

The two best Target Sprint teams in the World were at the Yate Outdoor Sports Complex over the weekend of 24/25 August to compete in the inaugural Air Arms Cup.

Target Sprint is the new-to-the-UK exhilarating sport which combines the adrenaline-fuelled frenzy of running with the calm control required for the challenge of target shooting. We have all seen the Winter Olympic event of Biathlon and marvelled at

how the athletes can regain their composure to shoot after the cross-country skiing... well, this is the slimmed-down and speeded-up version – without the snow!



Athletes run 400m, then shoot 5 knock-down targets at 10m as quickly as they can, using an air rifle; run another 400m, followed by another 5 targets – then a flat-out 400m sprint to the finish! Typically, 10 athletes start together and the first to cross the line is the winner. The lead can change several times during an event, as the first into the range after the run is frequently not the first one out – which all adds to the excitement!

Races last around 5-6 minutes and athletes compete in categories according to age and gender – ensuring good competition and a thrilling spectacle for the spectators. Rifles are single-shot loaded (not magazine-fed) and are left on the firing points, which means that the athletes run unencumbered and also speeds up the transitions from one phase to the other. Unlike Biathlon, there are no penalties for missed shots – all the targets need to be cleared before continuing – so missing a shot requires an athlete to reload and the additional time required becomes self-penalising.



The teams from Germany and Italy counted amongst their ranks four World Champions and four world record holders, joining the resident Sedgemoor Target Sprint Club athletes and two individual athletes from other parts of the country. Sedgemoor is the premier Target Sprint Club in the country and almost all the Great Britain Team are members and train with them regularly.

Saturday saw the individual races and the first final resulted in Gold for Caitlin Keaney, Silver for Erin Throgmorton-Appleby and Bronze for Paige Baxter in the Youth category. In the most fiercely fought category, the Junior Men, Jono Williams took Bronze – Jono is the current British Record holder and although he is a Youth, he competes in the much more competitive Juniors. In the Junior Women's race, Emily Shawyer, who had entered as an Individual athlete, took Bronze. The rest of the medals were taken by athletes from German and Italian teams, some of whom put in stunning performances.



The Air Arms Cup, a most-impressive trophy provided by the UK's premier air rifle manufacturer and major sponsor of Target Sprint, was decided on points scored by the first five athletes in each race, including the heats.



Sunday was the Team competitions, with the frenetic mixed Pairs and the Male and Female teams of three. Because of numbers, there was a certain amount of swapping of athletes to enhance the competition, which saw Isabel Moore, who had also entered as an Individual, in a team with a German World Champion and Paige Baxter, the youngest Female athlete, in an Italian Women's team. An Italian also joined a couple of Sedgemoor athletes to make

another team.

The top Women's team from Sedgemoor took the Bronze medal in a new British Record time. Their Men's team also achieved a new British Record time, without finishing in the medals, as did the Mixed Pair of Caitlin Keaney and Isaac Steele.

During the medal presentation ceremony on Sunday, the loudest cheer of the weekend went to Luke Spittles, who is currently only 12 years old and competed as a Youth, but as he was the only entrant in the category was unable to win a medal and was presented with a Certificate.



The Air Arms Cup was won with a Masterclass performance by the German team, with the Italians as the runners-up. Speaking after the competition had finished, Michel Herr, the current World Champion and German National Team Coach, praised the performances of the UK athletes and said that whilst we still had a way to go, it was not as far as it had been. He also praised the facilities at Yate and organisation of the

competition and they were all looking forward to next year's event already!

The competition was judged by all to be an outstanding success and the warm weather was only outshone by the warmth of the friendships forged between the athletes, their incredibly supportive parents and coaches from all the teams.

