



OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST  
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# PERAZZI: THE GOLD MEDAL GUN

## VIC HARKER RECOUNTS PERAZZI'S RISE TO OLYMPIC GLORY AND THE DREAM OF ONE MAN WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE

### VICTORY IN BEIJING

In the summer of 2008, Italian gunmaker Perazzi celebrated what amounted to a culmination of a 40-year history in which the company has risen to a position of pre-eminence in shotgun shooting competition at the highest level. In the steamy heat of China's capital city at the 29th Olympic Games, Perazzi shooters captured 11 of the 15 medals available in the clay target events. Perhaps even more impressive than that is in the Men's Trap event all six finalists shot Perazzis and 14 out of the first 15 placed shooters also used the gun. Also significant is of the 11 Perazzi shooters who won medals in all five events, only one, Giovanni Pellielo, is Italian. Team Perazzi consisted of shooters from Eastern Europe, the USA, Scandinavia and China, reflecting the global strength of the Perazzi brand.



OLYMPIC VICTORY: DOUBLE TRAP  
CHAMPION GLEN ELLER USA

For Mauro Perazzi, the head of the company, who has been present at the last six Olympics sharing with his shooters both their triumphs and their disappointments, this was an emotional moment. He recalls: "As our shooters stood on the podium to be presented with their medals and the anthems played it was my father who was in my thoughts. What this must mean to him and how hard he has worked over the years to

achieve his dreams and ambitions and in doing so helped others to achieve theirs."

### DANIELE PERAZZI

In post-war Italy life was hard. A country torn apart by the recent conflict with an economy in ruins, most people were poor and hungry and Daniele Perazzi was no exception. Though born in Brescia in 1932, his family were not gunmakers and at the age of 14 he had to take any job available just to help to provide food for his family. As Mauro Perazzi explains: "My father took a job in a gun shop just to keep the place clean but in the evenings he was allowed to help with simple repairs and he found he had good hands." In that gun shop Daniele Perazzi also found himself and a burning ambition not just to escape his poverty but to become a great gunmaker. By the age of 16 he was



still looking for an opportunity to work as a gunsmith but instead took a job with a gun manufacturer as a storekeeper. Daniele stubbornly clung to his dream and helped to assemble guns at night. Finally he was given an opportunity as an apprentice, damaged a new gun he was working on but then skilfully rectified it. His talent was now beginning to be recognised and he moved onto a bigger manufacturer, developing his skills as a craftsman and expanding his knowledge of every aspect of gunmaking. At the age of 20 he was already known as both a skilful and inventive craftsman. He offered his employer a patent for a single trigger he had devised but they refused it so Daniele resigned and sold it to a competitor. For the first time in his life he had some money. He also had something he craved more, the independence to start to make the guns he dreamt of. "My father possessed great energy," Mauro says, "he worked day and night. On Sundays he would sell the guns he made at the shooting ranges." Within a year or two Daniele Perazzi had accumulated enough money to establish proper workshop facilities and in 1957 Armi Perazzi was formed.

In 1960 Perazzi formed a partnership with Ivo Fabbri. Fabbri was a tool maker, trained by Fiat in Turin, and he brought with him a knowledge of new manufacturing techniques that would greatly influence Italian gun production in the future. From 1960 to 1965 the partnership built sidelock guns, both over-and-under and side-by-side, until both parties decided to go their separate ways. One would build small numbers

of exquisite shotguns acknowledged by connoisseurs to be some of the finest in the world, and the other would create a shotgun to conquer the world of competition shooting.

### MATTARELLI

In 1964 a tall, strongly-built man walked into Daniele Perazzi's workshop and asked him to make a Trap gun. This was Ennio Mattarelli from Bologna. He was 35 and already a famous Trap shooter, having won the World Championship in Oslo two years before. The new gun would be for Mattarelli's use in the forthcoming Olympic Games in Tokyo. Built around the Perazzi SHO sidelock action the specification Perazzi and Mattarelli agreed upon incorporated a barrel length of 740cm (29") with a tapered concave rib 11mm to 8mm, bored 7/10, ¾, 10/10 full choke. The gun would be stocked in the English style with a straight grip. At that time many Italian shooters still favoured relatively short barreled, fast handling guns in specifications still closely resembling those they had used



(ABOVE) MATTARELLI'S GOLD MEDAL WINNING SIDELOCK  
(LEFT) DANIELE PERAZZI AGED 20, DRIVEN BY AMBITION AND AN INVENTIVE MIND

