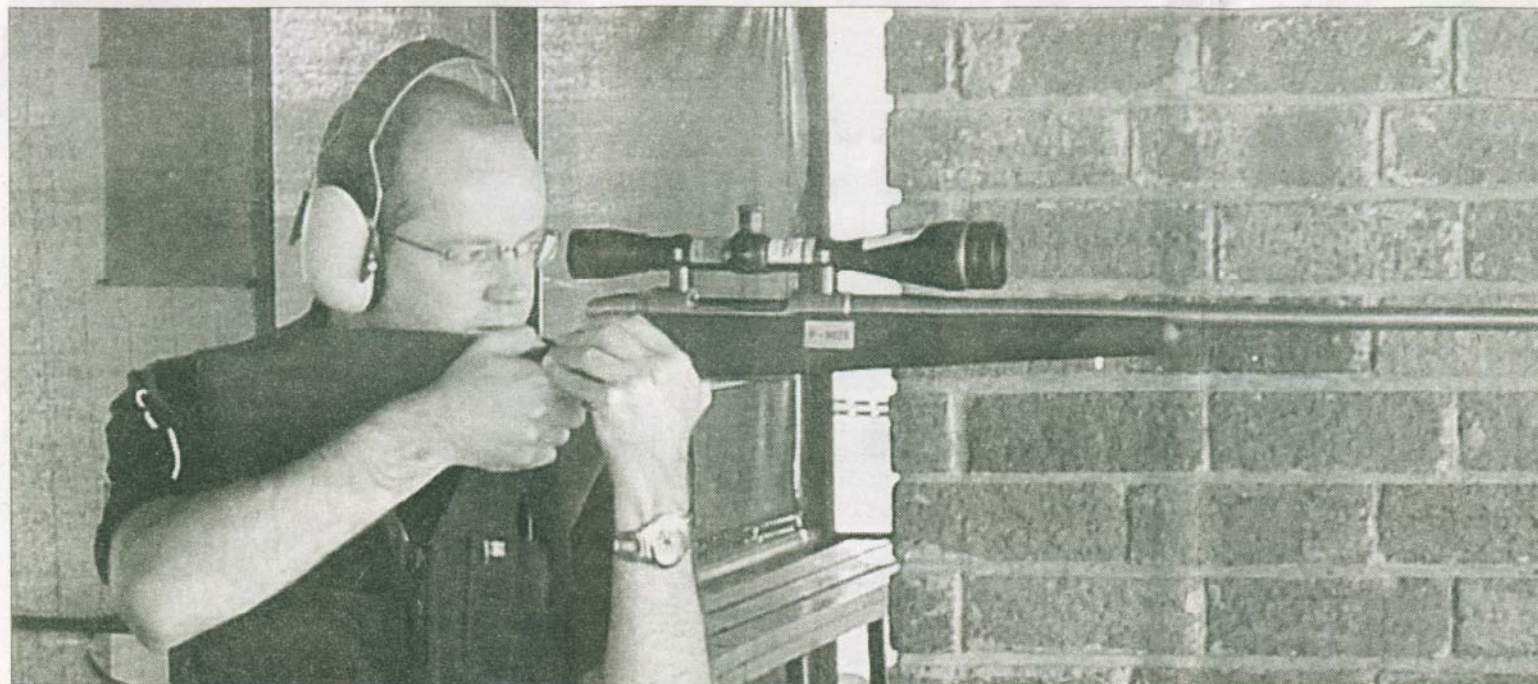


SILHOUETTE SHOOTING WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS



Canning claims top ten finish

BY TOMMY NETHERY

NEWTOWNSTEWART'S Matthew Canning (pictured above) has again confirmed his position as a top international marksman by clinching a top ten finish at the seventh IMSSU World Silhouette Shooting Championships held in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

That amazing success came just days after the Tyrone man claimed runners-up spot in the 2006 Irish National Metallic Silhouette Championships hosted in Dublin.

Canning was a member of a three-man Irish team which travelled to South Africa and despite gale force conditions on the first day of competition, the Newtown man and teammate Fabian Kinlough outshone a number of past world champions to post two of the highest scores.

For the remaining days conditions were more favourable and that was reflected on the scoreboard, Canning continuing to impress to

claim his place well up the rankings in the smallbore rifle event.

On his return from the championships, a delighted Canning reflected on his experience against some of the top shooters on the globe.

"Conditions on the opening day were horrendous. Winds exceeded 41mph which made for a low scoring shoot," he said.

"The organisers had squared the competition so that the majority of the top international competitors were shooting at the same time and in similar conditions. Ironically, it was this detail that seen the worst of the wind. The gusty south easterly wind came right in on the shooters making standing still virtually impossible.

"When one thinks of Africa you could be forgiven for thinking of warm weather but in the shade of the covered firing point it was positively freezing. It was a real job to keep my hands warm.

"For the remaining days of shooting the

wind dropped and the scores escalated considerably. There was no longer the need for coats and gloves. Although I just finished outside a Master Class medal position, I am delighted to be ranked tenth in the world."

That remarkable success came hot on the heels of another outstanding performance in the National Silhouette Association of Ireland championships, hosted by BRC Shooting Club Dublin.

The national event was run over two days with competitors shooting both standard rifle and hunting rifle. Competitors from all corners of Ireland emerged on the Dublin venue and in near perfect conditions scoring was extremely high.

Canning was again prominent at the summit of the leaderboard. His intensive programme paying dividends and at the close of play the Newtownstewart native had captured second place, confirming his qualification for the international team in 2007.