

2016 Nevada State Airgun Championship - Grand Prix Match, July 23-24

Battle Mountain

Are you tough enough?

That's the mantra on a giant sign in front of the Chamber of Commerce building in the town of Battle Mountain, NV near Horse Canyon where Nevada Air Gunners put on the Nevada State Airgun Field Target Championship match last weekend July 23-24th....

...And, it was that same mantra that was echoing through my head throughout the journey in organizing and preparing for that weekend's contest of airgun field target marksmanship. The weeks leading up to the match I sometimes questioned if I had it in me to deliver all that I promised. Horse Canyon is indeed a spectacular scenic setting for a premium field target experience. But its location is remote, the terrain is rugged, and its amenities are few. The winter's extra heavy rains washed out parts of our road leading into our site. We needed to shore those up for automotive access and the summer temps typical for July demanded shaded table space so we could rest and revive ourselves between activities. It was a tall order to fill on top of setting up a championship level course but after last year's event falling short on grand prix qualification due to low attendance, I was resolved to make this year a success. My solution... find help and get an early start!!

Friday the 15th, Jason H. (a good friend and new shooter) declared "Tetris masters unite!" and after trimming down and remounting the target bases to save space, we packed 56 targets, all our camping gear, camp food, a giant cooler full of beverages, a 20x30' tarp, and our pre-cut picnic table parts, in and on top of my Nissan Frontier truck. Took us about 6 hours, but every nook and cranny had something filling the space. It was quite a site on the road with the picnic table parts tied to the roof rack and a Marine Max 7day cooler strapped to the open tailgate holding everything else behind the camper shell hatch. (we used two ratcheting straps just in case.)

The plan was to camp on site all week, work every day, all day, until the tasks were completed and over the course of the week leading up to the match that's what we did.... It just didn't go quite as planned. LOL!! Despite the boot blisters, hammered thumb, cold water bucket baths, and the initial agony of defeat trying to raise a 20x30 tarp in the 15-20mph winds, by week's end our site was prepped, the road was passable, we had two heavy duty picnic tables with a double layered shade tarp flying over them, the coolers were full and a 56 target championship course was in place.

Our 28 lane course made its way up the access road approximately a half mile. Every target was lubed and pretested for function and then lubed and tested again upon installation with a 3.5fpe test pistol and passed. I am happy to report, I had zero protested targets the entire match. The terrain at our location allows for a wide diversity of shots. I took full advantage of every direction and angle possible. Level shots across the ravine, moderate-steep-ultra steep Inclines and declines were dotted up and down the canyon walls. Some were against the wind, quartered to the wind, others were protected from the wind by the change in landscape or by the willows nearby. A few were shaded shots under the tree canopies, and still others were creek side positions where the Beaver and the herd of elephant targets were waiting to challenge our competitor's skills.

Mother Nature was actually pretty nice to us. Temps were in the 80's and low 90's on match days. We had light winds most of the time with some moderate winds on occasion. However, the winds were

switching back and forth presenting an additional challenge. The course itself was pretty tough. We had a lot of long shots at 40-55yds. A few super-shots, like .480" Doe at 27yds, another .480 Ram at 24 yds, a 1" Turkey at 45yds. A gratuitous 3/8" Hands up Mouse at approx. 13yds that took its fair share of toil too. The 50yd 1.5" Porcupine Target on a steep canyon wall boggled my own mind with the Hold-under variable. Initial calculations put the Troyer a little above 30T however I did not factor the shade into the targets that were so and all of the new 1/2" targets I bought in preparations for this event are actually .480" instead of a full half inch. That may not seem like much but with 6-7 targets it adds up and those smaller than half inch KZ's felt awfully small. Nevertheless, the difficulty felt much higher than a 30T while shooting the course. The lanes were numbered 1-28 and we utilized an odd-even lane assignment with the score cards printed accordingly so every shooter had to work the entire gamut of diversity each day and also that wind factors would be as fair as possible with mother nature at the helm.

On the scoreboard: Highest possible score was 112

OPEN PCP		Day 1	Day 2	Total
Jim Whittlesey	USFT #148 / Nikko 10-60x / .177-JSB-10.34	48	46	94
Wayne Burns	USFT #144 – BSA 10-50x-60 / .22-JSB-13.4	41	43	84
Chris Merritt	USFT	40	41	81
Bill Corder	USFT / Bushnell 4200 8-32x / .177-JSB-10.34	38	43	81
Fred Biergiel	Daystate MK4 / Hawke 8-32x / .177-JSB-10.34	37	33	70
Dan House	Marauda / Sightron / .177 – 7.9 - CP	25	21	46

