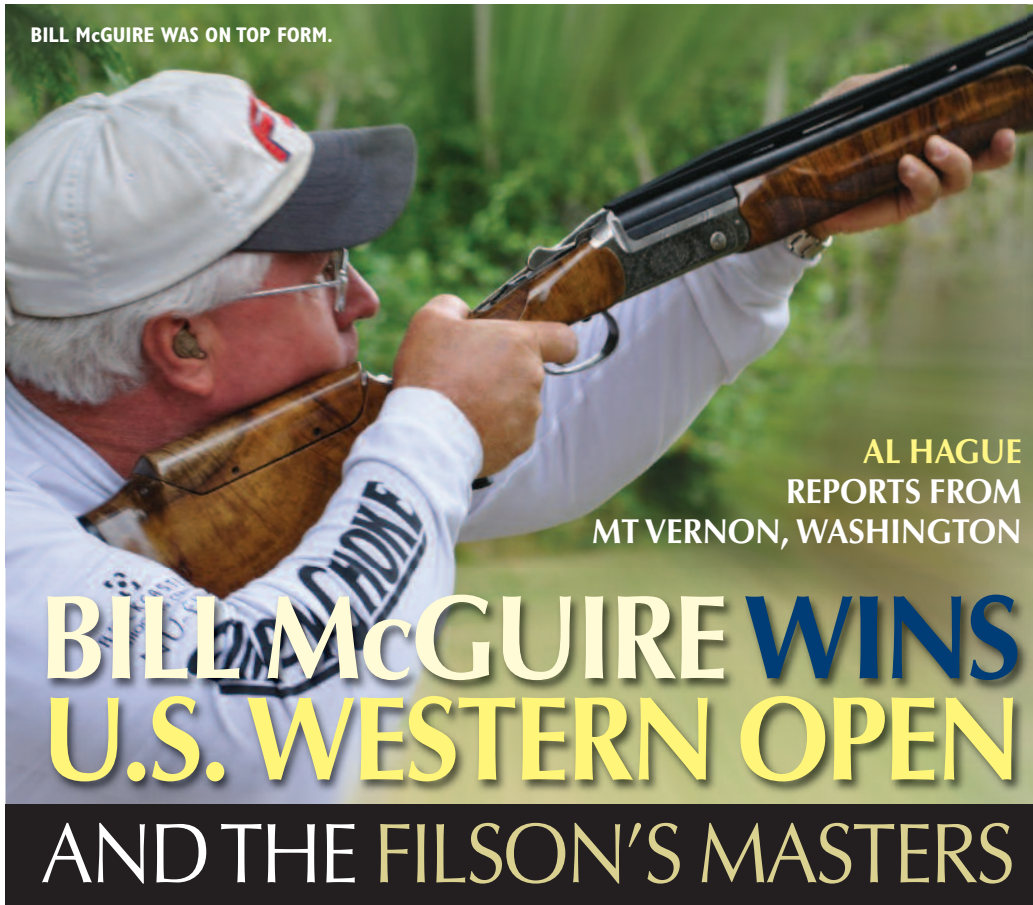


BILL MCGUIRE WAS ON TOP FORM.



AL HAGUE
REPORTS FROM
MT VERNON, WASHINGTON

BILL MCGUIRE WINS U.S. WESTERN OPEN

AND THE FILSON'S MASTERS

The 8th Annual US Western Open was held at the amazing Top Gun Club in Mt. Vernon, Washington (August 5-8). The Club is only open to the public once a year – just for this event. The Top Gun Club is the design and pet project of Jeff Van Den Top and over the years has evolved into one of the finest sporting clays courses on the West Coast.

The gracious hosts, Jeff and his wife Melinda, and Event Leader, Dan Mitchell, were on hand to encourage competitors over the four days of competition in this picturesque valley above and not far from the San Juan Straits and within one hundred miles of the Canadian border.

