

Clay Busters offers trap shooting for youths

The group is growing quickly and attracts students from as far as Maryland and Harrisburg.

By **MIKE NORTRUP**
For Your News

Roger Beardsley marvels at the millions of dollars he said are spent to invent video games that replicate trap shooting. He wonders why kids even bother with them.

He says, "Get off the couch and do it for real."

Beardsley offers youngsters that opportunity. He is the president and head coach of the Mason-Dixon Clay Busters, a trap-shooting club for sixth- through 12th-graders.

Organized in 2007, it has 29 members, mostly boys but also a few girls. Most come from communities near York, but a few hail from northern Maryland and Harrisburg.

They do their practice shooting at the Jefferson Sportsmen's Associ-

ation and the York chapter of the Izaak Walton League's range near Dallastown. Beardsley commends those two local clubs for providing his youngsters practice targets. This saves significant money.

He said it costs a member about \$200 annually to shoot, including ammunition and membership dues. Mason-Dixon has loaner shotguns for those needing them.

"Some sports cost more, some less," he said.

Interest in Mason-Dixon has grown rapidly.

"We started with 11. That 11 turned into 20 the next year, and we have almost 30 now," Beardsley said.

"It's outdoors, and there's a lot of camaraderie. The kids just like

breaking the targets," Beardsley said, explaining trap shooting's attraction.

Beardsley said his shooters are also attracted to the challenge and the medals they win for hitting progressively higher numbers of targets out of 25. The first comes for hitting 12 of 25 two times. They earn a Distinguished Expert medal for hitting 22 of 25 ten different times.

"A large number of our kids have earned the highest medal," Beardsley said, with a hint of pride in his voice.

Breaking the targets isn't easy, even for somebody armed with a 12-gauge shotgun. The shooter stands at the firing line, and a disc 4½ inches around is fired down-range from a machine located 16 yards in front.

The person has about one second to get off a shot, by which time the target is about 30 yards away and

Learn more

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traveling 43 mph.

But some young folks get very good. At the June 12 Pennsylvania State Championships in Elysburg, Northumberland County, Beardsley had shooters who busted 90 or more targets out of 100.

Mason-Dixon finished second of the 10-15 teams in the Varsity Division for grades 9 through 12. Its five shooters nailed 463 of 500 targets.

Beardsley noted that the varsity had its best finish in the four times it has competed at states. It had never finished higher than fifth.

The Clay Busters also placed second in the intermediate advanced division for grades 6 through

8.

"Our kids were highly competitive, shooting against the best in Pennsylvania. They may go on to be competitive at the national level," Beardsley said.

Beardsley notes that the sport is exactly the same for both adults and youths, and this makes him particularly proud of the scores his kids rang up — or shot up, as it were. He said he is also proud because Pennsylvania is a hotbed of trap shooting, has some of the best youth marksmen in the country, and his kids beat most of them.

However, he said Mason-Dixon faces more daunting competition from cars and girls when boys hit 16 or so. There is continual turnover.

But its head coach said it has a lot to offer youngsters: new friends, a sense of accomplishment and a sport they can participate in for the rest of their lives.