

Mixed Reactions

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES! THIS YEAR'S WORLD FITASC CHAMPIONSHIP IN CYPRUS WAS WON WITH A WORLD RECORD SCORE OF 198 – SOME 23 TARGETS UP ON THE WINNER'S SCORE IN 2007. MICHAEL BRUNTON

Congratulations to Richard Faulds (England), 2008 World FITASC Champion with a record breaking score of 198/200. This outstanding result completes the significant achievement for Richard of a 2008 World Sporting and FITASC double – no doubt softening the blow of a below par performance at the Olympics in Double Trap.

Well done America! World FITASC Runner-up, Anthony Matarese Jr., Super Veteran winner Joe Cantey and Diane Sorantino, Ladies Runner-up, have every right to be proud of their outstanding individual medal performances. In the team events, the Seniors (Will Fennell, Mike Haas, Anthony Matarese Jr. and Gregg Wolf) and Super-Veterans (Joe Cantey, Steve Fischer and Michael Taylor) took Gold and the Ladies (Ashleigh Hafley, Diane Sorantino and Deborah Wall) won Silver. Great job, one and all.

This was a well organized and smoothly run Championship on some of the most spectacular terrain available to the Limassol Gun Club in Cyprus. However, with hindsight, it may well be remembered more for target

presentations that were too close to the side of soft and lacked any Wow! factor – resulting in exceptionally high scores not seen before in modern day World FITASC Championships.

The scores speak for themselves. Each of the eight Parcours was straightened multiple times – 87 times in total to be precise! There were over 215 scores of 24/25. Of the 800 plus competitors, 301 shot an average of 80 percent or more. Only nine competitors shot below a 50 percent average. One competitor, finishing in 792nd place, managed an average of 51.5 percent, but only shot six layouts!

Speculating on why the bar (target difficulty) was set so low this year, many believe FITASC over-reacted following the too tough a Championship of 2007 in Prague (winning score was 175). In that instance, the degree of difficulty was compounded by hard to break (because of the target composition) targets. There were a multitude of unhappy shooters following Prague and the powers that be at FITASC obviously did not want a repeat situation in Cyprus.

In an effort to offer target setters guidance, FITASC introduced a system of target categorization for International events this year – A, B and C. A is an easier target that up to 80 percent of competitors should hit, B is a medium target (60-80 percent hit rate) and C is the stiffest target (40-60 percent hit rate). While this makes good sense, it was the mix of targets (1 x A (minimum), 2 x B and 1 x C per stand) and the inclusion of only one difficult C target in the



doubles that is of more relevance – not to mention that different target setters may not even agree on what is a C (difficult) target compared with a B target! So it is that target setters for such a prestigious event walk a very fine line between target presentations on the easy side of perfect and just too tough.

Reflecting on this year's Championship, many shooters are of the opinion that the degree of difficulty would have been about right if more of the doubles had utilized the more difficult targets on each peg – not the easiest. Perhaps each layout should have had one memorable target – just enough to create the 'wobble' room and ability for shooters to gain bonus targets. All sports are the more entertaining when competitors have the chance to come from behind, with the winner not emerging until almost the dying minutes of the event.

But there's always two sides to a story. No doubt many hundreds of competitors left Cyprus happy – they had spent plenty attending the event, were delighted by the organization and venue and came home with stories of their best performance (numerically) of the year. That, no doubt, was FITASC's intention – for everyone to enjoy themselves.

Such aspirations for the sport are admirable – and fully supported by this magazine. But is a World Championship the place to do it? I have long believed that clay target shooting should be fun and entertaining if it is to attract more supporters to the sport – but there's a place for everything. The name of the game at charity and or corporate events and clubs is breaking clays. Competition gets more serious with State and Zone shoots, Big Blasts offer yet another level of proficiency, while National and World Championships should reflect the ultimate annual challenge to every shooter, regardless of class. On that basis alone, many believe that this year's World FITASC Championship missed an opportunity to showcase itself as the 'senior' discipline within sporting clays.

MANY THANKS

As this is our last issue of 2008, I'd like to put on record my appreciation to our many thousands of readers, to our many advertisers and those dedicated correspondents that support our team efforts to publish ClayShootingUSA. Thank you – and all best greetings over the coming Christmas and New Year holiday to you all. ■