This 'unusual' event offered a tournament within a tournament that was sponsored by Filson –

The Filson Masters. To add to the excitement, Holland and Holland (with stores in New York, London and Moscow) were on site sponsoring the Northwest SXS Championship and a Paradox Exhibition. If that wasn't enough excitement, the Western Open was a Team USA Selection shoot.

Filson Masters

The Filson Masters was a 400 target event consisting of the two 100 target Pre-lims and the 200 Main Event (using the same courses as the US Western Open Main Event). Filson Masters winners would be determined by score, but more importantly, each day the best scores would be calculated and those that made the cut would continue on until only 24 in each class remained. The

squads were made up by scores so it was unlikely that most would shoot on the same squad each day. The majority of the shooters were fine with that – some commented that it gave them the opportunity to shoot with better shooters and in some cases with people they normally would not have the opportunity to shoot with. A few were not happy about not shooting with their normal squads – and it certainly affected their shooting comfort levels. It's important to note that no matter your standing in the Masters, everyone was still eligible for the US Western Open – same targets on the same courses.

The winners of each class in the Filson Masters were awarded a Filson Shooting Vest especially designed for this event along with prize money for each class of \$500 (1st), \$300 (2nd) and \$200 (3rd).



ABOVE: SHOOT HOST, JEFF VAN DEN TOP. BELOW: EVENT LEADER, DAN MITCHELL.



Special award

Jeff Van Den Top and Dan Mitchell presented a special award to Jim Porter from Orange (California) for his outstanding leadership with his non-profit organization that teaches youth shooting programs for Junior High and High School students. He is a Level III instructor associated with Triple B's Clays in Rosemead (CA) and through his 501-3c organization promotes and teaches sporting clays, firearm safety programs and works with the Boy Scouts. Porter manages to do all of this from his wheelchair and is certainly an inspiration to anyone who meets him. The website for this worthwhile organization is www.socaltopguns.com



JIM PORTER



As part of the youth initiative by Filson, a clinic with Andy Duffy was also sponsored. The youngsters chosen to participate earned their way by winning at the Filson Open, the Washington State Championships or the Oregon State Championships. In addition, Filson paid the entry fee for these top shooting youngsters to enter the Western Open. The five youngsters that took part in the clinic included Marty Arpin (16) from Maple Valley (WA), Megan Rice (14) from Yakima (WA), Mike Hoffman (18) from Vaschon Island

(WA), Rick Lengele (15) from Eugene (OR) and Brady Brunell (17) from Beverly Hills (CA).

Quality Targets

The courses were set each day by well known and respected target setters Dave Fiedler of Nevada and Jason Menke of Briley in San Antonio. Taking responsibility for the Red and Blue courses gave both men the opportunity to use their imagination and put forward their best efforts – and they certainly did that. The courses

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were set tough but fair. According to Fiedler, this venue is a target setters dream with so many options offered by the terrain. According to both target setters, they share the common goals of making the presentations fun and challenging – but fun first. Both men have more than 20 years experience at their jobs and it showed.

Day one (Thursday) had all 5-Stand fields open for practice

from 8am to 5pm. A 50 bird 12 ga practice on the Pump course from 9am-4pm (Thursday only) and the sub gauge (20, 28, .410, SXS) and pump gun events were held, using European rotations, from 9am until 4 pm.

The first rotations of the Pre-lim started promptly at 9am with the second rotation going out at 1pm. The Red Pre-lim (398 entries) was won by Zach Kienbaum with a hot 98 with Bill McGuire three back at 95 as runner-up. The Blue Pre-lim (405 entries) was won by Bill McGuire in a shoot-off with Jon Kruger tied at 98. Jenni Clark, the 15 year old lady from Texas, dominated her concurrent in both events. From these early Pre-lim results, this was shaping up to be a tough competition.



