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# A NATIONAL TREASURE

Bob Braithwaite was a quiet Cumbrian vet who won gold for Britain at the 1968 Olympics. Selena Barr looks back on this sporting hero

**J**ohn Robert (Bob) Braithwaite, sadly lost to us in February 2015, was a legendary trap shooter who represented his country at two consecutive Olympics in the 1960s. A true sporting hero and one of shooting's great natural talents, his Olympic gold medal is one of the sport's most romantic stories.

Born in 1925, the purely amateur Shot had only really even started competing when he reached his thirties – and had zero sponsorship (unheard of these days). He simply practised when he could spare the time from his busy Lancashire veterinary practice.

## Olympic gold

Britain has won an individual gold medal for clay shooting at the Olympics just three times – most recently in

2012 by Peter Wilson, in 2000 by Richard Faulds and in 1968 by Bob.

Speaking exclusively to *Sporting Gun*, Peter Wilson revealed that he met Bob just once – after his own win. “I was desperate to speak to the man who had done it first and who was a real leader in the sport. We spoke about everything; from shooting technique and the Olympic experience, to every day life. People had said to me beforehand that he was a very honest man and he would make it obvious within the first 10 minutes whether he liked me or not. I think he liked me, he didn't show any obvious sign that he didn't anyway! It was fascinating to compare his preparations for the Olympics to mine. He was just shooting as a hobby, whereas I was competing professionally. He was self-taught, didn't train as an athlete or have a whole host of sponsors backing him like I did, he was



**Bob Braithwaite, Britain's first Olympic gold medalist for clay shooting**

really on his own. When you compare that to what is the norm for professional shooters nowadays, his gold medal and score is all the more remarkable.”

Peter added: “Although we had very different preparations and levels of support, Bob had a wonderful mentality that was very similar to my own. I'd describe it as a 'controlled aggression' and it was something I really admired in him. I think it's important that Bob's story lives on and continues inspiring future generations because it shows what can be achieved with persistence and determination. He has left behind the best legacy for future shooters and I hope that he continues to be an inspiration for years to come.”

## Original inspiration

Richard Faulds regrets that he never got a chance to meet Bob. “He was one of my original inspirations in shooting and it would have been amazing to trade stories on how our Olympic experiences compared to one another. Gold medals

Bob's family have consigned the actual over-and-under 12-bore C Grade Browning shotgun he used to beat 55 shooters from 34 nations at the 1968 Mexico Olympics to Holt's Auctioneers. A special edition D Grade Browning shotgun, presented to Bob by Browning in recognition of his sporting achievements will also be sold. Both shotguns have an estimate of £7,000 to 9,000 and are for sale in London on Thursday 30 June.

For more information, visit: [www.holtsauctioneers.com](http://www.holtsauctioneers.com)



**The shotgun Bob used to win his Olympic gold medal will go up for auction at Holt's in June**



“It’s important that Bob’s story lives on and continues inspiring future generations because it shows what can be achieved with persistence and determination”

Bob’s widow described him as a man of few words, but what he did say was always pertinent

at Olympic level are few and far between in this country, so to have won one back then for a man in his circumstances is astonishing. Considering shooting was something that Bob just did in his spare time whilst working full-time as a vet, it’s incredible he even had time to have flown half way around the world with a gun. He is someone that young shooters will look up to for generations to come and personally what I took away from Bob’s story is, if you want something

hard enough, you can get it, as long as you put in the work.”

**Man of few words**

Bob’s widow Kathy describes him as a man of few words, but what he did say was always pertinent. She revealed that one of his favourite stories to recount was when the then Minister of State for Sport, Denis Howell flippantly remarked that Bob had flunked his chances of a medal when he missed two early clays. Bob coolly turned to him and said, “Yes, but I won’t miss any more.” And he didn’t. **SG**

JUEGOS DE LA XIX OLIMPIADA - MEXICO  
TR - SHOOTING - TIRO  
mas 35 de octubre de 1968

POSICION	NOMBRE DEL TIRADOR	PAIS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	TOTAL
1	BRAITHWAITE, Bob	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
2	BURTON, James	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
3	CHIFFOLEAU, Kurt	GER	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
4	WILCOX, David	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
5	CHIFFOLEAU, Kurt	GER	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
6	CHIFFOLEAU, Kurt	GER	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
7	ALLEN, Alexander	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
8	FRANK, John	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
9	FRANK, John	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
10	FRANK, John	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
11	FRANK, John	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
12	FRANK, John	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
13	FRANK, John	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
14	FRANK, John	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
15	FRANK, John	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
16	FRANK, John	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
17	FRANK, John	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
18	FRANK, John	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
19	FRANK, John	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216
20	FRANK, John	GBR	28	21	25	22	29	25	25	25	25	25	216

**Bob Braithwaite's winning scoresheet at the 1968 Olympics**



Bob celebrating his historic win

Above photograph: DREW GARDNER