

# **3RSSA Guide to Starting a Clay Target Shooting Team at a College**

## **1. Research and Initial Planning**

- Determine the interest level among students for a clay target shooting team. Use student surveys (attached), social media polls, or talk to students who listed being a member of a clay target team in their college application to the school.
- Research the college's history, policies and regulations on firearms, club formation, and student activities. Many colleges have had shooting/hunting teams in the past that were discontinued for various reasons. Understanding these reasons can make it easier to restart a team. Yearbooks are often a good place to start. If one did not exist, we can help connect you to other college coaches who can help share their setup.
- Look into the National Collegiate Shooting Sports organizations such as the Association of College Unions International (ACUI) and Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) to understand their rules and resources. Many colleges are already part of ACUI for other sports.

## **2. Find and Appoint a Faculty or Staff Advisor**

- Identify a faculty or staff member who is willing to act as the team advisor. They should be familiar with firearms safety and school policies and be comfortable supporting a shooting team. They do not need to be a shooting instructor, but the best advisors often have youth coaching experience in some sport.
- Determine the level of involvement and commitment you expect from students and faculty advisor. We recommend that colleges establish a team environment (rather than a hobby club environment). This typically means that the team should hold at least one practice a week and look to compete several times a semester. In the Northeast, ACUI Upper East Coast Regionals are held each November in Maryland. This is a good event to plan for. ACUI Nationals are in San Antonio, TX each March. This is another event to plan for.

### **3. Draft a Proposal and Constitution**

- Have students draft a team proposal by outlining the club's purpose, mission statement, and expected benefits for the students. This sets the tone for the team should establish clear goals for the first year.
- Develop a constitution and bylaws, which include club structure, leadership roles, membership requirements, and meeting schedules. Student positions are an important part of the team and student development. We recommend positions that reflect a team environment over a club environment. For example, there should be a Team Captain or Co-Captains, rather than president and vice president.
- Incorporate safety guidelines, risk management plans, and emergency procedures in the constitution to ensure compliance with college policies. Safety must be an important part of the team's culture and should be thoughtfully incorporated into the team's documents from the beginning (weapons storage, ammo storage, transportation to and from range, eye and ear protection requirements, and the use of outside safety certification/ classes such as hunter safety courses, SCTP classes, USA shooting classes, or 3RSSA instruction are avenues to accomplish this)

### **4. Secure Funding and Sponsorship**

- Create a budget estimating the costs for range fees, ammunition, firearms, team uniforms, safety gear, and travel expenses. We've attached an example budget that is appropriate for a new 5-10 student team. Every school is different and we can help you think about your particular needs and help find resources for you.
- Seek out potential funding sources, such as college grants, student government funding, or private donors. Clay target shooting is a high fixed cost (especially, if you intend to supply team shotguns) and high variable cost activity. 3RSSA can assist schools in the initial upfront cost through uniform, safety equipment, ammunition, and shotgun programs.
- Participate in 3RSSA incentive programs (current ones attached) that assist teams in building their MidwayUSA Foundation Endowment for doing things that help build strong teams.
- Establish a MidwayUSA Foundation Endowment with the MidwayUSA Foundation. This will allow 3RSSA and other donors to endow contributions that will provide long term financial support to your team.

- Contact Pennsylvania Youth Shooting Association (PYSA) and tell them about your team, its needs, and its goals - they offer grants and MidwayUSA Foundation matching to help support youth teams. Roy Fritz ([roy.fritz@pysa.us](mailto:roy.fritz@pysa.us))

## **5. Submit the club proposal, constitution, and other necessary documentation to the college's student activities or club registration office**

## **6. Identify Practice Facilities and Schedule**

- Find a local shooting range that offers clay target facilities and is willing to partner with your team. 3RSSA can assist if needed to help establish these relationships. Ideal facilities will allow your team to reserve two field for practice and host home shoots on a by semester schedule.
- Negotiate range fees and arrange regular practice times. Ensure the facility meets all safety standards and is appropriate for your students. If it has deficiencies, let us know. MidwayUSA Foundation provides range development grants for ranges that support youth shooting teams. We can help your club secure funding to make your "home field" better. As just one example, we had a club in which MidwayUSA Foundation and 3RSSA partnered to replace two broken trap machines — allowing the range to bring back two of their fields which have become the full time practice fields for the youth team.
- Schedule regular team practices (once a week) and establish a transportation plan for team members if the range is off-campus.

## **7. Recruit Members and Form a Team**

- Organize an information session or interest meeting to recruit members. Promote it through flyers, social media, and college newsletters. This recruiting should be professional and attract students who want to be part of a team. This is where we have seen schools go wrong. It is better to recruit a student who is interested in being part of a clay target team, but has no experience with shooting; than it is to take a student who is just looking for a place to shoot when it is not hunting season. As an example, only about 60% of the athletes on the West Point Skeet and Trap team have prior shotgun experience of any kind.

- Clearly explain the teams's mission, practice schedule, and costs. Provide a sign-up sheet and collect contact information. Hold a tryout for all interested members, no matter how few you get. Take those who demonstrate they are committed to building the right team environment and culture. We recommend having interviews be part of the selection process.