Though similar in age the two men were a contrasting pair, Mattarelli big, confident and extrovert, Perazzi smaller, quiet and more thoughtful. But both men shared the same strength and determination to achieve their own separate ambitions. With the gun now assembled in the white (unfinished), Daniele passed his creation onto Angelo Galeazzi, one of Italy's great engravers. The gun was engraved with a superbly executed English style scroll design. Mauro explains: "My father was determined that not only would the gun be everything Mattarelli needed to win the Olympic Games but as it also represented his best work it would be as beautiful as possible." Ennio Mattarelli came to collect his gun and with Daniele went to a nearby shooting range. Stuffing cartridges in his pocket the burly trap shooter walked onto the Trap range. The gunmaker stood watching intently. Mattarelli assumed his characteristic stance, his weight well over his left foot, his right heel slightly raised. He called for a target and missed it with both barrels. The next he clipped with the second barrel. The third

## Matarelli walked back to the gunmaker. "Esso bello" he said, and the two men shook hands

for live pigeon shooting. "My father saw this order as a great opportunity" Mauro Perazzi says, "he brought all the knowledge and skill he had gained over the previous years to create a gun of superb feel and balance that would meet precisely Mattarelli's exacting requirements".

a straight away he smashed, the same with the fourth target. Mattarelli had now found his timing with the new gun and the remaining targets he obliterated. Mattarelli put the gun under his arm and walked back to the gunmaker. "Esso bello" (It's beautiful) he said and the two men shook hands.



MATTERELLI WITH THE MX8. HIS OLYMPIC VICTORY BEGAN PERAZZI'S RISE TO WORLDWIDE SUCCESS

TOKYO GRAND SLAM

Warm October sunshine greeted the Italian shooting team flying into Narita airport for the Tokyo Games. Ennio Mattarelli's expectations were high as were those of his team mate Galliano Rossini, a gold and silver medallist from the two previous games. It had however been Mattarelli's year so far. With his new Perazzi gun he had already won the Grande Italia (The Italian Championship) and then the European Championship. With no World Championships in Olympic year, he now had to win the gold medal in Tokyo to complete his grand slam. But it was by no means a forgone conclusion and Mattarelli would have to overcome formidable opposition to achieve his goal. As well as France, Spain and the USA all fielding some great shooters, the Soviet block was now emerging as a force, supporting their Olympic teams with all the resources at their disposal. Great Britain also represented serious opposition in the form of the legendary Joe Wheater, a former European Champion, and Bob Braithwaite who in a very short time had already established a reputation as a fierce competitor on the European circuit.

The shooting events were staged at a military camp just outside Tokyo and Bob Braithwaite recalls the efficiency of the organisation and the efforts the

Japanese made to ensure the facilities would be as near-perfect as possible. "They went to extraordinary lengths to assure the success of the trap event," Bob remembers. "The background to the Trap ranges was a very pale green and to improve the visibility of the targets against it they quite literally sprayed the countryside a darker colour.

"It was a friendly Games," Braithwaite says, "and a good atmosphere prevailed among the shooters". Bob remembers Mattarelli as a charismatic figure although ultimately a serious man. "He was businesslike and professional and out to make the most of the opportunities that life offered him. And this was an opportunity for Mattarelli to put himself in the record books as one of Trap shooting's all-time greats." The Trap event comprised of 200 targets shot over two days. At the beginning of the second day Mattarelli was leading but a number of shooters were still very much in contention including Bill Morris USA, Pavel Senichev USSR, Rossini and Braithwaite. All seasoned experienced competitors snapping at the leaders heels like hounds, one slip and the pack would be on him and past him. But this was Mattarelli's day and his year. He kept his head and the lead. As Mattarelli stood on the podium to receive the gold medal the Perazzi company stepped onto the world stage.

