

Crosman All-American Field Target Championship (CAAFTC) – June 21-23, 2019

Where do you start on a big event like this? For me it was 2 months ago but for the shooter it was just 3 days ago...

I got wind of a problem from last year almost a year after the last event. There were some people not using timers and delaying the groups behind them to the point of causing them to end more than hour after everyone else. The one relaying this to me wasn't planning to shoot Crosman because of last year. So, I reached out and offered a fix... give them my spot, pull myself out completely, get marshals from Crosman, and I wouldn't shoot this year but would instead manage the field target shoot. Invite accepted now it was time to follow through.

Here in Rochester you never know what the weather is going to be like come spring. This spring was exceptionally wet, so we kept putting off working on the woods course. Just 3 weeks before Crosman we were finally able to get in there and the grass/weeds had grown up to our hips. Armed with weed-eaters and a DR mower we managed to make relatively quick work of the task and cleared all the lanes in 6 hours.

Ray Apelles and Greg Shirhall then contacted me about an idea they had. Let's try going back to full-size KZ's, like at the factory. Oh, and let's make the troyer of the woods course without wind match the troyer of the fields course with wind. Sounds easy enough on paper, but our woods course has relatively short lanes, so this proved to be easy on paper only.

Monday, before the event, I started the process with the weed-eater and knocking down the lane dividers as they had grown a lot and prevented the full affect of the wind to be transferred to the pellet 😊 After clearing the first 4 lanes on Monday I came up with the BRILLIANT idea on Tuesday to save some time...leave some of the barriers up to really make the shooters question why they love this sport. To some it looked like a Morse code message gone wrong....dash-dot-dot-dash-big dash-dot....translated "have fun turkeys..." I really had fun thinking of the shots that would be missed because of my fine gardening skills.

Wednesday I set the bricks up in the field for the rifle and pistol courses and moved them to the side as the club was going to mow the fields course Thursday. At least the bricks were in position and would just need to be moved out after they mowed.

Now it gets interesting because Thursday was calling for rain ALL DAY. I had taken Thursday off from work to finish up any loose ends and while I figured I'd have time on Friday I didn't want to take the chance of being caught short on time. So, I set out on Thursday morning, at 7am, to set up the woods course in the POURING rain. I was immediately soaked but continued lane by lane down the woods course...cross river, get more water in boots, put a brick at distance, not enough room, weed-eater back further, put brick at distance, attach target, take string back, cross river, get more water in boots, take string back. By the 4th lane my Jeans were soaked, and I removed those and replaced them with my full frog-tog suit...didn't help much. The rain REALLY came down then but knowing time wasn't on my side I continued. Each lane was rather slow and wet because I had to try and get the most distance from each lane to get the troyer up to where I needed it. Plus, I had to navigate a stream that had become a RIVER with all of the recent rain. Frog togs do great in light rain, but EVERY part of me was soaked this time. I was just an old man, now I'm a wrinkly old man. And of course, I had Lauren in my mind so as I am leaving each brick, she pops into my mind..."it better be 90 degrees to the shooter!" so I go back and do a double check. I kid you not, EVERY target and brick that I set up I had Lauren in my mind – she made quite the first impression last year 😊

Of course, I relayed this to Lauren when she arrived but she had no idea what I was talking about initially. After some recollection she was then like "oh, wow...I said that...oh, wow" we laughed and I will forever more think of Lauren each time I set out a target to make sure it's 90 degrees to the shooter.

So, the woods course is set up, 4 hours later. I'm absolutely soaked head-to-toe and the thunderstorm had passed over while I was in the woods, so the worst was over. Went home to dry off, dry my frog togs (which I didn't even think was a thing, but it is now) and dry my boots, well empty the water out first and then dry them out with a hair dryer. While I'm doing this, I look out and the rain has stopped <argh!>

After a break, and once everything is dry, I go back out to the fields course and get the blocks back out as I saw them mowing as I was leaving that morning. While there I start getting calls from Crosman (Mark) about squads and which group gets the field on Saturday. Well, a quick check of the weather says the higher winds are on Saturday so let's put the WFT group in the field on Saturday. What can I say, I'm a people pleaser. Then comes the weird thing. Mark's talking about having 2-3 person groups on the pistol line. Knowing that there was 35+ pistol shooters something wasn't right. After some back and forth Crosman was expecting 15 pistol lanes. So, I'm back out at the field trying to find more bricks. Looking through all the lanes and then going to the woods to get some extra bricks from there so that I have 15 pistol lanes. Back at home I'm adding 5 more lanes for pistol and planning to add the bricks at distance Friday morning.

