**Boom Boom Pow!**

Clay shooting becomes unique hobby for youth

Zane Austill

News Brief Coordinator

**F**or the fiercely competitive and the fiercely in favor of animal rights, the adrenaline rush that can be found while hunting is more accessible than ever. Though not the first thing that comes to mind when talking about high school sports, many young people in our community enjoy clay target shooting as a casual or competitive pastime.

Sophomore Thomas Neidenbach is one of the best competitors at the school. He even managed to finish with a score of 47/50 clays at his summer camp this year. Neidenbach recalls a fond memory of when he was first introduced to the activity.

“I was about 10 when my dad gave me an old 410 shotgun that he used to shoot. He took me out to the gun club on Sunday’s and we would shoot trap,” Neidenbach said.

The Spartanburg Gun Club is the local place where people can experience the unique sport. Neidenbach mentions “trap” which is one of the major categories of competitive shooting along with skeet shooting and sporting clays.

In general terms competitive shooting involves a shooter who can be equipped with a number of different variations in shotguns. These include the .410 bore, .28 gauge, .20 gauge, and .12 gauge in increasing diameter. The choice between these can be tactical because as diameter increases so does spread and recoil. The shooter stands as clay discs are thrown by a mechanical launcher or by hand. The way they are launched depends on the category, but in all cases the shooter attempts to burst the clay disc by hitting it with the spread of pellets.

The variation in the launch is where the true interest lies. For example, the most popular form of shooting, trap, involves only one tower from which clays are shot. The variety comes from the positioning, as shooters change where they are for five different angles of shots.

Skeet, the name comes from the Scandinavian word for shoot, was originally designed as a fair way among friends to decide the best shooter. It involves two launching machines and follows a standard sequence of shots involving a few pairs where two clays are launched in one go.

Lastly, sporting clays is a comparatively new way to experience the sport. It is developed to most realistically depict hunting and involves the shooter traveling through the forest to various different stations and unique unexpected shots.

Some might look at the sport as elitist or wasteful, but the sport defies stereotypes by creating lasting memories with families as Neidenbach mentioned and giving back to the community.

Sophomore Graham Hall, who also visits the club with his family and friends, discusses a recent shooting competition.

“It was a fundraiser for our youth group’s pilgrimage this year. We had different rounds to shoot for different prizes that businesses donated… I shot in two of the rounds. It was extremely fun,” Hall said.

Whether for a good time or competition, for once or for life, competitive shooting can be a way to show positive uses of firearms, make close connections, and above all, have fun.