MX8

Mattarelli's Olympic success had far reaching benefits for both Perazzi and other Italian gunmakers. The United States in particular now turned its attention towards Italy as a source of high grade shotguns after the very public demonstration of the Perazzi gun's qualities in Tokyo. As for Daniele Perazzi, the great interest in his gun only stirred his restless ambition and inventive mind to seek further ways to enhance his growing reputation. Perazzi had long noted the steadily increasing participation in clay target shooting both in Italy and elsewhere. He also appreciated that this sport in all its forms would require guns with different qualities and specifications from those he had previously made. His sidelock guns were beautiful and in great demand but they could only be produced in limited numbers and were very expensive. Daniele now began to envisage a gun that was a little more workmanlike, tough, rugged, and would withstand the ferocious pounding that thousands of cartridges a year clay target shooting would give it. In the time he could spare from continuing with his small workforce to produce his sidelock gun, as Mauro Perazzi describes, "My father would sometimes work long into the night making and experimenting with rough prototypes." Daniele Perazzi was gradually



(FAR LEFT) TOP SHOOTER MICHAEL DIAMOND, WHO FAVOURS THE MX8 (LEFT) MAURO PERAZZI JOINED THE COMPANY IN 1981

working towards what he determined would be the ultimate competition gun, immensely strong, totally reliable, easy to repair and at the same time retaining much of the beauty, elegance and balance of his sidelock guns.

Meanwhile the Perazzi company was expanding, in part due to the efforts of Ennio Mattarelli who had now joined Daniele as his partner. Mattarelli's continued success as a Trap shooter, but just as importantly his business sense and talent as a representative for the company, ensured a continuous flow of orders for guns. Apart from his business career Ennio Mattarelli was now focusing on the Olympic Games in Mexico and he and Daniele Perazzi agreed the new competition gun now reaching the prototype stage would be the one Mattarelli would take with him to Mexico to defend his title of Olympic champion. The MX8, as the new gun was designated, so far as bolting and jointing was concerned, like his sidelocks closely resembled the English Boss system, and had all the strength and durability required. Just opening and closing a Perazzi MX8 inspires confidence. Wedges integral to the action walls locate with draws machined in the monobloc. When the gun is closed these wedges support and hold the barrels at the sides. At the same time radiused extensions of the monobloc each side of the bottom barrel engage with convex surfaces each side of the breach face. Then a bifurcated bolt or the H bolt as Perazzi call it, moves forward from each side of the breach face engaging with bites on top of these extensions and holds the barrels down in the action body. It's difficult to imagine a stronger arrangement or one that contributes to a more elegant appearance.

The detachable trigger group represented a number of advantages to the target shooter. Leaf springs could be retained, providing trigger pulls of the same quality as a good sidelock mechanism, and could be easily replaced in minutes or a spare group substituted. The angle of the hammers incorporated also improved the power of the strike to the lower firing pin. Lower barrel misfires had been a problem of many over and under designs from the beginning. In the previous four years

Mattarelli did not win in Mexico. The Olympic Championship was won by Great Britain's Bob Braithwaite who like Mattarelli in 1964 seized the moment and did not let it go. Mattarelli did, however, win the World Championship for the second time in San Sebastian the following year. Ennio Mattarelli's contribution to the initial success of the MX8 was immense. He did not design the MX8, but his knowledge and experience of Trap shooting provided the specifications

Just opening and closing a Perazzi MX8 inspires confidence. It has all the strength and durability required

since the Tokyo Olympics, Mattarelli had been learning more about Olympic Trap shooting and the kind of gun required. At this time the discipline had existed for barely 20 years and both shooters and gunmakers were still pioneers. Mattarelli had now been one of the top competitors in the game for longer than most, and he had come to some conclusions about the specification for the MX8 which he now shared with Daniele Perazzi. The gun he would take to Mexico would differ in a number of ways from his first Perazzi. Heavier in the barrels, the bottom one incorporated an interchangeable choke system, the top was bored extra full. Staying with his preferred barrel length 74cm (29¼") the rib would again be concave and tapered 11mm-8mm but this time would have a 4mm step. Mattarelli had found this type of high rib discouraged head lifting, improved lateral vision on exiting angled birds and in hot climates contributed to heat dissipation. The English style straight hand stock was replaced with a full pistol grip design.

that made it a great Trap gun. By the time Mattarelli retired from competitive shooting to pursue his many business interests, the MX8 was in the hands of champions around the world.