Friday is here, and a 5:30 am start to the day. Get out to the course and set up the sight-in area...paper, paper, everywhere. At least they can start shooting because you KNOW that people are going to arrive early. Once that was done, I had some help from Crosman. We tested the targets for the field at ≤ 3 ft lbs and proceeded to then set the targets out for the pistol course and run the strings back. Daryl and I then went to the woods course to do the same. The "river" wasn't as bad, but even with my muck boots on I got water in the top. I stayed on the other side of the river while Daryl worked on his side. Testing each target, verifying visibility, verifying 90 degrees again <thanks Lauren>, and then at 15 I made my way over to Daryl's side and we were done. Crosman painted the woods targets and everything was set, and I could relax.

People started arriving and I was on the line greeting friends and newcomers. The laughing and storytelling didn't end until late Sunday night.

As a match director, here's where you're relaxed but you are just waiting for the problems to start. You've done the best you can to set up 3 fun-but-challenging courses, checking that the targets work correctly, and that everything is visible, but you just never know.

The wind for Friday was 12-14 mph so the pistols had a tough time of it. We had some cold lines because of strings getting caught in the target springs, but no target failures. Despite the cold lines the pistol match was a success. After the pistol match we moved the targets to the rifle blocks and Crosman repainted the targets.

Saturday I was putting paper out at 5:45 am for a 6:30 am start but then I had some work to do. Daryl and I set about working on the cold line issue from the day before. The lines were catching on the spring that was added to the air venturi rat targets. So, we set about going to each rat target and trimming the spring, so it was no longer a hook for the line to catch on.

8:15 am we started the safety meeting. Mark welcomed everyone, I went over safety, procedures, cold lines, etc and Mark raffled off the first set of prizes. The shooters then proceeded down to their assigned course/lane and got ready for the "hot line" call, and this is where my anxiety begins. Waiting for the problems to show up. I was on the woods course with two other marshals and we immediately had a cold line, as the string had been shot off. No biggie. Then the first low shooter had an issue with a target that was slightly too low. Called a cold line, grabbed a block, got water in boots crossing river, added a block on the target, got more water in boots crossing the river....yup an inch of water in my boots first thing <yay>. Then I waited. No cold lines until 7 lanes later and we had another string issue. There was one target issue, 10 L. At some point the faceplate fell off but without knowing when this happened, I couldn't touch it. But EVERYONE was making me aware of it to which I responded in mantra style "if you think there's a problem with a target put a P".

The field course had a near perfect run, with a cold line being called at the very end for a string issue. <Big sigh of relief at this point>. We had finished the first day of shooting and had cold lines for very minor issues that were mostly unavoidable. The groups moved well and both groups finished at almost the same time, I think the WFT/Open group actually finished before Hunter PCP which is unheard of.

After the woods 10 L target was pulled Crosman started repainting the targets for Sunday. We all had lunch and Day 2 was done.

Sunday was again a 5:45 am start with putting paper out but then we were done. We had our safety meeting and 2nd raffle and we were off. I was down at the woods again, thinking that the woods course is the most likely to have issues so that is where I should be. 3 ½ hours later, no cold lines, and I could finally put any concerns of an unsuccessful shoot out of my mind. NO cold lines on the woods course OR the fields course. Couldn't ask for anything better than that. There were a couple of protests on the fields course but the targets tested fine at ≤ 3 ft-lbs so no targets were pulled.

Everyone was thrilled with the courses, and the full kz proved to be fun and challenging for all. None of the courses were cleared. The winds in the field caused people to miss and the very subtle winds in the woods were driving people nuts <just what a match director likes to hear>.

People kept asking me how I did to which I had to explain why I wasn't shooting this year. It was bittersweet as I would have loved to shoot these three courses. I set them up to be fun, exciting, challenging, and at times crazy – shooting through a series of trees at a target that, no matter where you stood, had to be shot through a series of trees to the left and right. But on the other hand, I wanted this Crosman match to go off without the problems of years past. So, the adage of sacrificing the one for the many was always in my head.

The success of the full-kz courses is here to stay and will be a “Crosman” thing forever more. The full-kz provides easier targets for the beginners and the long targets that challenge everyone.