HUNTER PCP

Scott Schneider	Daystate MK4 / MTC / .20 – JSB – 13.6	43	40	83
Angel Santiago	Theoben / Aeon 3-12x / .177 – JSB - 10.34	37	40	77
Lonnie Smith	USFT #51 / Aeon 3-12x-50 / .177 – JSB – 10.34	39	35	74
Jim Cyran	Steyer LG100 / Hawke 4.5-14x / .177- JSB-10.3	34	33	67
Randy Ebersole	Marauder / Hawke 8-32x / .177-JSB-10.34	33	33	66
Jacob Sumner	Marauder / UTG 6-32x / .177-JSB-10.34	30	20	50

Hunter Piston

Jason Howard	HW97 / Simmons 6.5-20x / JSB 8.4 .177	12	13	25
Len Niles	Benji NP UTG 3-9x/ .177 CP	6	3	9
Chris Bledsoe	Weirauch	7	1	8

WFTF PCP

Mike Niksch	Thomas / Leupold Comp 35x / .177 JSB 8.4	42	39	81
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Freestyle

Chris Lovett	TM 1000 / Nikko 10-50x / .177 13.34 JSB	36	40	76
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There was a lot of great shooting going over the weekend on a very challenging course. Mike and Chris, although the sole shooters in their class both demonstrated strong marksmanship skills. We had a nice contest in Hunter Piston with some less experienced shooters. Congratulations to Jason with his first championship as a new shooter in the sport! The difficulty of the course was pretty rough on the Piston

shooters but did an excellent job of separating the scores in the pre-charged Hunter and Open divisions. Scott Schneider and Jim Whittlesey won their respective divisions convincingly shooting well both Saturday and Sunday. Very well done guys!! Congratulations to Wayne Burns and Angel Santiago for their second place positions. Angel made a nice comeback breaking the 40 mark on day two, pulling ahead of Lonnie Smith from a two point deficit on day one... great shooting Angel!!!

We had a shoot off for 3rd place in Open division between Bill Corder and Chris Merritt. I added a third target to lane 19 for the task. The metal quarry trio in position to challenge was ½" Rhino Rat at 11yds, 1.25" Fox at 28yds, and 1.5" Rhino Rabbit at a steep incline at 42 yds.... I know that doesn't sound so hard does it? Well of course, there was a catch. ;) I've been waiting for a while now to implement my 3 position shoot off....Here is how it works. Each shooter gets one shot per target but they have to shoot one target standing, one target kneeling, one target sitting (or preferred). Shooters choice as to which one they want to shoot in which position. Most FT shooters only want to shoot from the comfort zone of a seated position but Field Target is a multi position sport so I've adopted this approach to shoot offs to emphasize the importance of positional shots. In addition, the shooters choice aspect, challenges both the mental game as well as their marksmanship skills, putting them in a position to strategize according to their own marksmanship skills.

It took two rounds to settle the matter. Bill went first via the toss... knocked down the 42yd Rabbit first from the seated position, missed the 28yd Fox from Kneeling position, and missed the 11yd Rat, from standing position. Chris matched Bill's one point with a seated position on the 11yd Rat, and missed the 28yd Fox standing, and missed the 42yd Rabbit kneeling.

Second round... Bill went for the same shot sequence but got caught in the wind on that steep inclined Rabbit at 42yds and wasn't able to make up the points on the Fox or the Rat from the kneeling and Standing positions respectively. This left Chris the opening he was hoping for and he polished off the 11yd Rat from a seated position for the 3rd place win!! Nicely done Chris and still very good shooting overall by Bill in tying the score up for third in Open with an improved second day score.

In the Pistol Category.....We had 6 shooters taking on the course that Wayne and his crew set up on Friday. It was Jacob Sumner who took the days win (on his birthday). Nicely done too!! Out of a possible 42 shots Jacob knocked down 40!!! And ..Randy Ebersole was only one shot behind Jacob with a 39.

Jacob Sumner	1720T UTG 3-12x	40/42
Randy Ebersole	1720T	39/42
Lonnie Smith	1701P Hybrid	37/42
Wayne Burns	1720T UTG 3-12x	34/42
Scott Schneider	Airmax	29/42
Jason Howard	1701P UTG 3-9x Bugbuster	16/42

Congratulations and Thank you to all that attended the Nevada State Airgun Field Target Championship match. Each of you proved that you indeed are "tough enough" and each of your presence enhanced the experience. Thank you to Wayne Burns and his crew for making the trek from Oregon and adding on to our activities with a pistol field target match. A special Thank You to Chris Merritt for opening up his property for our field target enjoyment. I hope that everybody had a great time and I am confident we can make the experience even better next year.

Speaking of next year... NAG's 2017 State Championship match will be May 26-28th