved to be somewhat easy. The aim need not be accurate, and the whole point is to sight those beads slightly ahead of the direction in which the rock is traveling. Simple, isn't it?

Then I began missing, and it didn't seem so easy as I thought it was, at first. Came a string of three hits, followed by four misses—back and forth, until at the end of the string, I found I had made 12 hits—

or slightly less than 50%. Teddy made pretty much the same score as on his first string.

“How about skeet?” asked Teddy, always the adventurous.

A box of 25 shell plus the rocks had set me back ₱2.40, but I was game for another string—just to find out how skeet-shooting felt. Back in my mind, I kept thinking of Vic Baltazar who, the first time he shot skeet, had broken only three or four rocks. And mind you, Vic is a veteran snipe-hunter!

Alvarez, a veteran compared to us, was first. Next came Teddy, and I was last. Alvarez got two birds in the first station.

“Shoot low at that bird going away from you,” warned Alvarez.

Teddy broke only one. I was up next, and fared no better. Well, that was one of the three or four I had to break in order to equal Baltazar's record, I said to myself.

And so we pass through the various stations, with Teddy busting them more and more as he got into the swing of the game. So did I. And at the end of the string, Teddy had broken 16 birds, and I came through with 11. Hooray!

Teddy and I had shot as well in skeet as on the traps—and skeet was supposed to be slightly more difficult. Then and there I realized that the bug of skeet-shooting had infected Teddy and myself. I was broke, and my right arm (despite the shooting coat I had put on) was suffering from the pounding it had received. You see, in my hurry to bring up the butt to the shoulder, the butt often rested at the base of my arm instead of on the shoulder. Skeet rules call for the butt being in a position lower than the right elbow, until the bird comes out of the

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traphouse. Then the gun is swiftly placed on the shoulder, the aim taken with the proper "lead", and a fast jerk on the trigger finishes the movement. The "squeeze", so important in rifle and pistol shooting, is practically negligible in skeet and trap. At least, that is how it seemed to me.

We inveigled Topin to shoot with us, borrowing the under-and-over shotgun of his father, the Hon. Delfin Jaranilla, skeet champion of the Philippines.

"Ha-ha, Topin, here's where we'll get even!" we chorused at young Jaranilla.

And we **did** get even, with a vengeance. Not used to the over and under manner of firing two shoots, Topin often fired both shells at one bird. You can imagine how the force of the explosion nearly set him flat on his back, while a look of amazement swept his face!

Meanwhile, Kalaw and myself did better: he broke 18 and I accounted for 16. Poor Topin finished with a 7—but still it was twice as good as that of Baltazar's!

"Some 8,000 shells were fired today," calculated Alvarez. "For the competition alone—the 12 gauge open trap championship of the Philippines—6,000 rounds were fired."

We made a rapid calculation. At 10 centavos per shot—wow, ₱800 gone in powder smoke in one day!

But all felt very happy. The fascination of skeet had enslaved us. My right arm was black and blue, and I owed Teddy the cost of the shells for that last string—but I was contented.

"When will the NRPA install its skeet range?" we asked one another.

"Well, in the meantime—until the NRPA does install a skeet range—I'm glad the Cosmopolitan Gun Club holds open house only once a year." murmured Teddy.

"For the sake of our pocketbooks," added Topin.

"Me, too," I grunted in approval.