MAURO PERAZZI

In 1981 a young man joined the Perazzi company who would assure its continuing success and its legacy. Mauro Perazzi was born in Brescia in 1959 and like his father Daniele he knew from an early age what his destiny would be. Able and energetic, he quickly became familiar with the various aspects of managing the Perazzi company. From the beginning he appreciated the importance to Perazzi of success in competitive shooting and he was soon travelling with Team Perazzi to many of the major events. Mauro Perazzi soon became a familiar figure on the International shooting circuit. Meeting and talking with competitors from all parts of the world provided him with a deep understanding of both shooters and clay target shooting. Over the years this made





## PERAZZI: OLYMPIC SUCCESS



(FAR LEFT) SATU MAKELA NUMMELA ACHIEVED OLYMPIC GLORY WITH HER MX2000-8  
(LEFT) CALIFORNIAN KIM RHODE, ANOTHER OF PERAZZI'S CHAMPIONS

an important contribution both to Perazzi's product development programmes and the successful sponsorship deals with many shooters who with Perazzi's assistance became champions.

**Michael Diamond:** To even briefly profile all the great shooters Mauro has recruited to the Perazzi banner would require a book, but certainly the Australian Trap shooter Michael Diamond would be near the top of the list. A double Olympic gold medallist and three times World Champion, he is truly one of the all-time greats and still only 36 – who can tell what Diamond will achieve with his MX8 before he retires.

**Kim Rhode:** California girl Kim Rhode is another shooter in a long term relationship with Perazzi. She's achieved two Olympic gold medals and a bronze in double trap. This versatile 28 year old has since switched to Skeet for which she won a silver medal in Beijing with her MX12.

**The Brits:** From the British perspective, Trap shooter Peter Boden must rank as one of Perazzi's longest serving ambassadors. A Double Trap World Champion, a Commonwealth Games gold medallist and a joint holder of a record five British Grand Prix wins for Olympic Trap, his contribution to the Perazzi brand in the UK has been outstanding. As for George Digweed, the world's most successful sporting shooter who signed with Perazzi in 2000, he has with his MX2000 added to his list of achievements which includes 15 world titles.

### OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS TOKYO 08

For the moment, however, it is the Olympic champions that must take centre stage.

**Satu Makela Nummela:** A 38-year-

old from Finland and an experienced competitor with her MX2000-8 achieved an Olympic record score of 70ex-75+21 to take gold for the Ladies' Trap event.

**Walton 'Glenn' Eller:** The US Army Marksmanship unit at Fort Benning Georgia has a way of regularly producing champions and Texan Walton 'Glenn' Eller is the latest success story. This 26-year-old, a former British Open Sporting Clay Junior Champion in 1994, claimed the gold medal in the Double Trap event with a high rib variant of the MX2000.

**David Kostecky:** At 190cm 6' 3" tall and 212lb, Kostecky's athletic build would suit him for many sports. The 33-year-old, born in Brno, Czechoslovakia, chose Trap shooting however, and in his third Olympics captured the gold medal. His MX2000 with 75cm barrels with interchangeable bottom choke and extra full top weighs 4.05kg. Mauro Perazzi contrasts this with the weight of Ennio Mattarelli's first Perazzi trap gun at 3.57kg. "That's evolution" he says.

### THE PERAZZI EXPERIENCE

All these champions and many others before them have made the journey from their own country to the Perazzi company on the Via Fontelle at Botticino, Mattina near Brescia.

What they find is a manufacturing facility resembling more a company in the aerospace industry or the headquarters of a Formula One motor racing team than a gun factory. The gunsmiths and the operatives work quietly with only the faint hum of high tech machinery to disturb them. Although the most modern technology is used where appropriate the very nature of the MX design still requires skilled hands to retain its intrinsic character that combines, as it always

has, traditional values with modern innovation. The most modern methods are also used to ensure that the new gun will fit the customer which is confirmed in the technically advanced ballistics department. The Perazzi experience includes an incredible number of specification options all based on sound principles and Perazzi's experience. Perhaps most importantly the Perazzi operation constantly reinforces the customer's feeling that he or she is in the hands of one of the most competent experienced and technically advanced gunmakers in the world, up to and including the exciting moment they step out onto the Perazzi shooting range with the finished gun.

Mauro Perazzi, as now the head of the Perazzi company, says "Of course our continuing relationship with our many champions is a joy. It is however also my great pleasure to meet shooters who just love to shoot and appreciate fine guns. To put into their hands in one day a custom built gun that with our experience will further enhance their enjoyment of shooting is the life blood that sustains our business." It is however Mauro's commitment to success in competitive shooting and pushing forward the boundaries of clay target gun design that still drives the company. This is implicit in Perazzi's constant development of new specifications to incorporate into the gun his father created 40 years ago. Daniele Perazzi's great ambition was to create the ultimate competition shotgun and it is one his son continues to share.

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