## **8. Set Up Training and Safety Protocols**

- Establish a training program with a certified coach or instructor. If your coach is not certified (or wants/needs additional resources), we can assist you in finding certified National Skeet and Sporting Clay Instructors in your area and/or help certify your coach (and students) with coaching clinics through SCTP or NSSA. All certifications emphasize firearm safety, proper shooting techniques, and sportsmanship. We don't recommend having the local club "pro" be an instructor for your team unless they are certified through a national governing body. If the local "pro" wants to help, we recommend they attend a coaching clinic — which 3RSSA and MidwayUSA can help secure grants for their attendance.
- Hold a mandatory safety briefing and require all team members to complete firearm safety training.
- Develop emergency procedures for all scenarios on the to and from the range and at the range and ensure all members are familiar with the protocols. Shooting is an extremely safe sport — but when there are firearms involved, even small accidents become more complicated. As an example, we have seen a college student attending a team practice get a flat tire heading to the range. The gun and ammo was in their car when a police officer stopped to help the student with their tire. Seeing a gun and ammo in the trunk, the encounter required additional explaining that the student was unprepared for.
- Determine and develop your firearm accountability and storage plan. This should be coordinated with a college's police department or safety administration.

## **9. Join Collegiate Shooting Organizations**

- Register the team with collegiate shooting organizations ACUI/SCTP to gain access to competitions, resources, and networking opportunities. 3RSSA can assist your faculty advisor or coach with setting up the initial accounts if needed. There are also other organizations that allow virtual competitions and leagues such as USA Clay Target League. You can find more

information on all the youth shooting programs on the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) page ([nssf.org](http://nssf.org)).

- Comply with their requirements for team registration, eligibility, and competition participation. Most organizations require individual member fees of between \$25 and \$50 per athlete. We can help you decide which ones to join based on your team goals, funding, and competition level.
- Many teams travel and host shoulder to shoulder shoots with surrounding youth teams or shooting clubs. These are typically done organically and we can help introduce you to clubs and teams in your area interested in competing. Having your team compete against local clubs is a great way to generate competition, network with other shooters in the area, and generate support for your team. 3RSSA can help you connect with other college shooting programs in your area.

## **10. Partner with 3RSSA and MidwayUSA Foundation to equip your team**

- Design and approve a team logo that matches school colors and style that can be embroidered on team vests, range bags, hats, and shirts.
- Send the design and initial sizing for team members to 3RSSA so that we can work to get your team an initial set of team equipment.
- Participate in the 3RSSA 50/\$50 program that provides a youth team with up to 50 flats of ammunition for \$50 per flat per year. 3RSSA then donates the money to a team's MidwayUSA Foundation account (see attached flyer)
- Contact 3RSSA for initial setup of shooting glasses. We work with schools to help them get their shooters into competitive shooting glasses through grants and working with industry partners.
- Determine how you plan to obtain shotguns for your team. This differs by organization. Some prefer that students provide their own shotgun. Other schools seek to provide the shotgun as team equipment. Some mix the two. Depending on your team's situation, we can help with advice and purchasing.

## **11. Plan and Attend Competitions**

- Create a competition schedule based on the organization's calendar and local matches. We recommend teams work to host one shoulder to

shoulder match, travel to one shoulder to shoulder match, and travel to a tournament each semester. Plan your practices around these events.

- Organize travel logistics, registration fees, and necessary equipment for competitions. Most competitions take 4-6 weeks lead time to coordinate. New teams can receive 3RSSA travel incentives into their MidwayUSA endowment for traveling and hosting matches.
- Plan one fund raising shoot per year in which the team hosts local shooters, family, and faculty for a day at the range to promote their sport and raise funds for their team.

## **12. Promote the Team and Build Campus Support**

- Create a social media presence on Facebook and Instagram to share team activities, achievements, and competition results. Coordinate with school public relations office to ensure compliance with school media policy and link accounts.
- Produce professional marketing material and signage for your team. School print offices can help with banners and posters that can help promote the team both at your school and at your “home range.” Banners at the local range that hosts your team stating “HOME FIELD OF THE XXXXX CLAY TARGET TEAM” help create the right relationship with a club.

## **12. Evaluate and Expand**

- We recommend teams start with 5-10 dedicated athletes in their beginning season. This allows for the students, coach, and advisory to focus on creating the right culture, procedures, and practices for a team. Once a sound foundation and key pieces are in place, recruiting and expanding is much easier.
- Shooting teams have high variable costs — each practice and shot requires additional money. Reviewing your team’s budget regularly the first year will help you adjust funding, size, practice and competition schedule to the right size. Our advice is to start with fewer athletes so that you can afford them adequate practice and competition. Expand as your budget allows and communicate with 3RSSA about your needs. We are here to help schools get teams off the ground by finding and aligning resources.
- Plan for the future by grooming potential new leaders to ensure continuity of the team. It is best to take freshmen and sophomores, who will mature into the sport and roles on the team. Similarly, coaching staff can be

expanded through the selection and use of volunteer assistant coaches whose interests and goals align with the team.

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## Other Resources:

1. <https://www.claytargetnation-digital.com/articles/college-shooting-teams>

This is a recent article in Clay Target Nation that provides some information on starting a college team and provides some insight from coaches of the country's most active college programs (from a recruiting perspective). While these may not be the programs you are recruiting against in the beginning, you can see from their thinking what they are talking to prospective athletes about.

2. Scholastic Clay Target Program: <https://mysctp.com>

3. ACUI Clay Target Program: <https://acuiclays.org>

4. MidwayUSA Foundation: <https://www.midwayusafoundation.org>

5. Pennsylvania Youth Shooting Association: <https://www.pysa.us>

6. National Shooting Sports Foundation: <https://www.nssf.org/shooting/youth-college-programs/>