5-Stand

This event was held all day, each day, with competitors shooting in between Pre-lim and Main rotations. The 5-Stand at Top Gun is unlike any other. The layouts are elevated above the targets and it's also secluded in amongst a rock formation that gives a feeling of grandness. Many of the presentations are below the shooting position with downward angled targets which presents its own challenge. The latest targeting control system was in use offering a multitude of target combinations limited only to the imagination of the target setter.

Five shooters, including Zach Kienbaum and National Champion, Gebben Miles, were tied at 44 after Saturday's 5-Stand. In the shoot-off, Kienbaum outlasted Miles to take Saturday's HOA. On Sunday, Junior shooter, Theo Ribbs, had

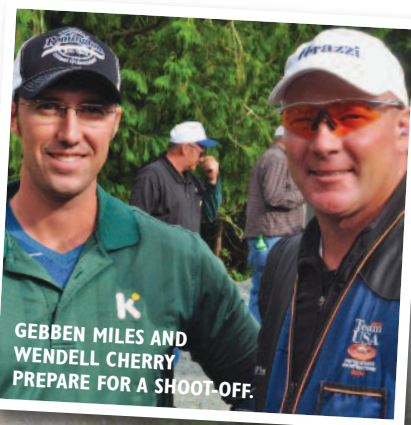
The layouts are elevated above the targets and it's also secluded in amongst a rock formation that gives a feeling of grandness.

everyone nervous when he was perfect on his first 25, but finished on 47 tied with Jon Kruger and Hunter Milligan. Top of the leaderboard was Wendell Cherry and Gebben Miles, tied at 48. In the late day shoot-off, Cherry earned Sunday's HOA with Miles taking runner-up. In Ladies, Beverly Cole won both 5-Stand events with consistent scores of 38 on Saturday and 39 on Sunday.

Sub Gauge

In the Small-gauge events, honors went to Raymond Brown (20g-48), Jon Kruger (28g-47) and Jay Koetje (.410-47). Jeff Van Den Top the event host, wearing #1, captured .410 AA class with 45.

The SXS competition had 57 entrants and after the smoke cleared and the shoot-off was complete, HOA went to Mike Wilgus with Dave Lauzen as the Master class winner.



Great Support

Holland & Holland were on hand to display their fine guns and sponsor the Holland & Holland Northwest SXS competition. Guy Davies, Executive Sales Director, and David Cruz, Director of Operations, made the trip from

New York to exhibit and demonstrate their fine guns and to sponsor their events. Not only do Holland & Holland build fine guns, but selling high end used guns, many of which are collectors pieces, is a major part of their worldwide business.



The Paradox is available once more

The Paradox shotgun has a long history and like many inventions was truly an invention of necessity. In 1863 a young Lieutenant Vincent Fosbery discovered that a few inches of sharp rifling in a shotgun choke was sufficient to stabilize a slug but not enough to blow a shotgun pattern – so he patented his idea in 1885. Harris and Henry Holland realized the systems potential and in the following year bought the rights and named it the Paradox. Basically, the last few inches of the side by side barrels have rifling lands and grooves so that when a slug is fired it is spun – accuracy is increased. Equally, a shot shell can be used in the same gun to great effect. This gun allowed you to have one gun for multiple uses – such as big game and birds (sound familiar?).

Holland & Holland manufactured these guns up until 1931 and then ceased production. Now they are being built once more and are available as a 12 bore round action side-lock with branded ammunition from Hull Cartridge. Get one of these and you can deer hunt in the morning and take pheasants in the afternoon – seemingly a contradiction – thus the name Paradox.



H&H Events

Thirty shooters showed their mettle in the Northwest SXS 12g event with Andy Duffy finishing one up on Art Heitlauf. In the hammer competition, Tom E. Jones posted a huge 84 over second place Terry O Murphy (77). In the small bore Mike Helms finished on top with a 71 followed by Rich Smith (55).

Day two of the Main and the weather was not quite as friendly. Gray skies and intermittent rain was prevalent early on. The weather certainly didn't dampen enthusiasm – day one leaders continued where they left off.

