

Chris Batha's *The Instinctive Shot*

For the last half-century, wingshooting instruction has been dominated by two techniques: the Churchill method, as espoused by English gunmaker Robert Churchill, and that of Percy Stanbury, the late, great instructor from the West London Shooting School. Churchill's *Game Shooting* and Stanbury's *Shotgun Marksmanship* have become the bibles of each respective camp.

Both remain classics with much to recommend them but shooting has since moved on: inexpensive over/unders and repeaters have been perfected and dominate today, ammunition has improved, and sporting clays has influenced and altered not only the clay-bird disciplines but also the shooting of live game—driven game in particular. Churchill's and Stanbury's formalized techniques, which evolved with lightweight side-by-sides in the manicured battues of Britain, have also proven less than perfectly suited for hunters in America's uplands or duck marshes.

Chris Batha's, *The Instinctive Shot: The Practical Guide to Modern Game Shooting*, addresses all of these shortcomings in the most comprehensive and systematic treatment of game shooting published in decades. Batha, an Englishman with a background in competitive clays, is an instructor with vast experience in shooting, gunfitting and gunmaking on both side of the Atlantic (and is *Shooting Sportsman's* Shooting Editor.) He has taught for over 30

years, been the chief shooting instructor for London's E.J. Churchill and Atkin Grant & Lang, and is the former director, tutor and senior instructor of the British Clay Shooting Association. *The Instinctive Shot* is his follow-up to *Breaking Clays*, which has gone through two printings and remains a best seller in its genre seven years after its release.

Batha addresses his book to both American and European shooters—"straight shooting is straight shooting, regardless of target or quarry or over which ocean." His non-dogmatic advice is based on a "modern" style that synthesizes classic game-shooting techniques with insights from contemporary clay shooting. With it, he advocates a low-gun technique that stresses gun fit, flexible footwork, stance and posture, proper gun mount, hard target focus, and practice—especially lots of the latter two.

In 20 chapters and 200 full-color pages, all the basics are covered: safety, etiquette (British and American), shotgun types, shotshells, chokes, clothing, equipment, and the pros and cons of various shooting techniques. There are excellent chapters on eye dominance issues and gun fit. The heart of the book describes the mechanics of developing an instinctive style with cross-over applications between game and clays, and then specific chapters on adapting these techniques to British driven shooting and also to American upland hunting and waterfowling. Chapters on improving vision, tips for youngsters and ladies, and using clays to practice round the book out.

Batha has a knack for explaining technical concepts clearly, and often uses lively analogies from other sports to make his points. The text is complemented by a profusion of color photos, charts and diagrams, all of which make Batha's explanations easily visualized and understood. Each chapter is broken into bite-sized subtopics, the contents of which are based on "all the questions I have been asked while giving shooting lessons, gun-fittings and at shows."

If you don't have a game-shooting technique book, this is one you *must* own. If you have Stanbury or Churchill you still need it. I consider it essential for the beginner or intermediate shot and especially the American planning to shoot overseas—and even the most experienced shots will find insights for trouble-shooting problems that may arise. This is Batha at his best—and as such a worthy addition to the canon that comprises wingshooting instruction.

Published by Quiller Press in the UK, and distributed by Stackpole in the US, it retails for \$34.95 in America. For more information: www.countrybooksdirect.com.

—*Vic Venters*