Filson Masters Results

Since the Filson Masters was taking place at the same time as the US Western Open, it was possible that someone could win both events – or both their classes. The Master's 400 targets included both Pre-lims and the 200 bird Open, which accounts for the different class winners. The Master class winner was Bill McGuire (388/400). Top honors also went to Jake Jones (AA-336/400), John Wilgus (A-343/400), Nick McGlory (B-324/400), Craig T Langager (C-310/400), Alan Vorhees (D-299/400) and Kurt Johnson (E-266/400).

Main Event

The weather for the first day of the Main (Western Open) co-operated nicely with pretty much clear skies and pleasant temperatures. At the end of day one, Bill McGuire and Wendell Cherry were knotted at 97/100. Young guns, Theo Ribbs and US Open Champion, Joey Bolton, were one bird back (96) with Brad Kidd in striking distance on 95. AA had Cary Skaggs at the top with a strong 90 and in A class, Andrew Van Den Top was alone at 89 (511 shooters took to the course on day one of the Main).

Day two of the Main and the weather was not quite as friendly. Gray skies and intermittent rain was prevalent early on. The weather certainly didn't dampen enthusiasm – day one leaders continued where they left off. It was easy to see that Bill McGuire had not traveled all the way from Tennessee to do anything but win!

Bill McGuire of Tennessee

There is no doubt that the competition at the Western Open was fierce – given that this shoot was one of the final Team USA selection shoots. Several All Americans and team members had made the trip and perhaps that makes the victory even sweeter for the man who flew across the country to compete against the best.

Bill McGuire began his shooting career in 1996 and reached Master class in two years. According to McGuire, he shoots about 6,000 registered targets a year. This was his first time in Washington, (his home club is the Rockcastle Shooting Center in Bowling Green, Kentucky) and naturally, he thoroughly enjoyed it! His accomplishments in the sport are many, such as having won the Seminole and the US leg of the Triple Classic in 2005 along with the East Coast Championship twice. Watching him shoot you quickly see he's very serious but equally friendly – and makes a great squad partner. He enjoyed the Masters and US Western Open format and was completely incredulous at the Top Gun Club. Currently he shoots a Blaser F3 and his favorite shell is Remington Nitro 1 1/8 8s or 7s.



A Top Junior Lady

Jenni Clark was the Main Event Lady Champion, posting a 174/200 which also put her well up among the Master class scores. She's a 15 year old High School Junior from Texas and started shooting at the age of 12 as part of her local 4H club. Her accomplishments this year include taking 5th place in the women's World FITASC Championship in Italy, along with a Gold medal as a member of the Lady's team at the recent World Sporting in England.



She also enjoys softball and has hopes and plans to make a career in sports medicine through Trinity College in San Antonio. She shoots a Beretta 687 and shoots her favorite shells by Gamebore. This young shooter has the poise and confidence of an athlete that's much older and more experienced. She's a very competitive young Lady and you can bet you will read much more about her in future issues of this magazine.

He was steady all day, finishing with a Blue course score of 98 to add to his Red course score of 97 (195/200). Theo Ribbs was very much on form, firmly taking runner-up over some very accomplished shooters with a two

day total of 193. Jenni Clark continued her run of form in the Ladies with a two day total of 174, 13 targets clear of Diane Nelson (161). M1 required a shoot-off between Brad Kidd and Wendell Cherry with Kidd coming out on top with a two day score of 191 and four off the winner.

Summary

The US Western Open at Top Gun was, once again, a premier event in every way. The standard of shooting was incredible, the organization and management was 'right on' and the fun and food was top shelf. The volunteers and staff were commended by everyone attending for an outstanding job in a very unusual format. The standard and number of shooters that attended the event made this shoot one of the best on the West Coast this year. If you weren't there this year, try and make it next year. It's an incredible shooting experience – but be prepared for some variety in the weather as is always the case in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. ■